

## **THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

81 Water Management Drive

Havana, Florida 32333

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### **APPROVAL OF REGIONAL MITIGATION PLAN**

Pursuant to Chapter 373, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Northwest Florida Water Management District (District), has approved the annual Northwest Florida Umbrella, Watershed-based, Regional Mitigation Plan (UWRMP) for Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) impacts identified in the annual FDOT environmental impact inventory submitted pursuant to §373.4137, F.S.

### **BACKGROUND**

§373.4137, F.S., requires the District, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE), the FDOT and other appropriate federal state and local governments, and other interested parties, to develop and approve an annual regional mitigation plan for the mitigation needs of the FDOT. Through consultation, the District's UWRMP was designed and evaluated to meet the mitigation requirements of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, and 33 U. S. C. § 1344.

The updated UWRMP includes newly proposed mitigation to offset impacts associated with nine newly identified roadway projects. Five projects were submitted by FDOT on April 28, 2006, and four were submitted on September 6, 2006. The District proposes use of the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank and acquisition, preservation, enhancement and perpetual management of lands within the St. Andrew Bay area in Bay County to offset wetland impacts associated with improvements to three segments of State Road (SR) 79 within Bay and Washington counties in the St. Andrew Bay watershed. The first southern segment has an estimated 39.46 acres of wetland impact from Steele Field Road to the Washington/Bay County Line. The next segment, from Washington/Bay County line to Environmental Road, has 1.28 acres of wetland impact. Within these two road segments, it is estimated that 15 acres of wetland impacts occur outside of the mitigation bank service area and approximately 25.74 wetland impact acres are within the service area. The more northerly segment has an estimated 2.09 acres of wetland impact entirely within the mitigation bank service area where mitigation is proposed. The fourth FDOT project has an estimated 0.50 acres of wetland impact in Okaloosa County associated with improvements to SR 4 from SR 189 to US 90, and the fifth FDOT project has an estimated 0.61 acres of wetland impact for construction on US 90 from SR 4 to the Yellow River Bridge. Mitigation for both of these projects with minor impacts is proposed within the restoration efforts at Yellow River Ranch, though consideration is also being given to mitigation in the Shoal River wetlands or other proximate mitigation sites. The first of the five projects listed in September 2006 involves an estimated 6 acres of wetland impact in Washington County associated with improvements to a northern segment of SR 79 (from Strickland Road to north of Reedy Creek). Use of the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank is proposed for these impacts within the service area. The next project is for a southern segment of SR 79 in Bay County with an estimated wetland impact of 8.53 acres. The proposed mitigation would involve acquisition, preservation, enhancement and perpetual management of lands within the St. Andrew Bay area in Bay County. The next FDOT project listed is within Walton County and will have a projected wetland impact of 4.29 acres for improvements to US 331 (from US 98 to south of the Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge). Proposed mitigation would be undertaken by expanding hydric pine flatwood restoration efforts in the Lafayette Creek lands owned by the District. Alternatively, mitigation could be undertaken with expanded restoration on the District's Devils Swamp lands. The final FDOT project involves 1.10 acres of wetland impacts associated with the replacement of the US 98 Wakulla River Bridge. The proposed

mitigation that is being considered would be in cooperation with the Apalachicola National Forest or Wakulla Springs State Park. The total wetland impact acres for the mitigation projects above is estimated to be 63.86 and the total estimated cost of mitigation activities, including staff and administrative costs, for these nine projects is \$5,820,388.38.

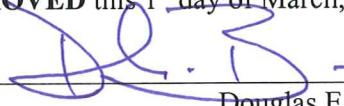
A copy of the UWRMP may be accessed online at <http://nwfwmdwetlands.com> or may be obtained from Ron Bartel ([ron.bartel@nwfwmd.state.fl.us](mailto:ron.bartel@nwfwmd.state.fl.us)), Resource Management Division, Northwest Florida Water Management District, 81 Water Management Drive, Havana, FL 32333-4712.

The District concludes, as of the date of this approval, that the UWRMP complies with the mitigation requirements of Chapter 373, F.S., and 33 U.S.C. §1344.

In accordance with §373.4137 (7), upon approval by the governing board of the water management district or its designee, the mitigation plan shall be deemed to satisfy the mitigation requirements of §373.4137, F.S., for impacts specifically identified in the FDOT environmental impact inventory and any other mitigation requirements imposed by local, regional, and state agencies for these same impacts. The approval of the governing board of the water management district or its designee shall authorize the activities proposed in the mitigation plan, and no other state, regional or local permit or approval shall be necessary.

In accordance with §373.4137 (8), approval of the plan and any amendment does not eliminate the need for FDOT to meet the permitting requirement to reduce or eliminate impacts of the transportation projects, nor does it change any other permitting criteria for those transportation projects. This approval only addresses mitigation requirements for the specified road projects. It does not grant or imply that the specified projects satisfy any other permitting requirements under Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S., or rules adopted there under.

**APPROVED** this 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 2007

  
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Douglas E. Barr, Executive Director  
Northwest Florida Water Management District  
81 Water Management Drive  
Havana, Florida 32333

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF GADSDEN

March 1, 2007      Dorothy R Cotton  
Date

 **Dorothy R. Cotton**  
Commission # DD52852  
Expires March 14, 2010  
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