

ETDM Annual Report

Northwest Florida Water Management District

January 2005

Introduction

Participation in the streamlined Efficient Transportation Decision-Making (ETDM) process has enhanced the ability of District staff to fully identify the scope of major regional transportation projects, to identify potential resource implications in a watershed context, and to efficiently identify mitigation opportunities. The process has also improved the ability of District staff to coordinate with FDOT and other resource and regulatory agencies, and it appears to have significantly enhanced the ability of project planning to effectively address interrelated resource issues in a cooperative and comprehensive manner.

District responsibilities with respect to major transportation projects include initial project review and longer-term, in-depth analysis and regional mitigation planning. It is expected that continued implementation of the ETDM process in a way that allows for early involvement and interagency review will improve the ability of District staff to implement these responsibilities.

The following responses are provided based on the MOU Performance Measures format provided by FDOT.

Section I – Before ETDM Implementation

1.1 Describe how the agency is organized in Florida.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District was created pursuant to the Florida Water Resources Act of 1972, as amended in 1976. The District is governed by a nine-member Governing Board. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. An Executive Director oversees a staff of approximately 90 that includes hydrologists, geologists, biologists, engineers, planners, foresters, land managers, and administrative personnel.

The District has an array of responsibilities as defined in Chapter 373, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and other statutes. In general, the District works with state and local governments, as well as with citizens and federal agencies, to protect water resources, assure the availability of water supplies for reasonable and beneficial uses, promote flood protection and floodplain management, address water quality issues, and protect and restore natural systems.

Prior to ETDM there was no specific organizational structure to address water resource impacts associated with FDOT mobility projects. Related review work was assigned “as needed” based on limited knowledge of potential impacts and project priorities.

1.2 Describe how project information enters the organization.

Information concerning proposed and planned FDOT transportation projects was provided to the District most frequently through five means:

- A) Inclusion on the FDOT project inventory pursuant to Section 373.4137, F.S.
- B) Circulation through the Florida State Clearinghouse process.
- C) Description in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permit public notice.
- D) Review of a local government proposed comprehensive plan amendment, development of regional impact (DRI), or other local government documentation.
- E) Receipt of an Advance Notification directly from FDOT or supporting organization (e.g., Opportunity Florida).
- F) Other Newspaper and mailed meeting notices to the District

1.3 How many staff were involved and how were they allocated?

No staff were specifically assigned or budgeted for to review impacts concerning FDOT mobility impacts. Staff assignments and involvement was ad-hoc on a permit by permit basis. Prior to the ETDM process there was also indirect staff involvement through the FDOT regional mitigation planning process per Section 373.4137, F.S. This was a cost reimbursement program directed towards development of wetland mitigation projects based on FDOT estimated wetland impacts. Staff were also occasionally involved (on an ad-hoc high priority only basis) through the District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program in the review and comment on State Clearinghouse notices, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers public notices, and local government comprehensive plans and DRIs.

1.4 How were projects assigned?

Review and comments were assigned to Resource Management Division staff on the basis of staff availability and on an ad-hoc basis as requested by the District's Senior Management.

1.5 How frequently did staff consult or coordinate with FDOT on projects?

Under the 373.4137 process, District staff communicated with FDOT staff once the wetland impacts were listed on the environmental inventory. For Clearinghouse, Corps public notice, and other review activities, District staff generally did not consult directly with FDOT staff, but responded with comments to the agency coordinating the review (e.g., FDEP, Corps of Engineers, and FDCA).

1.6 How many FDOT projects were reviewed and coordinated with FDOT each year?

Through Section 373.4137 process, District staff have reviewed approximately 31 projects as submitted as part of FDOT's project inventory since 1997.

1.7 Describe your typical involvement with FDOT projects and at what phase that involvement usually occurred: planning, PD&E, permitting, etc....

