

Gulf Coast Parkway

Wetlands Action Plan

The Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study for the Gulf Coast Parkway will be developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; and to comply with all federal and state laws and requirements. Given that the alternatives developed for the proposed project will be on new alignment or in combination with existing roadways, the level of documentation will be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Coordination with state, federal and local agencies, including those with jurisdiction over the referenced requirements, will be conducted throughout the EIS process.

In order to further define the project study, a scoping meeting will be conducted with the regulatory agencies to ensure that the scope of work adequately addresses all of the issues raised by the agencies. Agency coordination will continue throughout the study with regular conference calls to report on the project's progress and discuss agency concerns. The project team will meet with the Environmental Technical Assistance Team (ETAT) at key points in the study's development. In addition, the ETAT will have the opportunity to formally comment during the review period for the Draft EIS, Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD).

Several members of the ETAT, through their review of the project in the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Programming Screen, had comments regarding a number of environmental issues. While Action Plans have been prepared to address several issues, the focus of this plan are the procedures used to address those comments concerning potential impacts of the proposed action to Wetlands. Concern was expressed for the amount of wetlands potentially impacted by the proposed action and by indirect and cumulative actions potentially occurring as a result of the project, project-specific water quality and water quantity alterations, reduced aquatic habitat quality, and impacts to listed species and their habitats, including essential fish habitat..

Given that the information in the ETDM programming screen was on the corridor level, the issues raised by ETAT members will be addressed during the development of alignments within the corridors selected for further study. Estimates of impacts will be based on the right-of-way width for the alternative(s) developed rather than the corridor widths. The general study process that will be utilized to address those issues raised by the agencies is as follows:

- The study team will coordinate with the agencies prior to conducting field work. This includes providing the survey methodology for agency review.
- The study team will conduct field investigations to identify the nature and extent of the natural resources within the alternative alignments in accordance with Part 2 of the FDOT *PD&E Manual*. This will include identification of the type and functions of wetlands, their contiguity, vegetative structural diversity, wildlife

habitat value, and integrity. Wetlands will be identified using the most recent available wetland delineation guidance from the state and federal agencies. Chapter 62-340, Florida Administrative Code will be used to identify wetlands to satisfy state required delineation methods. For the USACOE, the recent Rapanos decision along with SWANCC and other guidance that is developed from the USACOE will be utilized to ensure that wetlands meeting the federal definitions will be identified. Wetlands will be classified using the Florida Land Use Cover Classification System (FLUCCS) and the USFWS classification system as described in "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States".

- The functions and values of representative wetlands of each principal type will be evaluated utilizing the Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM).
- Based upon the results of the wetland impact evaluation and coordination with the agencies, adjustments will be made and/or design changes implemented to the alternative alignments, to minimize or avoid impacts where feasible to do so.
- Where wetland avoidance is not viable, practicable measures to minimize harm will be identified through coordination with the resource agencies (USCOE, FDEP, USFWS, FFWCC, and NFWFMD).
- A Wetland Evaluation Report (WER) will be prepared to document the types and functions of existing wetlands; the potential impacts to wetland functions, including indirect and cumulative impacts, as a result of the proposed project; and the consultation and coordination conducted with the resource agencies. The Final WER will include conceptual mitigation measures to offset the anticipated impacts.
- Coordination with all appropriate ETAT member agencies will be maintained throughout the process, as indicated above.

Through project scoping and direct consultation with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other agencies, the level of detail and scope of the Wetland analysis will be determined. Specific items to be discussed in the scoping meeting include the types and functions of existing wetlands; the potential impacts to wetland functions, including indirect and cumulative impacts. Once the assumptions and expectations for the analysis of Wetland impacts have been established, the analysis will be initiated.

Once the assumptions and expectations for the analysis of impacts to Wetlands have been established, the analysis will be initiated. The procedure for analyzing the effects on Wetlands will be conducted in the following manner and summarized in the WER and Draft EIS.

- Define the boundaries for each issue/resource.
- Inventory notable features.
- Identify project impact-causing activities.
- Evaluate the analytical results.
- Assess the consequences and develop strategies for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation.