

# ETDM Annual Program Review Meeting Notes Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission/



## **Meeting Date and Location**

January 18, 2005  
Burns Building –

## **Meeting Attendees**

Buddy Cunill - FDOT  
Carl McMurray - FDOT  
Terry Gilbert – FFWCC  
George Hadley – FHWA  
Cathy Kendall - FHWA  
Damaris Santiago - FHWA  
Terri Alexander – URS  
Gary Phillips – URS  
Jordan Smith – URS

## **EST Discussion**

### **Discussion of FFWCC Review (Use of Environmental Screening Tool)**

- An overview of FFWCC project reviews using EST was presented to FFWCC. FFWCC reviews consisted of Wildlife and Habitat issues. FFWCC reviewed a total of 31 projects (23 in Planning Screen and 8 in Programming Screen). Out of the 31 projects reviewed, 17 were reviewed within review period (16 Planning Screen & 1 Programming Screen) and 14 projects were not reviewed within review period (7 Planning Screen & 7 Programming Screen). A total of 5 projects were reviewed within 45 days (5 Planning Screen) and 26 were not reviewed within 45 days (18 Planning Screen & 8 Programming Screen). Extensions were granted for 9 projects in the Programming Screen.
- FFWCC indicated that as of the second week of January 2005, the Districts have not communicated with them about any comments submitted during the Planning and Programming Screens. FFWCC stated that they have not been notified about the completion of any Summary Degree of Effect or Planning or Programming Summary Reports from the Districts.
- Some of the ETDM Projects are relatively minor and FFWCC would not have normally commented on these projects. Need standardized letter to handle minor projects more efficiently.

## **ETDM Process**

### **How is interagency coordination between Districts and other ETAT agencies?**

- FFWCC indicated that interagency coordination between Districts and other ETAT agencies has been very good.

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- Currently projects are submitted to FFWCC in groups or clusters from the same FDOT District, and for the same 45-day review period – review timeframes are sometimes too short for multiple projects with the same deadline. Due to the quantity of projects submitted, FFWCC is forced to prioritize the importance of projects for in-depth review of potential impacts. FFWCC recommended that projects be staggered for improved efficiency.
- District One is developing a communication portal for agencies to discuss and communicate issues among themselves.

### **Describe how FFWCC is organized in Florida?**

- FFWCC is organized with a Tallahassee Headquarters Office, and two Field Offices located in Punta Gorda and Vero Beach. Punta Gorda reviews projects in portions of Districts 1 and 7, and Vero Beach reviews projects in Districts 4, 6, and portions of Districts 1 and 5. This same geographic area of responsibility for the three offices is the same regardless of environmental streamlining under ETDM.
- FFWCC ETAT coordinator operates on a statewide basis and coordinates comments from other ETAT representatives within FFWCC. The statewide coordinator accomplishes all ETDM projects in FDOT Districts 2, 3, and portions of Districts 5 and 7 which collectively cover 40 of the state's 67 counties (60%).
- All projects are handled in-house by FFWCC staff.
- FFWCC has recently undergone an internal reorganization. In the near future, there will be a reassigning of responsibilities of staff within FFWCC for Environmental Streamlining. In addition, Terry Gilbert, the ETDM statewide coordinator is retiring as of April 29, 2005.

### **Describe your involvement with MPO's Planning Process?**

- FFWCC has not previously been involved with MPOs because they were not part of their mandated coordination process that they have with other state and federal agencies.

### **Discuss the types of review FFWCC conducts with FDOT that are outside of the EST. e.g. project field reviews, permitting reviews.**

- FFWCC states that for the statewide ETDM Coordinator, approximately 60 to 70 percent of staff time devoted to FDOT transportation issues was spent on projects outside of EST while 30 to 40 percent of time is spent reviewing projects within EST. Devoted staff time can be highly variable depending on the complexity and size of the project, potential for impact, and the need for continuing coordination. Actual staff time committed by FFWCC field offices has been considerably less, and is estimated at less than approximately 20 percent for both EST projects and projects outside of the EST process.
- FFWCC uses the EST to review other projects such as DRI's and other developments.



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## ***Contract Management Discussion***

### **Renew Funding Agreement**

- FFWCC Funding Agreement ends March 2005. No additional funding needs were specified at meeting. Terry Gilbert to discuss with FFWCC management regarding future funding needs. FFWCC always handles “everything” in house in terms of FDOT highway project reviews.
- FFWCC may need a position in the future to coordinate and review ETDM projects, this may be addressed in the future. To be determined by FFWCC management.

