



March 2011
Newsletter

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Water Quality: What's Ahead for Florida

In November 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized water quality standards for the State of Florida that define numeric limits on the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen pollution, also known as nutrients, allowed in Florida's lakes and flowing waters. The rule is scheduled to take effect on March 6, 2012. The proposed standards are the result of a January 2009 EPA determination made under the Clean Water Act that numeric standards were needed in Florida and an August 2009 consent decree between EPA and the Florida Wildlife Federation. The consent decree required EPA to adopt specific or "numeric" nutrient pollution standards by November 2010.

The EPA has established nutrient criteria (Total Phosphorus and Total Nitrogen limits) for receiving streams in Florida by dividing the state into five watershed-based regions based on biological monitoring and nutrient concentrations in high-quality streams in these regions. Numeric nutrient criteria for lakes are separated into three categories based on clarity and alkalinity of the receiving water and anticipated biological responses to



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Special Points of Interest:

- EPA finalizes protective standards for Florida (pg. 1)
- Conservation Banking can be a profitable land-use alternative (pg. 1)
- Several endangered species may no longer be threatened (pg. 3)
- Desktop GIS analysis helps to save time and money (pg. 3)
- Rescue Golf Initiative (pg. 4)

Conservation Banking: An Alternative Land-Use

In situations where traditional development (residential, commercial, etc.) is either undesirable or impossible, or if the land owner's goal is to protect the property and have it remain in a natural state, a land owner may look to environmental alternatives as a means for achieving long-term goals with potential financial gain. Conservation banking can be a viable mechanism to achieve preservation, ownership, or land-use goals while serving as a way to earn income through the protection of endangered species habitats. These activities also help to buffer against urban sprawl by creating connected parcels of preserved lands that provide aesthetic and recreational value for us as well as important wildlife corridors. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) promotes conservation banks as a tool for mitigating impacts to species while saving developers time and money. With a conservation bank, credits are established for the specific habitat or species that occurs on a site. In exchange for permanently protecting the banked lands, the bank sells habitat credits to developers and others who need to compensate for the environmental impacts of a project. The bank uses a portion of the

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Water Quality Update

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nutrient inputs. Nutrient criteria for springs are more narrowly focused because specific forms of nitrogen pollution drive many of the adverse effects experienced in Florida's springs. EPA has provided some flexibility in the process by allowing Site-Specific Alternative Criteria for lakes and flowing waters when sound science demonstrates that water quality and designated in-stream uses can be maintained (within a given watershed, area or water body) with nutrient levels differing from those in the more general standard.

Now that the final rule has been published, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) will be responsible for implementing the numeric standards through the state regulatory process. Once effective (March 2012), a phased implementation is envisioned which will include; a) updated assessments of water bodies; b) revisions to impaired waters listings, c) new and updated Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) calculation/implementation; and d) incorporation of the criteria into new or renewed NPDES permits (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) for point source dischargers. Nonpoint sources (e.g. agriculture, septic systems, etc.) will be addressed through State requirements, TMDLs, and basin management plans. The EPA estimates the costs to address these requirements to be between \$135-206 million per year.

While the numeric water quality standards addressed above apply only to lakes and flowing waters, EPA anticipates promulgating standards for estuarine coastal, and southern inland flowing waters in November of this year, with final publication of those standards slated for August 2012. For more information, please visit http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/florida_index.cfm. WEG has assisted numerous clients in water quality improvement, restoration and nutrient reduction projects. If you would like more information, please contact WEG.

Conservation Banking: An Alternative Land-Use

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funds to protect or enhance the environmental resources it holds and provide for long term management. Conservation banks are typically used when it makes more sense for a developer to purchase conservation credits than to protect part of the area being developed (i.e., when on-site conservation would result in small, isolated sites). Properly managed, a conservation bank, which must be approved by a state or federal wildlife agency (such as USFWS), can be a win-win for the landowner, developer, environment, and public.

Florida's first two conservation banks received final approval from USFWS in the spring of 2007, opening the state up to a new industry of environmental trading. WEG, having been a pioneer in this industry in Virginia for over twelve years, brought their expertise to Florida with the state's third conservation bank site. The property contains over 125 acres of potentially high quality Sand Skink habitat and may also be approved for Florida Scrub Jay credits as well as a recipient site for relocated Gopher Tortoises. WEG has also proposed a wetland mitigation bank immediately adjacent to the conservation bank which will improve the quality of and protect over 140 acres of currently degraded wetlands. The initial prospectus received favorable reviews and WEG has been working

with Wildlands Conservation, a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve natural systems, to develop the complete application package for submittal to the USFWS. Once approved, the two banks will provide over 125 habitat credits and 30 wetland credits to offset unavoidable impacts to species habitat or wetland systems.

According to the USFWS, there is a great and immediate need for conservation banks in Florida to offset impacts to habitat for the Florida Panther, Florida Scrub Jay and Sand Skink. The USFWS is doing their part to promote conservation banking in Florida through outreach to landowners and consultants at appropriate conferences, along with enforcement and education at county environmental meetings and USFWS field offices.

