

IRT QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

NORTHWEST FLORIDA UMBRELLA, WATERSHED-BASED, REGIONAL MITIGATION PLAN (UMBRELLA PLAN)

FEBRUARY 17, 2010

[FDOT Midway Maintenance Office – Midway, FL]

Attendees
Randy Turner – USACE (Jacksonville)
David Rydene – NMFS (St. Petersburg)
Joy Giddens – FDOT (Chipley)
Tracey Ludyjan-Ybarra – FDOT (Chipley)
Terry Gilbert – URS (FWCC Consultant)
Duncan Cairns – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)
David Clayton – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)
Robert Lide – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)

The IRT quarterly meeting was held Wednesday, February 17th, 2010, from 2 PM – 5 PM (EST) at the FDOT Midway Maintenance Office (17 Commerce Blvd. at the US 90 / I-10 interchange west of Tallahassee). IRT members not in attendance were Cecelia Harper (EPA – Atlanta), Mary Mittiga (USFWS – Panama City), Ted Hoehn (FWCC – Tallahassee), and Andrew Phillips (USACE—on temporary deployment to Afghanistan).

Items discussed included:

1. SR 281 (Avalon Blvd.) from I-10 to north of railroad tracks.
2. SR 65 from the Franklin/Liberty county line to a point 25 miles north.
3. CR 375 Syfrett Creek Bridge.
4. US 331 from north of Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge to SR 20.
5. Status of several permit modifications discussed at November, 2009 meeting.
6. Potential road projects if 2nd federal stimulus bill goes forward, updates on ongoing mitigation projects and annual monitoring, and general functioning of the Umbrella Plan process.

1— SR 281 (Avalon Blvd.) from I-10 to north of railroad tracks

Per FDOT consultants (Paul Looney, Volkert & Associates, Inc., 10/5/09), this project will impact 8.24 acres of palustrine, historically forested wetlands and result in a functional loss of 3.179 UMAM units. Joy reported that although this functional loss is calculated only for the direct impacts, the consultant determined there are no secondary wetland impacts (the impacts are limited to roadside ditches with no adjacent wetlands currently in existence).

Randy (USACE Permitter) will include special conditions within the USACE permit to require purchase of 3.18 UMAM credits from a mitigation bank. Before deciding whether to mandate purchase of “in-kind” forested wetland credits, or allowing “out-of-kind” mitigation with the purchase of herbaceous wetland credits, he will first consult with other USACE coworkers. Nearby mitigation banks with appropriate service areas are the Garcon Peninsula Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.2.2), and the Pensacola Bay Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.2.11).

FDOT would prefer that this USACE permit be issued by March, 2010.

2— SR 65 from the Franklin/Liberty county line to a point 25 miles north

Shoulder work associated with this project will impact an estimated 0.59 acre (0.35 UMAM value) of mostly herbaceous wetlands (per Joy, finalized impacts may vary slightly from these estimates). An important concern raised is that Harper’s beauty (*Harperocallis flava*), a federal and state endangered plant, occurs along this stretch of SR 65, although Joy did state that all known plants are outside the shoulder footprint, and that there would be no loss or takings of any plants.

NWFWMD proposed debiting mitigation credits from the Whiskey George / Sumatra (UWRMP 5.5.9) project, located in Tates Hell State Forest some three miles from the southern end of the FDOT project (estimated credits for work already implemented is in the 20+ range). The IRT consensus is that use of Whiskey George / Sumatra is appropriate mitigation for this impact.

FDOT prefers this USACE permit be issued by April, 2010.

3— CR 375 Syfrett Creek Bridge Replacement

Replacement of the CR 375 Syfrett Creek Bridge in Wakulla County is anticipated to impact ~1 acre of forested, palustrine wetlands (UMAMs have not been done at this time). Per Joy, this project is likely two to three years out. NWFWMD proposes using debiting forested wetlands credits from Shuler (UWRMP 5.6.4) as mitigation (both the impact and proposed mitigation are within the Ochlockonee River basin). The IRT consensus is that use of Shuler is appropriate mitigation for this impact. A final decision concerning mitigation will be made when the USACE permit is issued.

