

UMBRELLA PLAN

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

IRT QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 18-19, 2009

[USACE Office – Jacksonville, FL]

Attendees	11/18/09	11/19/09
Andrew Phillips – USACE (Cocoa Beach/Jacksonville)	❖	❖
Randy Turner – USACE (Jacksonville)	❖	❖ ^a
Mary Mittiga – USFWS (Panama City)	❖	❖
David Rydene – NMFS (St. Petersburg)	❖	❖
Joy Giddens – FDOT (Chipley)	❖	❖
Duncan Cairns – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)	❖	❖
David Clayton – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)	❖	❖ ^a
Robert Lide – NFWFMD (Tallahassee)	❖	❖

^aRandy Turner and David Clayton conducted a jurisdictional wetlands vegetation workshop for USACE staff on November 19th and did not attend the final IRT meeting session.

The IRT quarterly meeting was held Wednesday and Thursday, November 18-19, 2009 at the USACE Jacksonville office (701 San Marcos Blvd., Room 372, Jacksonville, FL). IRT members not in attendance were Cecelia Harper (EPA – Atlanta), Ted Hoehn (FWCC – Tallahassee), Terry Gilbert (URS Consultant for FWCC – Tallahassee), Tracey Ludyjan-Ybarra (FDOT – Chipley).

Items discussed included:

1. IRT process and USACE coordination during Mr. Phillip's deployment to Afghanistan.
2. Mitigation options for SR 281 (Avalon Blvd. from I-10 to north of CSX Railroad).
3. Adjustment of credit ledger at Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB) in light of acquisition and ongoing restoration of Ward Creek West.
4. Use of Dutex Property (UWRMP 5.1.5) as mitigation for US 98 from Navy Blvd. to Blue Angel Pkwy.
5. US 98 Wakulla River Bridge mitigation options.
6. Restoration and monitoring updates:
 - Plum Creek (UWRMP 5.3.11)
 - Yellow River Ranch (UWRMP 5.2.1)
 - Perdido River WMA – Phase II (UWRMP 5.1.4)
 - Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.3.1)
 - Ward Creek West (UWRMP 5.4.2)
 - Tates Hell (UWRMP 5.5.9)

1—IRT process and USACE coordination during Mr. Phillip's deployment to Afghanistan

The IRT will coordinate through Mr. Randy Turner (USACE—Jacksonville) during Mr. Phillip's absence.

2—Mitigation options for SR 281 (Avalon Blvd. from I-10 to north of CSX Railroad)

Per FDOT consultants (Paul Looney, Volkert & Associates, Inc., 10/5/09), this project will impact 8.24 acres of palustrine wetlands and result in a functional loss of 3.179 UMAM units.

Several mitigation options were considered including the Yellow River Ranch (UWRMP 5.2.1), the Yellow River Ranch Addition (UWRMP 5.2.12), the Garcon Peninsula Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.2.2), and the Pensacola Bay Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.2.11).

The IRT consensus is that the Pensacola Bay Mitigation Bank (UWRMP 5.2.11) is most appropriate in offsetting wetland impacts associated with SR 281 (Avalon Blvd. from I-10 to north of CSX Railroad). The Pensacola Bank Mitigation Bank is immediately adjacent to the impact and has available palustrine forested credits.

In a related matter, an older FDOT project (I-10 / Avalon Interchange) that ultimately did not require wetlands mitigation will be removed from the FDOT Inventory of wetland impacts.

3—Removal of proximity factors for several USACE permits mitigated at Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank

A 1.64x proximity factor had been applied to federal debits at the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB) to comply with USACE permits for several FDOT projects in Bay County. The 1.64x proximity factor was applied only to those wetland impacts occurring outside the SHLMB mitigation service area. The USACE permits are:

Permit No. SAJ-1991-60607 IP-GAH (SR 77 from North Bay Bridge to CR 2300)

Permit No. SAJ-2000-1798 IP-GAH (SR 79 from US 98 to West Bay Bridge)

Permit No. SAJ-2001-6577 IP-GAH (SR 77 from CR 2300 to Bay/Washington Co. Line)

At the time of permitting, it was understood among the NFWWMD, USACE, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and other agencies that this proximity factor could be eliminated upon acquisition and restoration of substantial acreage in the Ward Creek area. The NFWWMD has since acquired the Ward Creek West property (719.30± acres, acquired 2/29/08) from the St. Joe Company and initiated extensive restoration activities including shrub reduction on ~130 acres for restoration of hydric pine flatwoods and savanna. Harvesting of planted pine is scheduled for January, 2010. Approximately 30 acres are to be planted in wiregrass, and 10 acres in toothache grass 2/29/08. Prescribed fire will follow. The IRT has conducted a site inspection, and at the 7/16/08 quarterly meeting approved 173.76 WRAP credits for this project.