If you feel that your property may be suitable for conservation banking, please contact WEG to see how we can help.



Florida's Fish and Wildlife: A Healthier Future ?

In September 2010, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) adopted new classification rules for conserving and managing the state's imperiled species. FWC began reviewing each species (61 state-listed species) on that list using the new listing criteria. This review will determine whether species will remain on the *new* State Threatened list or be reclassified. The Biological Status Reviews (BSRs) were completed in December 2010 and distributed for peer review and 45-day comment period which ended in February. The final BSRs will be considered by the FWC Commission for approval in June.



There was encouraging news in the preliminary findings of the BSR indicating that conservation measures have had “measurable, beneficial impacts on wildlife in Florida.” Preliminary findings showed success for some of Florida's most vulnerable species (*see right*). Before the Commission removes any species from the list, a management plan will have to be written and approved with the goal of ensuring the species never reaches a high risk of extinction again.

For more information, please visit www.myfwc.com.

May no longer be at risk of extinction

- Florida Black Bear
- Chipmunk
- Florida Mouse
- Homosassa Shrew
- Sherman's Fox Squirrel
- Limpkin
- Brown Pelican
- Snowy Egret
- White Ibis

Desktop Feasibility Analysis Can Save You Time & Money

As a recognized leader in the fields of mitigation and conservation banking, WEG has developed an efficient, cost-effective way to identify environmental mitigation opportunities at very little cost and expense to our clients.

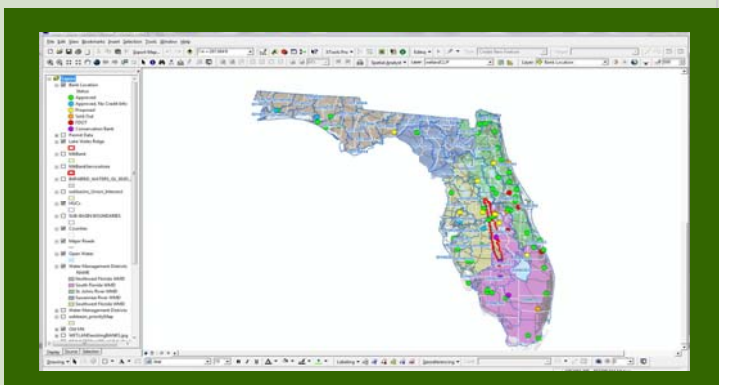
With a team of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) experts on staff, WEG is able to perform watershed, statewide, or regional analyses to identify opportunities to create, enhance, restore, or preserve streams, wetlands, and/or habitat for mitigation banking purposes. Projected growth trends are matched against existing banks and available credits to identify target areas. This process is known as gap analysis.

Our environmental experts have extensive experience in data collection and integration, database management, survey research, spatial analysis, and cartography. By incorporating spatial, demographic, and sector-specific data, into a geodatabase, they can then add spatial elements to all data. These spatial elements assist our engineers and clients when visualizing and analyzing data in new ways and aid in the analysis of future supply and demand for environmental mitigation credits. All of the collected information is displayed in a geographic format which can be easily searched and updated using GIS technology. The data can be displayed using both

maps and spreadsheets. The databases are updated periodically to reflect the current status of mitigation banks in the states. Once a particular area has been identified, localized site searches can be performed to identify individual properties suitable to meet the identified need.

These services have been performed for a variety of clientele, including municipalities, utilities, transportation departments, land owners, and investors and is currently being performed, by WEG, to determine the future supply and demand for Florida Conservation Banks.

If you would like more information on how our GIS services could help you, please contact WEG.



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Does Your Golf Course Have Untapped Property Resources?

The golf industry has been one of the hardest hit during this recent economic crisis and the Golf Course Business Consultants (GCBC) group, of which WEG is a member, is interested in helping to rescue this important industry. At the PGA Executive Conference, held in Orlando, FL in January, the GCBC group presented their collective ideas on “**How to Save Golf**”. The diverse ten member GCBC team offered insightful ideas on how to become profitable in today’s market. Ron Boyd’s, President and co-founder of WEG, presentation focused on making golf courses more profitable through untapped property resources, such as:

- Evaluating Irrigation Practices
- Establishing a Conservation Easement
- Entitlement of an Environmental Bank
- Changes in Maintenance
- Assessing Existing Drainage

One of the first steps in discovering any untapped resources is an environmental review which can help determine environmental opportunities. If you would like more information about environmental opportunities for your golf course,

please contact one of WEG’s Environmental Planners at any of our offices.

For the complete GCBC white paper on “How to Save Golf”, in downloadable pdf format, please visit the WEG website, at www.wegnet.com, and click on the Publications tab.

Continuing to focus on supporting the golf industry, WEG’s Ron Boyd, along with Bill Love of W.R. Love Golf Course and Patrick Karnick with Wadsworth Golf Construction, presented “Working Efficiently and Economically with the Permitting Process” at the Orlando Golf Industry Show’s Education Conference in early February. The attendees of these sessions were educated on efficiently navigating the regulatory process.