District staff closely reviewed projects provided on the FDOT inventory through the Chapter 373.4137 process and developed and implemented mitigation plans accordingly. However, this involvement was typically after the project planning stages and during the actual PD&E permitting stages when impacts

had already been established. Staff time was limited to involvement on proposed projects as described under questions 1.3 and 1.5 above.

1.8 How many staff hours per month were typically devoted to working on FDOT projects? Planning Phase? PD&E phase? Permitting?

Approximately 550 staff hours were typically spent per month working on FDOT projects to plan for wetlands mitigation in the permitting phase and to implement wetlands mitigation under 373.4137. Generally less than 20 hours monthly were devoted to reviewing project impacts under all District programs. Project impacts were occasionally reviewed in the planning phase but were mostly commonly reviewed in the permitting phase.

1.9 What were the major barriers to coordination and involvement with FDOT projects: Budget? Staff? Other Resources? Time? Communication? Meetings? Field Reviews?

There was no source of revenue to rely upon and budget staff resources to review FDOT projects. Staff priorities are generally directed towards water resources projects that are funded through the District's planning and budget process. There was no formal process or intergovernmental structure in place to allow for effective and required lines of communication between the District and the FDOT District 3 office. Notifications of FDOT projects required only a voluntary response at NFWFMD expense with no assurance of FDOT's accountability to the comments made.

1.10 Describe your involvement with the MPO's planning process.

On a time-available basis, District staff would occasionally and informally review MPO plans as provided to the District.

1.11 When did your agency typically provide review on DOT transportation projects?

As described under Question 1.2, District staff provided review of project proposals at or near the permitting phase through Section 373.4137, F.S. process, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permit public notices, and the Florida State Clearinghouse process. District staff actions were based on these programs and processes.

1.12 How often have you published joint notices with FDOT?

The District has not published joint notices with the FDOT.

Section II – After ETDM Implementation

2.1 Describe how your agency is organized in Florida?

Overall basic agency organization has not been affected by the ETDM process. However, within the District's Resource Management Division, a multidisciplinary project team from three bureaus and two sections including staff with extensive backgrounds in the area of water resources planning, environmental engineering, hydrology, and wetlands biology has been formed to support ETDM project

efforts. The Division generally performs all of its project work in this way in order to make the most effective and efficient use of available staff and meet priority project deadlines. The District has also retained several continuing services contractors should additional expertise or services be needed for ETDM implementation. To facilitate this, it is expected that the funding agreement may have to be revised to provide for District outsourcing.

2.2 How does project information enter your organization?

In addition to the ways listed in the response to question 1.2, project information is now provided to the District in a systematic manner through the planning and programming screens through the ETDM process. The primary notification and communication tool is email. Project information is uploaded through the internet to the EST. Over the past year, however, some projects planned by FDOT District Three have not been coordinated through the ETDM process. It is the expectation of District staff, however, that the ETDM process will be used more consistently in the future.

2.3 How many staff are involved and how are they allocated?

Since the initiation of the ETDM process, the involvement of District staff in the review and coordination of transportation projects has expanded significantly. A breakdown of staff involvement is as follows:

- Total staff involved – 16
- Division Director – 1; ETAT, review and administrative oversight of program.
- Environmental Scientists – 3; involved in wetland mitigation and evaluation of pre-existing conditions.
- Planners – 2; involved in review of EST projects, preparing response to requests received through the EST, planning future mitigation needs and strategies, field review, participation in meetings, and coordination with FDOT.
- GIS assistance – 3; prepare maps for use by staff for field review, maintain data base of projects under review.
- Administration – 2; prepare reports and invoices, participate in meetings, assign tasks
- Administrative Assistant – 1; support.
- Hydrologist – 1; water resources review.
- Engineers – 1; engineering oversight.
- Student Interns – 2; review of EST and preliminary assessments.

