

PERMIT STREAMLINING QUALITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES (QES) FOR WETLAND IMPACT MINIMIZATION

1. OBJECTIVES:

In adherence to the below policies and guidelines the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will follow the Quality Enhancement Strategies (QES) for FDOT capacity improvement projects. These QES's would be aimed at providing reasonable assurances to the regulatory agencies that FDOT projects have been designed to minimize wetland impacts as much as is practicable while conforming to acceptable design criteria without jeopardizing public safety.

Presidential Executive Order 11990 entitled "Protection of Wetlands", dated May 2, 1977 establishes a National Policy to "avoid to the extent possible the long-term and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative." In implementing this Presidential Executive Order, the U.S. Department of Transportation set forth its policy on wetlands in USDOT Order 5660.1A "Preservation of the Nation's Wetlands", dated August 24, 1978, which is "to assure the protection, preservation and enhancement of the Nation's wetlands to the fullest extent practicable during the planning, construction and operation of transportation facilities and projects. New construction in wetlands shall be avoided unless there is no practicable alternative to the construction and the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such construction. In making a finding of no practicable alternative, economic, environmental and other factors may be taken into account. Some additional cost alone will not necessarily render alternatives or minimization measures impracticable since additional cost would normally be recognized as necessary and justified to meet national wetland policy objectives."

In carrying out US DOT Order 5660.1 A, the Federal Highway Administration has implemented its wetland policy through the Technical Advisory T 6640.8A, dated October 30, 1987, which provides guidance on the preparation of environmental documents including the assessment of project impacts on wetlands. The Technical Advisory prescribes a wetland evaluation methodology which, in part, calls for:

- An evaluation of all project alternatives including avoidance alternatives,
- A formal wetlands finding stating that no practical alternatives to the wetland taking exist, if such is the case, and, among others,
- An evaluation of all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands.

2. IMPLEMENTATION:

A. Perform early identification and quantification of wetland locations and preliminary impacts during Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) screening, Project Development and Environment (PD&E) and Design.

B. Determine possible wetland avoidance strategies and verify validity of alignment alternatives from the Preliminary Engineering Report.

C. Perform alternative design analysis.

1. Reduce roadway and pond footprint in order to avoid and/or minimize wetland impacts. Considerations may include:

Roadway:

- A. Median widths
- B. Fill slopes
- C. Shoulder widths
- D. Guardrail
- E. Bridge vs. embankment

Stormwater Ponds:

- A. Siting of pond sites
- B. Consider alternative treatment methods

- 2. Quantify wetland impacts and propose compensatory mitigation in accordance with state and federal regulations.
- 3. Evaluate safety aspects.
- 4. Provide cost of alternatives.

D. Document interagency coordination and consideration of Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) comments during project development.

3. BENEFITS:

Implementation of these strategies will allow early identification and reduction of environmental impacts thereby streamlining the regulatory and production process.