## ***General Discussion***

### **What were the major barriers to coordination and involvement with FDOT projects?**

- FFWCC district offices in Punta Gorda and Vero Beach have not been using all of the EST capabilities, such as the GIS data layers and other information, due to lack of high speed Internet access. Punta Gorda and Vero Beach respond to ETDM projects and provide comments in a memo structured on the EST format which is sent to the FFWCC ETAT representative for review, and agency approval. The comments are entered by cut and paste into the online EST form and submitted. Funding for Internet access for FFWCC was originally set-aside in the FFWCC Funding Agreement. Both field offices of FFWCC have just recently installed high-speed internet connection.

### **Explain any program successes you have experienced?**

The EST is a great tool for all ETAT agencies reviewing projects at the same time, opportunity to see other agency comments, and to work in conjunction with other agencies which results in better quality comments.

### **What recommendations would you make to improve the environmental streamlining of the process?**

- FFWCC recommends developing streamlined compliance statements, or standardized agency requirements for resource protection measures statewide for appropriate use in providing comments in the EST process. FFWCC has evaluated and prioritized the importance of habitat statewide, and has identified critical habitats in their Closing the Gaps publication. They recommend increased coordination with land management and resource agencies to identify priority land tracts on maps to be used by MPO and FDOT in Planning and PD&E for mitigation purposes under the provisions of Senate Bill 1986. This will avoid impacts, save money and conserve imperiled species.



**Explain any program successes you have experienced?**

- The EST is a great tool for efficiency in information management and communication – organized groups reviewing projects, better quality comments, WMDs, USACOE, and USFWS are participating early in the review process, and SB 1986 is a good tool for mitigation and buying lands for conservation.
- EST has resulted in FFWCC commenting on more projects than before the ETDM process.
- The ETDM process is working better because it serves as a consistent statewide review process used by all project reviewers across all FDOT Districts. It encourages increased cooperation and dialog between the Districts and state and federal agencies. FDOT district feedback on the comments received is critical to the ETDM process since it shows the impact of agency input on project and process.
- **What can be done better in ETDM performance by all parties?**
- Our agency should maintain or increase our technical assistance role with FDOT in working on road design, mitigation, and impact avoidance issues.
- **What are your training needs for ETDM?**
- FFWCC has no training needs at this time. If Punta Gorda and Vero Beach require training they will ask FDOT.

**What are the benefits of the EST/ETDM process?**

- All ETAT agencies review projects during same review period.
- FFWCC, and other agencies can review other ETAT agency comments.
- It improves the process to be able to work with and coordinate with other ETAT agencies.
- There are better quality comments associated with the EST since all agencies have access to, and can use the best available GIS information.
- Field review is always an option, and technical assistance is available from the reviewing agencies to FDOT on request.

**Annual Report**

- FFWCC has completed Draft 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report and will coordinate with FDOT and FHWA on finalizing.



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***Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations***

- Currently, projects are submitted to FFWCC in clusters and FFWCC is sometimes forced to prioritize projects based on level of resource impacts. FFWCC recommends ETDM project releases be staggered within individual FDOT Districts for improved efficiency and management of staff hours. Coordinate with Pete McGilvray.
- Better communication between the District and FFWCC is needed concerning the availability of the summary reports so the agency can see how their comments were addressed. Verify/improve the Summary Report notification process.
- Creating generic standardized statements within EST for FFWCC to utilize and modify for specific projects. This will expedite time savings and increase FWC's level of participation. Coordinate with Pete McGilvray.
- Develop Regional Mitigation Plan at a landscape or regional level to address both large and small projects. Evaluate and prioritize resource value of both upland and wetland tracts within FDOT District suitable for a 20-year mitigation plan. Then, create an upland/wetland bank (similar to Platt Branch in Highlands County) which is endorsed by all agencies – could be state/federal partnership. Coordinate with Josh Boan.
- FFWCC will continue to provide Technical Assistance to the FDOT Districts and recommends this process be enhanced by including even more projects.
- FFWCC will complete a Draft Annual Report consistent with the FDOT guidelines. FDOT and FHWA will review the Draft report and provide comments for consideration by FFWCC, before finalizing Annual Report.