

**Lower St Johns Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Meeting Summary
Host: Florida Dept of Environmental Protection
Jacksonville, FL
November 30, 2005**

Attendees

Alex Ainza, CCUA
Sarah Anderson, UF
Russell Brodie, FWD
Tiffany Busby, Wildwood Consulting
Fred Calder, FDEP
Dean Campbell, SJRWMD
Pamela Chancy, NE FL AP
Cindy Cospers, DEP Watershed
Monitoring
Rea-Silvia Costin, COJ/PW/ENG
Barry Cotter, COJ-EQD
Dean Dobberfuhr, SJRWMD
Gretchen Ehlinger, FWC
Mike Hartman, CPAC
John Higman, SJRWMD

Mike Hollingsworth, USACE
Michele Lockwood, SJRWMD
Glenn Lowe, SJRWMD
mindy matthews, St Johns River
Alliance
Jim Maher, FDEP
Kraig McLane, SJRWMD
Alan Obaigbena, FDOT
Bill Osburn, SRJWMD
Ying Ouyang, SJRWMD
Terry Pride, FDEP
Laura Savage, FDEP
Lucy Sonnenberg, JU
Jeremy Tyler, FDEP
Shayne Wood, CDM

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 10:03 am. Jim Maher, Co-Chair, welcomed everyone and gave a brief history and a description of the purpose of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Everyone introduced themselves.

No comments were made on the August meeting summary.

Presentation: “Springs of the Lower St Johns (North of the Ocklawaha Inflow)”

Jim Maher introduced Bill Osburn who is with St Johns River Water Management District. Mr. Osburn outline the springs in the Water Management District’s region. In recent years they have doubled the number of identified springs. There are now about 95 known spring sites.

Mr. Osburn noted that there is a new publication coming out on the springs that will be available on the District’s website by Christmas and it will also be available on CD. He showed a map of the Lower Basin springs. The total discharge of the springs is not very large. Most springs are below 5 ft³/second. Two springs feed sinkhole lakes and therefore do not contribute to the St Johns River flow. Indigo Spring’s flow has not yet been measured.

Total mean flow of all the Lower Basin springs is 1.13 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is less than 0.28 percent of the total river flow.

In terms of water quality, springs with about 0.20mg/L are considered to be anthropogenically impacted. All the springs in the Lower Basin are all under this level.

After Mr. Osburn's presentation, there were questions and answers. Some of the discussion is detailed below.

Ms. Cospier asked if any bacteriological work was done.

Mr. Osburn responded there had not.

Someone asked if there was any work on the ones that are wells.

Mr. Osburn responded that FDEP has refused those.

John Hendrickson asked about the other springs that feed in upstream of the Lower Basin that contribute flow to the St Johns River. Has there been any work done on that?

Mr. Osburn replied that, yes, there has been work on those springs.

Mr. Ouyang asked what the maximum NO_x concentration in all the springs is.

Mr. Osburn responded that it is about 5 mg/L.

Mr. Maher asked about chloride levels in Green Cove Spring. Are there any saltwater springs?

Mr. Osburn replied that there are no saltwater springs in the Lower Basin. Outside the basin—Salt Springs for example—are known to have 1,000 ppt chloride levels.

Mr. Maher asked what is the cubic feet per second (cfs) contribution of Salt Springs to Lake George.

Mr. Osburn responded it is about 60 cfs. Also, about 22 springs were submerged by the Rodman Reservoir. All the raw data will also be available on the District's web page.

Presentation: "Protection of Wetlands and the Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method"

Jim Maher introduced Glenn Lowe with the St Johns River Water Management District. Mr. Maher began the presentation with an overview of wetlands included the definition of a wetland, the types of wetlands, wetland functions, wetland indicators, and threats to wetland species.

Mr. Hartman noted that he had seen some information on the projection of sea level rise over the next 50 years. In the past, we have lost control over coastal wetlands—are we going to get a second chance at this? There was discussion on this topic.

Ms. Sonnenberg asked how permitting is done between the feds, the Water Management District and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Mr. Maher explained that the State wetlands regulatory authorization is split between FDEP and the Water Management District. There is a federal authority as well that is administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. FDEP permits single family residences, utilities, and marinas. The Water Management District permits commercial sites, subdivisions, and FDOT projects.