4—US 331 from north of Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge to SR 20

Per Joy, a construction timeframe for this road project has not been established, although it is anticipated to be, at a minimum, a number of years in the future. The direct impacts of this project, if implemented, are estimated at ~75 acres. This project will not be a “stimulus” project. Projected wetland impacts include an existing 20-acre barrow pit, and creation of storm water ponds.

This impact is within the service area of two mitigation banks (Nokuse Mitigation Bank—UWRMP 5.3.10 and Devils Swamp Mitigation Bank—UWRMP 5.4.9), and is proximate to Lafayette Creek—UWRMP 5.3.6. No decision concerning mitigation was made.

5—Status of permit mods discussed at last IRT meeting

Permit mods adjusting mitigation for several USACE permits discussed at the November, 2009 IRT meeting have now been issued.

SAJ-2000-1798 IP-GAH Modification #5 (SR 79 from US 98 to the West Bay Bridge), issued 2/10/2010, changes the required mitigation from debiting of 23.11 federal credits at the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB / UWRMP 5.3.1) to debiting of 14.09 credits from the SHLMB and debiting of 9.02 credits from Ward Creek West (UWRMP 5.4.2).

SAJ-2001-6577 IP-AWP Modification #3 (SR 77 from CR 2300 to the Washington/Bay County Line), issued 2/10/2010, changes the required mitigation from debiting of 44.05 federal credits at the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB / UWRMP 5.3.1) to debiting of 33.36 credits from the SHLMB and debiting of 10.69 credits from Ward Creek West (UWRMP 5.4.2).

SAJ-1991-60607 IP-GAH Modification #3 (SR 77 from Bailey Bridge / North Bay Bridge to CR 2300), issued 2/23/2010, changes the required mitigation from debiting of 14.69 federal credits at the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB / UWRMP 5.3.1) to debiting of 11.13 credits from the SHLMB and debiting of 3.56 credits from Ward Creek West (UWRMP 5.4.2).

SAJ-2007-05337 IP-AWP Modification #1 (US 98 Wakulla River Bridge), issued 2/18/2010, changes the required mitigation from the Ferrell Property (UWRMP 5.7.3) to debiting of 4.92 credits from the Shuler Property (UWRMP 5.6.4).

SAJ-1997-03121 IP-CP Modification #1 (widening of US 98 from Navy Blvd. to Blue Angel Pkwy.), issued 2/17/2010, changes the required mitigation from acquisition of a minimum of 350 acres at Jones Swamp (UWRMP 5.2.5) to debiting 19.43 credits from the Dutex Property (UWRMP 5.1.5).

SAJ-2001-02226 IP-DBH Modification #2 (US 98 Thomas Drive Interchange), issued 2/17/2010, changes the required mitigation from wetlands restoration within Robinson Bayou in Panama City (never incorporated into UWRMP) to debiting 2.72 credits from Ward Creek West (UWRMP 5.4.2).

SAJ-1999-03665 NW-CP Modification #1 (I-10 Escambia Weigh Station), issued 2/17/2010, changes the required mitigation from acquisition of not less than 20 acres at Jones Swamp from “5 parcels show [sic] on page 16 or 16 of the permit drawings...” to acquisition of not less than 20 acres at Jones Swamp from the Schluter Tract. This permit modification also removes the requirement to record a deed restriction on acquired lands with Escambia County.

6—Mitigation project updates and general discussions

David (NFWFMD) presented updates on various, ongoing mitigation projects (all monitoring reports are posted at <http://www.NFWFMDwetlands.com>)—substantial progress in implementing mitigation for permitted impacts continues to be made. Any discussion of potential road projects from a 2nd federal stimulus bill is purely speculative at this point. The Umbrella Plan is currently operating with a two-year grandfather extension under the USACE/EPS compensatory Final Rule. Another extension is necessary by July 9, 2010 for the Umbrella Plan to remain in effect.

THE NEXT IRT MEETING IS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR LATE APRIL, 2010