2.4 Describe how Section 1309 funds have been used to streamline process?

Funding provided for environmental streamlining through the ETDM process has been used through participation in the streamlined process primarily through the review of projects uploaded into the EST. In addition to EST work, District staff also conduct more in-depth office and field analyses to better understand potential impacts relative to permitting and wetland mitigation needs of the FDOT. Information and recommendations developed are provided to FDOT pursuant to the Operating and Funding agreements. Additionally, ETDM funding has been important in the development of an In-Lieu Fee Regional Mitigation Plan, which will be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This plan is being designed to address wetland impacts identified through the early involvement process and to coordinate wetland mitigation planning on a regional, watershed basis to meet federal permitting requirements in a more effective and timely manner.

2.5 How are projects assigned?

Projects are assigned by the ETAT for review coordination and analysis to the Resource Management Division’s planning section. Water resources planners, environmental scientists, hydrologists, GIS analysts, and engineers are involved depending on the type and potential resource interaction of proposed projects.

Staff from other District Divisions (Regulatory and Land Management) are also consulted on an infrequent basis depending on the type of project and potential environmental impacts.

2.6 How frequently does staff consult or coordinate with FDOT on projects?

This averages about ten times monthly through the EST and occasional interagency meetings on the ETDM process and specific project proposals.

2.7 How many FDOT projects have been reviewed or coordinated with FDOT over the past year? How does this differ from prior to business practice?

We have had involvement with 46 FDOT projects this year. This number includes 16 projects reviewed through the EST that would not have otherwise been reviewed.

Non-EST projects where wetlands mitigation efforts are underway are as follows:

ID	Project	County	Mitigation Site
1	US 98 (CR 30A-US 331)	Walton	Live Oak Point Devils Swamp
2	US 98 (Mack Bayou)	Walton	Devils Swamp
3	US 98 (Blue Angel Pkwy.)	Escambia	Jones Swamp
4	I 10 Weigh Station (Escambia Co.)	Escambia	Jones Swamp
5	SR 300 (St. George Is.)	Franklin	Apalachicola Bay
6	US 98 (Peach Cr.-Bay Co.)	Walton	Devils Swamp Choct. District Lands
7	US 98 (US 331-Peach Cr.)	Walton	Devils Swamp Choct. District Lands
8	I 10 / I 110 (Pensacola)	Escambia	Jones Swamp
9	SR 77 (N. Bay-CR 2300)	Bay	Sand Hill Lakes
10	SR 79 (US 98-W.Bay Br.)	Bay	Sand Hill Lakes
11	SR 77 (Mill Cr.-SR 20)	Bay	Sand Hill Lakes
12	SR 87 (CR 399-Eglin)	Santa Rosa	Yellow River
13	I 10 (@Avalon Int.)	Santa Rosa	Garcon Peninsula
14	SR 77 (CR 2300-Mill Cr.)	Bay	Sand Hill Lakes

15	US 331 (Freeport Bypass)	Walton	Lower Choctawhatchee River and Bay
16	US 90 (@CSX Bridge)	Santa Rosa	Garcon Peninsula
17	US 90 Weigh Sta. (@AL Line)	Escambia	Perdido Pitcher Plant Prairie
18	US 98 (@Thomas Dr.)	Bay	Robinson Bayou
19	US 90 (Escambia Bridge)	Escambia & Santa Rosa	Escambia River
20	US 98 (@Josie Rd.)	Santa Rosa	Garcon Peninsula
21	Quincy Bypass (US 90-SR 12)	Gadsden	
22 23 24	Three Bridges Wakulla Co. (US 319 & Rbts Rd)	Wakulla	Tates Hell / Womack Drainage
25	I 10 (@ Little River)	Gadsden	Tates Hell / Womack Drainage
26	SR 65 (US98-Lib.Co.Line)	Franklin	Tates Hell / Doyle Creek
27	SR 79 (ICWW Bridge/West Bay)	Bay	
28	SR 263 (Capital Cir. NW from US 90 to I-10)	Leon	
29	I-110 (Airport/Brent Int.)	Escambia	

The 16 projects reviewed through the EST are as follows:

ID	County	Proj #	Project	Screen	Activity
1	Escambia	2835	Brent Lane (SR 296) at Rawson	Planning	Widening
2	Escambia	2859	9th Avenue	Planning	Widening
3	Escambia	2860	Brent Lane (SR 296) at Davis Hwy	Planning	Widening
4	Escambia	2830	Fairfield Drive (SR 727)	Planning	Widening
5	Escambia	2831	Brent Lane (SR 296) at US 29	Planning	Widening
6	Bay	2853	Baldwin Road	Planning	Widening
7	Okaloosa	2891	Crestview Bypass A	Planning	New
8	Santa Rosa	2861	SR 87 Extension	Planning	New
9	Leon	3412	Capital CIR SW	Planning	Widening
10	Leon	3413	Capital CIR NW	Planning	Widening
11	Leon	3414	Woodville HWY S	Planning	Widening
12	Leon	3415	Woodville HWY N	Planning	Widening
13	Bay	2854	SR 22 (Wewa Highway)	Planning	Widening
14	Bay	2856	23 Rd Street (SR 368)	Planning	Widening
15	Escambia	2862	Pensacola Bay Bridge	Planning	New
16	Santa Rosa	4671	Escambia Bay Bridge (East of Scenic Hwy to West of Avalon Blvd)	Program	Replacement/widening

One other review and comment was performed for proposed project at SR-30E (Stump Hole), Gulf County.

2.8 Describe your typical involvement with FDOT projects and at what phase that involvement occurs: Planning, PD&E, Permitting, etc...

Typical involvement includes many elements. First, the District participates in the streamlined ETDM process as an ETAT member and through the EST. Beyond the EST process, District staff estimate the quantity and quality of wetlands to be potentially impacted by roadway projects. Following this, District staff provide input to FDOT on ways to possibly avoid impacts to water resources and plan for how and where appropriate wetland mitigation would be successfully implemented. In the permitting/mitigation phase, appropriate mitigation sites are further identified through the separate 373.4317 process, and purchase is negotiated and/or enhancement or restoration activities are planned. Subsequently, permitting for mitigation sites is carried out, and mitigation implemented. Long-term monitoring and/or maintenance plans may also be established and executed.

2.9 How many staff hours per month are typically devoted working on FDOT projects? Planning Phase? PD&E phase? Permitting?

It is estimated that 550 hours per month are spent on wetlands mitigation efforts and 160 hours per month are spent on EST efforts.

2.10 Describe your involvement with MPO's planning process?

District involvement with MPOs has not changed since implementation of ETDM, other than indirectly through the EST.

2.11 Describe instances of where early collaborative decision-making with FDOT has occurred to eliminate duplication or resolve issues?

In the past, there were no early opportunities for collaborative decision-making. District staff merely responded to project impacts after they were identified in the permitting stages and as a function of the 373.4137 process. Some of the new projects being entered into the EST at the Planning Screen phase have enhanced the District's staff ability to begin planning for wetland impacts in a more timely manner as well as communicate and agree with District 3 that wetland impact issues would be occurring.

2.12 When did your agency become aware of and receive public input on a transportation project? Planning? Programming? Project development

At the staff level this is generally accomplished through the EST Planning Screen. District staff have also reviewed one Programming Screen project and continue to participate in the other processes listed in the response to question 1.2. Generally the District receives public input on transportation projects only when the regional wetland mitigation plan is placed on a Governing Board agenda for public comment.

2.13 How often have you published joint notices with FDOT?

This has not occurred to date.

- 2.14 What are the major barriers to coordination and involvement with FDOT projects: Issues to consider Budget? Staff? Other Resources? Time? Communication? Meetings? Field Reviews? Environmental Screening Tool?

