

Environmental Program Performance Management



US Fish and Wildlife Service/ FDOT Central Environmental Management Office Annual ETDM Program Review Meeting Notes

Meeting Date and Location	Meeting Attendees	
March 16, 2005 URS Corporation	Buddy Cunill Carl McMurray	FDOT
	Mary Mattiga Janet Mizzi John Wrublik CalLee Davenport	USFWS
	Gary Phillips Terri Alexander Jordan Smith	URS

Introduction and Background

The USFWS Annual ETDM Program Meeting was held on March 16, 2005 at URS Corporation in Tallahassee, Florida. The meeting was attended by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and URS Corporation. A major component of the ETDM process is collecting, evaluating and monitoring ETDM Performance Measures. Two methods being used to document and report on the effectiveness of the ETDM Process is an Annual ETDM Program Review Meeting and the Annual Report. The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate and compare the before and after effects of implementation of the ETDM Process and how it has effected change within USFWS and their specific operations and daily business activities with FDOT.

EST Discussion

Discussion of USFWS Review (Use of Environmental Screening Tool)

- An overview of USFWS project reviews using the EST was presented to USFWS. USFWS typically reviewed project issues related to Wetlands, Wildlife and Habitat, Secondary and Cumulative Effects and Special Designations.
- USFWS reviewed a total of 119 projects and provided 278 comments relating to the above mentioned issues. Sixty-Seven percent of the projects reviewed by USFWS were reviewed within the 45 day review period and extensions were granted for 18 projects. USFWS has provided substantive and good quality comments. Of the 278 comments given by USFWS, 59 percent of the projects were assigned a degree of effect of Minimal to None, 25 percent Moderate, 14 percent Substantial and 3 percent of the projects had a potential dispute.

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Discussion of Interagency Coordination

- USFWS indicated that interagency coordination between Districts and other ETAT agencies has been good. However, USFWS has not participated in any dispute resolution for the eight projects which they assigned a Potential Dispute Degree of Effect.

Discussion of how comments have been addressed in Project Development

- USFWS is unaware of commitments and responses that have been provided in the EST for issues which USFWS has previously commented.

Discussion of Summary Reports

- USFWS has indicated that they have not reviewed project summary reports to summary responses provided by FDOT Districts on projects which USFWS has previously commented.

ETDM Process

How is USFWS operating differently under ETDM Process than it was prior to the implementation of ETDM? (e.g. number of staff, projects reviewed, typical involvement)

- Before the implementation of the ETDM process, the USFWS received information on transportation projects from documents provided by FDOT and their consultants. These documents consisted of Advance Notifications, Requests for Informal and Formal Section 7 Consultations under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the USFWS was notified of FDOT projects through notices and letters provided by the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Federal Highway Administration. Before ETDM, transportation projects were reviewed by Service biologists responsible for assessing the impacts of development activities on fish and wildlife resources. There was not one Service Biologist assigned exclusively to review transportation projects. The Service rated projects based on the species potentially to be impacted by the project, the location of project, and whether wetlands would be impacted by the project. Before ETDM the service's review of Transportation projects has been hindered by workload and staffing shortages.
- The USFWS has been participating in the ETDM process since early 2004. The overall organization of the Service's field offices in Florida has not changed. However, USFWS hired three full-time biologists for each of the three field offices to work exclusively on FDOT transportation projects. In addition, funding provided

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through the ETDM program has adequately funded the three full-time biologists. This full-time staff allows the Service to provide comments on all transportation projects submitted by FDOT. USFWS is now notified about FDOT Transportation projects through e-mail by the FDOT ETDM District Coordination and the Service still receives information regarding FDOT transportation projects proposed prior to the initiation of the ETDM process through Advance Notifications and formal correspondence.

In your opinion, how has your agency involvement influenced project quality and project delivery?

- Due to the implementation of the ETDM process, USFWS feels they have played a positive and significant role in influencing project quality and project delivery. Since the implementation of ETDM, USFWS has increased the number of transportation projects reviewed, as well as the amount of time spent on the review of each project. The USFWS Annual Report provides narratives of projects where early coordination by the Service has helped to resolve fish and wildlife issues.
- USFWS has been more responsive with districts which have resulted in a good working relationship.

Discuss the types of reviews USFWS conducts with FDOT that are outside of the EST. e.g. project field reviews, permitting reviews.