The IRT consensus is that the acquisition and initiation of restoration activities at Ward Creek West does allow for adjustment of the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank credit ledger. Upon modification of the USACE permits, the 1.64x proximity factor will be removed and the SHLMB federal credit ledger adjusted upwards by 23.27 credits (7.27 hydric pine flatwoods credits, 13.24 mixed hardwood wetlands, 2.76 herbaceous wetlands), with a corresponding 23.27 credits debited from the Ward Creek West credit ledger.

4—Use of Dutex Property (UWRMP 5.1.5) as mitigation for US 98 (Navy Blvd. to Blue Angel Pkwy.)

USACE Permit No. SAJ-1997-03121 IP-CP (widening of US 98 from Navy Blvd. to Blue Angel Pkwy., 12.95-acre impact, issued 1/3/2000) required acquisition of a minimum of 350 acres at Jones Swamp within one year of permit issuance (a 27:1 ratio of mitigation acres to impact acres). Unfortunately, the NFWMD was not able to proceed with large acquisitions at Jones Swamp.

The IRT consensus is that mitigation for widening of US 98 from Navy Boulevard to Blue Angel Parkway may, upon permit modification, be shifted to the Dutex Property (UWRMP 5.1.5). The number of credits to be debited from the Dutex Property credit ledger, submitted for USACE approval, is 19.43.

The number of credits to be debited were calculated as follows. Because no functional assessments of the wetland impacts were conducted, it was necessary to calculate how many credits would need to be debited from the Dutex credit ledger to offset this impact. At the time of permit issuance, the impacts were listed by FDOT as low-quality, and consisted of already highly-impacted roadside wetlands. For the purpose of calculating needed mitigation credits, it was assumed that the impacted acres were of the highest quality, with adjustment factors applied to account for time lag and secondary impacts. Thus, the direct functional loss is 12.95. Applying a 6-10 year time-lag of 1.25 (see FAC 62-345 Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method) to the direct impacts yields an additional loss of 3.24. Secondary impacts are estimated by multiplying the direct impacts by 1.25, which also yields an additional loss of 3.24. Together, this results in 19.43 credits needing to be debited from the Dutex

Two other USACE permits (SAJ-1999-03665 (NW-CP)—I-10 Escambia Weigh Station and SAJ-2001-03186 (NW-ES)—I-10/I-110 Pensacola) requiring land acquisition within Jones Swamp were fulfilled by purchase of the 54.73-acre Schluter property within Jones Swamp.

5—US 98 Wakulla River Bridge mitigation options

Implementation of mitigation at the Ferrell Property (UWRMP 5.7.3) or the St. Marks Mitigation Property (UWRMP 5.7.4) to offset impacts associated with the US 98 Wakulla River Bridge replacement (1.98-acre loss / 2.46-UMAM functional loss per USACE) have, at this time, not proven feasible.

The IRT consensus is that mitigation for wetland impacts associated with replacement of the US 98 Wakulla River Bridge may be implemented at the Shuler Property (UWRMP 5.6.4) with a 2x factor applied for going “out-of-basin.” 4.92 credits will be debited from the Shuler Property credit ledger to offset this impact.

6—Restoration and monitoring updates

- Plum Creek has been acquired. Offsite pine was harvested prior to purchase. Beaver control, under contract with John Dunlap of the USDA, is being implemented. Additional restoration activities including removal of the beaver dam, replacing a culvert, and replanting the beaver pond area with cypress and other species is scheduled to occur in 2010/2011.
- Yellow River Ranch—the dike that severed the Yellow River Ranch pasture from the Yellow River floodplain has been breached and stabilized in eight locations. Fill material from the dike breaches was used to fill in several ditches, which have now been stabilized with vegetation. Herbicides to eradicate exotics and nuisance species have been applied to the pasture with generally good results. Prescribed fire has been implemented. Chinese tallow trees have been treated with the herbicide garlon. Some areas are exhibiting recruitment of native species, whereas other areas will require additional eradication of non-native and nuisance species. Tree and wiregrass plantings are being scheduled.
- Perdido River WMA II—windrows have been removed, brush reduced, herbicides applied, and pine thinned in the hydric pine flatwoods polygons and removed in the hydric savanna polygons.
- Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank—planned management activities continue including a recent prescribed fire.
- Ward Creek West—this site (719.30 acres) was acquired by the NFWFMD 2/29/08 (\$1,936,700 or \$2,692.48 per acre). A timber survey has been completed, a 3rd row cut implemented on portions of the property, and ~130 acres have been Gyro-tracked (i.e., shrub reduction for restoration of hydric pine flatwoods and savanna). Timber harvesting should occur in January. Thirty acres will be planted in wiregrass, and 10 acres in toothache grass. A single-drum chop is recommended for Gyro-tracked areas before next prescribed fire to stimulate the seed bank. The IRT will closely watch the development of the West Bay Parkway (CR 388) and any impacts which may occur to the Ward Creek West mitigation site. Removal of offsite pine and plantings are planned for early 2010.
- Tates Hell—restoration planning continues in the Whiskey George / Sumatra areas.