The primary barrier experienced over the past year has been inconsistency in the degree to which the EST has been used by FDOT District Three. A number of projects have been programmed through the pre-existing PD&E process. Additionally, there have been major transportation projects (primarily those proposed by Opportunity Florida) that have not received effective interagency reviews prior to decision-making, either through the ETDM or other process. Given that these projects are for major state roads and incur major near-term and long-term state and other public expenses, it was recommended that they be fully addressed through the streamlined ETDM process and the 373.4137 process. Failure to do so has adversely affected the ability of the District to effectively identify potential water resource impacts, recommend avoidance or minimization strategies, or plan for regional mitigation in an efficient manner. Currently there has also been little coordination with the MPOs, which is where many of the projects originate. However, it is anticipated that as the ETDM process matures this type of coordination will be practiced and better early involvement and coordination between District 3, MPOs, and the District will be able to take place. Also needed is closer coordination with the Federal and State permitting and resource agencies. This type of coordination was generally very limited in the past year primarily because several of these other agencies had not fully executed ETDM agreements.

- 2.15 What are some of the finding or results you have discovered related to your agencies operations, FDOT operations or the environmental process in general since participation in the MOU and agreements?

Participation in the process has enhanced the ability of the District to coordinate with FDOT and other resource and regulatory agencies, and it does appear to significantly enhance our ability to more properly plan for and address resource regulatory issues in an integrated and more timely manner.

- 2.16 What recommendations would you make to improve the environmental streamlining of the process?

Currently proposed amendments to F.S. 373.4137 will allow for wetland permitting and mitigation processes to be more integrated with the ETDM process. Continued development of the Districts in-lieu fee wetland mitigation plan will allow for the federal wetland permitting phases to be more streamlined and function to further enhance the benefits and efficiencies of the ETDM process.

A prescreening approach should be encouraged. As soon as projects are “born” there should be some discussion of these before the ETDM initiated “45-day” clock begins.

Rather than just meet a 45 day deadline and a “comments received receipt” from the FDOT ETAT, more feedback may be needed for interagency discussions including opportunities to compare and discuss partner resource/permitting agency comments. This dialogue may resolve possible conflicts or reduce misunderstandings among agencies.

It may also be appropriate to revise the funding agreement to facilitate District use of outside contractors if and as necessary.

Section III – Agency Specific Performance Measures (PM) Questions

- 3.1 If your agency has established Performance Measures, describe how participation in ETDM process and streamlining has contributed to meeting these measures?

The District reports on budget performance measures (BPMs) in its annual Standard Format Tentative Budget Submission to the Executive Office of the Governor. These BPMs address costs per units for water supply planning, minimum flows and levels development, water resource monitoring, land acquisition, water source development, land restoration, land management, facilities maintenance, invasive plant control, and resource regulation. None of these performance measures, however, are affected by ETDM.

The District also reports on a set of core performance measures for water supply, flood protection, water quality, and natural systems. These are reported on annually in the District Water Management Plan Annual Report. A number of these performance measures, particularly as they relate to water quality, natural systems, and flood protection, could be affected indirectly through the ETDM process. These effects cannot be measured over the short-term, however. The ETDM process would affect achievement of resource protection performance measures cumulatively through long-term protection of water related natural resources.

- 3.2 Describe your agency Performance Measures

See response to question 3.1.

Conclusion

Participation in the streamlined Efficient Transportation Decision-Making (ETDM) process has very successfully enhanced the ability of Northwest Florida Water Management District staff to work cooperatively with the Florida Department of Transportation in the review of proposed projects and potential impacts, as well as in planning for regional mitigation. The process also appears to have significantly enhanced the ability of project planning to effectively address interrelated resource issues in a comprehensive manner. Since initiation of the program, involvement of District staff in the review and coordination of transportation projects has expanded significantly, with additional staff being assigned to project review, coordination, and planning. This involvement also tends to be much earlier in the process than had been experienced prior to ETDM.

To further improve program effectiveness and interagency coordination, it is recommended that all state transportation system projects be consistently incorporated into the EST. Additionally, it is recommended that the post-ETAT review coordination and resolution process be clarified. It is important that timely communication and coordination occur reflecting consideration of ETAT comments and degree of effect assessments and to provide for resolution as necessary. As discussed under item 2.16, timely feedback together with dialog between review agencies could also help improve efficiency and clarity.