- USFWS work tasks that are not directly related to the EST include attending multi-agency collaborative meetings and workshops such as SR 40 in Marion, Lake and Volusia Counties and Escambia Bay Bridge Replacement in Escambia County. USFWS also conducts numerous field inspections, reviews FDOT and/or consultant proposals for transportation projects and coordinates mitigation efforts and potential banking opportunities, as appropriate.

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Contract Management Discussion

Discussion of Funding Agreement

- The USFWS Funding Agreement was scheduled to end on April 18, 2005; however, the Agreement was extended to June 30, 2005. FDOT, FHWA and USFWS are currently working on the re-negotiation of the Funding Agreement. The new Funding Agreement will be for three years to match up with the existing Agency Operating Agreement and Master Agreement. A draft agreement will be provided to all parties.

Discussion of Billing and Invoice Forms

- The USFWS inquired about obtaining separate budgets for the three field offices.
- USFWS discussed travel for training being needed even if not directly related to ETDM because it would help make the ETDM reviewers more efficient at their jobs. A footnote will be added to the new funding agreement.

Discussion of Performance Management Forms

- The new Performance Management Forms was explained to USFWS who agreed to participate during the trial period for comments and suggestions. The procedure will be similar, however, every quarter USFWS will now submit a quarterly report electronically via the EST. The Quarterly reports will consist of the same information as the paper forms i.e. administration, coordination and project review. In addition, USFWS will also submit electronically a form for each project reviewed during PD&E, design, ROW or construction.

FDOT Funded Positions Reference Manual.

- USFWS was provided with three copies of the FDOT Funded Position Reference Manual. The reference manual contains instructions for proper invoicing and fund usage which are currently provided on the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) website.

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General Discussion

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

- USFWS has not encountered any significant problem. However, there have been instances where minor problems were encountered due to lack of communication between the USFWS, the FDOT, FDOT consultants, and other agencies. In addition, the Service had not been able to fully fund the salary and benefits of the transportation biologists, which is currently being amended in the new funding agreement.

Discuss how things have changed in your process and relationship with FDOT Districts?

- The USFWS relationship with DOT is good and has been pro-active. Since the implementation of ETDM all FDOT transportation projects that are received by the Service are assigned to the appropriate transportation biologist for review. ETDM has permitted the Service to provide comments on all transportation projects. USFWS has become more proactive in their review of transportation projects. There have been some cases where USFWS will discuss issues with FDOT on potential projects before they enter the ETDM process.

What would be your self-assessment of USFWS performance over past year?

- The general consensus from USFWS is that their performance over the past year has been good. It is nice to provide comments on transportation projects during the early stages of project development, and throughout the project.

Explain any program successes you have experienced.

- Early coordination has proven to be a success for USFWS and has helped to resolve fish and wildlife issues. The USFWS Annual Report provides a narrative of some projects where early coordination has been successful.

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

- USFWS recommends more involvement, prior to EST involvement and becoming more proactive and better coordination with districts prior to EST involvement.

What Performance Measures does your agency track/report?

- The USFWS has performance measures to track their workload in the review and consultation of projects that could potentially affect fish and wildlife resources. The performance measures for USFWS include a number of the technical assistance requests received, the total number of technical assistance completed, and the acreage of habitat protected or restored in the past fiscal years based on a variety of issues.

What can be done better in ETDM performance by all parties?

- Better interagency coordination with projects that have a potential dispute.
- Better coordination with District in terms of comments provided by District on comments issued by Service.

What are your training needs for ETDM?

- USFWS mentioned that travel be allowed even if not directly related to ETDM because it would help make the ETDM reviewers more efficient at their jobs.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

- Better notification by Districts to notify ETAT agencies of comments provided.
- Better interagency coordination. There needs to be conversations between agencies with projects that have inconsistent degrees of effect.
- USFWS recommends FDOT fund modeling efforts to forecast potential growth effects from roadways.
- USFWS recommends ETDM process address indirect effect (i.e. induced development) and cumulative effects from major roadway widening and expansions, and new roadway alignments.
- Better involvement in the MPO planning process.

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- The GIS in EST has been very useful, however, there may be outdated layers.
- Recommend training in assigning degree of effect. Each reviewer and agency has different opinions of what constitutes a particular degree of effect.
- USFWS to assist DOT with documenting compliance and narrowing down technical studies.
- The Response time needs to be improved. Some projects are more complex than others.