There are *de minimus* exemptions for permits. With a general permit, a single family residence can fill up to 4,000 square feet of wetland if it is isolated. Federal permits are wrapped into State permits, in some cases.

Ms. Sonnenberg asked if there are any buffers required.

Mr. Maher responded that FDEP recommends a setback of 25 feet with a minimum of 15 feet. This holds the assumption that there are no secondary and cumulative impacts for stormwater. But those setbacks rarely apply to single family.

There was discussion about secondary impacts and setbacks.

Glenn Lowe with the St Johns River Water Management District outlined the Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM). Wetland delineation has gone way "up the hill" from historic

definitions. There were lots of debate and discussions as the wetland determinations affect the projects and mitigation requirements.

Mitigation options include: Creating wetlands; Wetland enhancement (restoring the hydroperiod to existing wetlands); and Wetland mitigation banks.

Prior to UMAM, mitigation was discussed in rule. The Legislature was criticized that mitigation requirements were too subjective. Thus, the Legislature set out to create a mitigation methodology that had more structure and form. There is much more process now and it has made Mr. Lowe's job both harder and easier. It is more work to determine mitigation requirements but easier to explain to applicants. It is easier to train staff and involves less personal opinion.

Mr. Lowe outlined the assessment method and overview guidance. Functional losses are computed by multiplying the impact "delta" times the impacted area. Mr. Lowe provided some examples of how the math and the process work.

Mr. Hartman asked about the Freedom Commerce center and having mitigation outside the basin with the wetlands.

Mr. Lowe responded that yes, some of the mitigation for that project is outside the wetlands basin. The UMAM process does allow that.

Mr. Maher outlined the benefits of the UMAM and provided examples of how the UMAM helped achieve better mitigation that would have been previously possible.

Mr. Hartman asked about the location factor and how does it help the disadvantaged people in the urban core.

Mr. Maher responded that we try to keep mitigation on the site or at least in the same basin. That is the goal, but it doesn't always happen.

Mr. Higman asked if the price for a wetland was being set by the mitigation banks.

Mr. Maher responded that, yes, it puts a price on wetland destruction if a mitigation bank is being used. But the purchase is not one to one. You have to buy more to accommodate a risk factor. Different banks have different service areas and different wetland types.

Mr. Tyler asked if there is a UMAM on every wetland impact—is there a number below the permit threshold.

Mr. Maher replied that they look at the size of the wetland impact and adjust for that. There is a *de minimus* amount that is the judgment call of the permitter what qualifies. Also, general permits are available under the rule.

Film Event at the Jacksonville Zoo & Alliance Update

mindy matthews gave a report on a key event coming up at the Jacksonville Zoo. The Alliance is working on funding for TAC selected projects. Alliance fundraisers have included the following:

1. Film airing on PBS nationally in May;
2. Increases in funding from local sources;
 - a. All counties are now funding the Alliance.
 - b. More corporate funding.
 - c. National funding applications are in.
3. Seeking a national champion and to be designated as "America's First River"

A nominating committee has been formed for the 2006 Board of Directors.

Film events are being planned at three zoos. One will be held at the Jacksonville Zoo in February. They need to sell 300 tickets; tickets cost \$40. You also have the option of becoming a "Friend of the River." Ms. Matthews passed out save the date cards, asked for volunteers to sell tickets, and showed posters and canvases for sale. Ms. Matthews also described the ArtyGator project and showed shirts for sale.

She noted that she needs three things from the TAC: 1) Help publicizing the zoo event; 2) Help selling tickets; and 3) Volunteering to help with the event. The next planning meeting will be at the zoo on December 15th.

The Alliance has received good reviews on the film. It was in "Florida Today" and will run on government access channels.

Ms. Matthews noted that the Lower Basin TAC project is the Hogan's Creek project. She has spoken with Sen. King and he is going to do everything he can. Sen. Nelson's office is aware of the project. She is trying to improve media awareness and get the coverage the project needs.

Technical Updates

Lower St Johns TMDL

Jim Maher reported that there have been dramatic developments in the process. The TMDL has been rescinded based upon a lawsuit. EPA will provide their own TMDL by January 23, 2006. On December 6th, EPA will be here to discuss the draft TMDL and allocation. It is unclear how the new TMDL affects the BMAP and allocation we have been working on. Tiffany Busby noted that it is nutrient TMDL using dissolved oxygen as a proxy for protection of the biota. But the 4.8 mg/L that the TMDL maintained is below the State dissolved oxygen standard of 5.0 mg/L. John Hendrickson added that the process to establish a site specific alternative criterion (SSAC) is difficult and may be protested. Mr. Hendrickson is looking at the model results.

