

NFWFMD/DOT Umbrella Mitigation Plan – Projects Meeting  
Meeting Minutes  
January 23 & 24, 2008

Attendees:

Individual - Employer	01/23/08	01/24/08
Andy Phillips – Corps of Engineers	❖	❖
Cecelia Harper – EPA-Atlanta	❖	❖
Mary Mittiga – FWS	❖	❖
Hildreth Cooper – FWS	❖	
Vivian Negron – FWS	❖	
Joy Giddens – DOT	❖	❖
Tracey Ludyjan-Ybarra – DOT	❖	❖
Duncan Cairns – NFWFMD	❖	❖
Robert Lide – NFWFMD	❖	❖
David Clayton – NFWFMD	❖	❖
David Rydene – NMFS	❖	❖
Terry Gilbert – URS for FWC	❖	❖
Ann Redmond – BRA/ENTRIX	❖	❖

Field Meeting, January 23, 2008

**West Bay Conservation Unit.** The IRT and NFWFMD met at the West Bay Conservation Unit to inspect the site. Five areas were inspected on foot. A logged titi site, a transition from mesic to wet pine plantation (plantation to the powerline), a low spot in the western boundary road, a 3<sup>rd</sup> row thin are in the pine plantation, and the edge of rim-ditched cypress swamp. Discussion centered on planned restoration measures, existing vs. future conditions, extent of hydrologic alteration, characteristics of plantation vs. natural landscape setting, and species composition.

Hydrologic alteration is due to some ditching, roadside ditches, the drainboard-style placement of pine planting beds, evapotranspiration by the planted pines and pervasive shrubs. With the exception of the areas that were too wet to plant, the entire site is planted in pines. Fire used to be used as a periodic management tool, but we saw no sign of recent burns, including in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row thin and post-logging titi area. In addition to removing the thick layer of pine needles, fire will stimulate the seed bank in the “with mitigation” condition. The plantation setting has a dramatically different community composition than the native hydric pine flatwoods and savannahs, which are the primary types to be restored. Obviously, the community structure of native forested wetland communities (gum, cypress, mixed forested) is very different from the plantation, in those cases where pine plantation was overplanted these systems.

**Holmes Creek Bridge.** The group then went to the Holmes Creek bridge site to discuss potential secondary impacts. The existing, metal pile-supported bridge will be replaced by 2 new spans in the existing ROW. After lengthy discussion it was decided to assess secondary impacts within 150 ft. of the replacement spans. Considerable time was spent

discussing noise and light impacts. The new spans will treat stormwater, whereas the existing span does not; although this is now a design requirement. The stormwater must be treated to OFW standards. The east side of the bridge is a public park. The west side of the bridge has a powerline, so the bridge will be built east of the powerline.

Corps of Engineers offices, Panama City Beach, January 24, 2008

**Ward Creek Mitigation Area.**

Discussion about using new UMAM scores vs. WRAP scores developed in the RGP/EMA process. Using the WRAP scores is appropriate in this case because the Ward Creek site is part of the RGP/EMA Conservation Unit. NFWFMD will provide the text, write-up and scores to IRT for final review and approval.

Holmes Creek bridge replacement. This site will be re-assessed using WRAP. Because DOT's consultants were instructed to use UMAM and would need a contract amendment to do new scoring, NFWFMD will go back out to do the WRAP and get the scores to the IRT for consideration.

Future impacts, near term. CR 388 is going to be upgraded then eventually widened. It will be mitigated at Ward Creek.

**Plum Creek Mitigation Area UMAM scoring.**

Polygon B water environment score was discussed at some length. NFWFMD is proposing to score existing condition at 3 because the beavers prevent re-colonization or re-planting of trees due to increased and stable hydroperiod and depth of inundation. After a long discussion it was decided to move this to a 6 because the site is a wetland, but its present condition won't support development of a forested system, which is the historic system in this polygon. To restore a forested community the beavers will be removed and the dam breached to restore a fluctuating hydroperiod to allow the planted cypress and gum trees to establish. Once the trees are tall enough to survive continuous inundation the beaver management may be discontinued. The community structure existing condition score was raised from 3 to 4.

Polygon A water environment score was discussed at length. NFWFMD proposed scoring the without mitigation condition as 7 because of the likely development potential which would have 5-ac. Ranchettes. We believe the ranchettes will likely be managed in such a way as to create significantly increased runoff from the uplands, which carry fertilizers/nutrients and reduce onsite seepage input.

Polygon D was delineated after the September 2007 IRT site visit. The NFWFMD-proposed scores were accepted. It's a 0.88 ac. Polygon.

**Live Oak Peninsula Mitigation.**

It's very difficult to find affordable land for mitigation in south Walton County. DOT has projected 3.21 ac. of impacts for the US 331 bridge impacts. A good site is Section 16 school board land. A solution to expand Devils Swamp RMA was too expensive. Another parcel in Pt. Washington on a county road was at >\$87,000/ac., too expensive. Joy says that DOT needs land in that area, so DOT may be able to get the land. Andy is concerned about the lack of a realistic mitigation package for these impacts. The access

to existing NFWFMD mitigation project on Live Oak Peninsula is via barge, so if more work could be done, it's logistically difficult. Nor is there more mitigation available at Devils Swamp RMA. Using the Point Washington Conservation Unit, owned by The St. Joe Company will be investigated.

**Wakulla County Mitigation Needs.** Impacts to be offset are ~2 ac. of forested and 0.23 ac. of SAV. DOT has not yet requested a mitigation plan for the SAV. Joy's hoping they can monitor the project to quantify the impact because she's wants to be sure the shading-out occurs. Apparently there is none under the existing bridge, although there's some discussion as to why not (shade, scour, etc.)

The NFWFMD has identified land adjacent to an outparcel of Wakulla Springs State Park and is in the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone. The property is an estate sale situation with a willing seller who wants to sell for conservation. The first parcel would be 160 ac., which has about 6-8 ac. Site is in the appraisal process now. The project would be preservation with minor management.

NFWFMD has some other very preliminary ideas, which need more investigation.

#### **Perdido River WMA Mitigation.**

NFWFMD recently bought 5,456 ac. of land from International Paper. Two projects have been identified for restoration, totaling 55 ac. There is a mitigation need for already-permitted impacts from US 98 and other impacts in the area. It's approaching an enforcement situation, so it's critical to get mitigation identified for these impacts. More restoration can be found at the Perdido acquisition site.

For the new US 98 bridge, Andy would like to incorporate a wildlife crossing associated with the pending bridge project. He's hoping that it can be done on the state/WMD or TNC landholdings. Fencing will be necessary. The bridge approaches will be constructed on fill. Terry will look at the FWC comments to see how they viewed this issue. There are some residences in the area to be concerned about. The bridge is a joint FL/AL project, so there may be some chance to get AL funds to contribute to a crossing. The IRT will meet for a site visit in March or April to assess in detail.

NFWFMD has drafted a plan for the restoration, including functional assessment.

#### **Next Meeting.**

The next meeting may be scheduled to coincide with the upcoming Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank meeting to simplify Cecelia's travel from Atlanta. The Perdido River bridge will be included, as well as other projects in the Escambia County area.

The next meeting will also include a more detailed discussion of how to assess secondary impacts.

Minutes drafted by Ann Redmond at the meeting