Value Analysis and Optimization Project

Kraig McLane reported that the project was endorsed by the TMDL Executive Committee. It is co-funded by the St Johns River Water Management District and FDEP via some funding from JEA. The project is looking at all the possible projects to achieve the load reductions required by the TMDL. The three options being evaluated are the following: 1). Load reductions to meet the TMDL (approximate cost \$120 million); 2). Meet and exceed the TMDL to allow for growth (approximate cost \$200 million); and 3). Achieve zero discharge through reuse (approximate cost \$400 to \$600 million).

The next step in the project is to develop the optimization model to see what the best mix of projects is for cost-effectiveness.

Legislative Initiative

Kraig McLane noted that they added a zero discharge project into the initiative and talked to some key players about fund-raising. There is an effort to raise \$15 million this year for projects including funding for tributary remediation and tributary assessment team (TAT) support. The Governing Board will review the Lower Basin initiative next week and once it is finalized a "pretty" document and CD will be produced that describes all the projects and funding requests.

Fisheries Monitoring Update

Russ Brodie reported that they are continuing their fisheries monitoring program. He reminded the Committee that they have recently expanded their study area to include sites upstream to Palatka. They have started a study on how fish react to low dissolved oxygen events. They are

finishing that project this week and may give a report on the results at the next meeting. The annual report is now done; contact Russ if you would like a copy.

Mr. Higman asked if Mr. Brodie's team had observed any fish kills.

Mr. Brodie responded that there was one that they sampled but they don't have the results yet. The St Pete lab did find microcystis in the gut.

Oceans Council

Tiffany Busby reported that an Oceans Council had been recently formed based on State Legislation passed in the last session. The Council's objective is to set State priorities for ocean research. Ms. Busby provided information from the council's website and referred members to the site for additional information. Cindy Cosper also brought information about the members and their meetings from the website.

Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council

Tiffany Busby noted that a workshop had been held in Clearwater November 1-3, 2005 to outline the structure and priorities for a Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council. At the end of the workshop, a resolution was passed to create a Council. The group asked FDEP Secretary Castille to appoint the first members of the Leadership Committee. Appointments should be made in the next few months and then the Council will meet in Spring 2006.

Tributary Assessment Team (TAT) Update

Dana Morton reported that the fifth fecal coliform sampling event is complete and one more series of sampling is planned. The results have been interesting. Miramar Creek has very high counts. The septic tank group did a pipe survey in that area and found numerous direct connections. Next, they will conduct a dye study. FDEP has been working in the Westside/Cedar Bend. They have narrowed down an area for a source or sources but they have not yet identified the precise source. The TAT is also conducting a pilot study using anti-microbial fabric to test the effectiveness of reducing fecals in stormwater.

Lake Management Society

Dean Campbell reported that there is now an active group/association in Northeast Florida that is starting a Northeast Florida Chapter of the Lake Management Society. It will include water resources management folks who are interested in both lakes and riverine lakes. Anyone interested in participating in the organizational meetings is welcome. The next meeting is on December 13th in Palatka. This Chapter will focus on St Johns River lakes and hopefully increase research and publications. They are opening new membership categories and Mr. Campbell will send out a link to the web page with more information.

Florida Stormwater Association Meeting

Terry Pride noted that the Florida Stormwater Association meeting is December 7-9 in Orlando. On December 7th there is a special session devoted to TMDLs and Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).

MOSH Event

It was noted that the next MOSH event is February 12, 2006.

River Report Card

Lucy Sonnenberg reported that the Riverkeeper has started an initiative to develop a River report card and a public education effort. Mike Hollingsworth added that they will take existing data and make it into an annual report.

Wrap Up, Announcements, and Next Meeting Date

Jim Maher thanked everyone for coming. The next meeting will be on February 8th, 2006 hosted by Dan Littles, Clay County. The meeting will be held in Green Cove Springs.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:01 pm.

Meeting summary prepared by Tiffany Busby. Please send comments to busbyt1@bellsouth.net or call 904-797-2721.