



2011 Annual Quality Assurance Report

Division of State Lands

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Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

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Executive Summary

The DEP Division of State Lands (DSL) is Florida's lead agency for environmental land management and stewardship, serving as staff to the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Governor and Cabinet). Therefore, the Division's role and responsibilities go far beyond just acquiring lands for protection. It provides oversight for the management of activities on more than 11 million acres of public lands including lakes, rivers and islands. DSL administers the Florida Forever Program, Florida's blueprint for conserving our natural resources and renewing our commitment to conserve our natural and cultural heritage. The Division of State Lands also assists landowners who want to sell land to the state, buy land from the state or gain access to public lands. As such, The Division of State Lands believes in sound and useful Quality Assurance/Quality Control management practices to effectively complete the various tasks and goals associated with carrying out its mission.

The Division of State Lands is organized into six separate program areas: the Director's Office (DO), the Office of Environmental Services (OES), the Bureau of Public Land Administration (BPLA), the Bureau of Land Acquisition (BLA), the Bureau of Appraisal (BA) and the Bureau of Surveying and Mapping (BSM). Each program area (bureau) is then divided further into project areas or sub-programs. All six program areas within DSL provide different functions for the Division.

The 2011 calendar year QA/QC activities in DSL were again numerous. Quality assurance and quality control continued to be monitored by those individuals involved in each in-house process, as well as by supervisors, bureau chiefs and, at times, hired contractors along with DSL's associated contract managers for 2011. The quality assurance officer (QAO) for the division was not involved in the many processes that were executed throughout the division on a daily basis in 2011, but rather, continued to act as a policy leader for the division as a whole.

DSL program staff performed necessary tasks in every instance to ensure that all work performed and all products generated were completed with full adherence to the applicable DEP rules and policies.

DSL's senior management continued to ensure that this quality system was fully operational within the Division's programs, and that the designated Quality Assurance Officer provided general oversight. The managers also continued to evaluate the numerous processes within the programs to ensure they met the program's needs, and periodically evaluated the effectiveness of staff's data quality activities, including reviewing audit results. They also evaluated corrective action policies and procedures to be implemented when data did not meet program objectives.

DSL continued to conduct data review on a regular basis within each applicable working group to determine the usability of data for determination of compliance with rules, etc. in the past year. Additionally, DSL continued to carry out numerous record-keeping procedures such as calculation checks, data archiving, checks of database entries, document control and maintenance, and record generation, retention and storage procedures to ensure appropriate documentation. This ensured that the DEP contracts that are administered throughout the division were properly managed to assure appropriate data quality as well. Corrective actions, when necessary, were practiced routinely in an effort to improve both working areas effectiveness and the public's ability to utilize DEP resources. Such actions were in part initiated as a result of user commentary, complaints, or other reports received from data users and the public requesting revisions, etc.

DSL continued completion of administrative QA/QC in 2011. Data was generated and used for budget reconciliation, allocations, reports and correspondence for each bureau's operating expenses. Resolution assistance was given to staff with timesheet problems, and any other People First System functions. Performance Measures Data Collection (PMDc) assistance, property and supply inventory and travel and Purchase Card (P-Card) reconciliation of expenses continued to be a part of each bureau's QA/QC responsibilities.

In addition to the normal everyday QA/QC functions performed by division personnel, DSL's QA/QC activities in the 2011 calendar year included multiple trainings, audits, issues and corrective actions. Several Florida Communities Trust staff were able to achieve completion of two trainings: a Tree Identification training and an Archeological Resource Management training. The auditing program area within the Bureau of Public Land Administration also accomplished two trainings: the first related to mining activities to improve auditing of Board of Trustee commercial leases, and the second involved sales tax information to improve audits of submerged land lease fee reports and assist the Department of Revenue (DOR) with certain tax collections. The division was also subject to several audits: Environmental Site Assessment, Acquisition/Appraisal and a prior audit follow-up to the most recent Leases, Easements and Other Uses of State-Owned Lands audit. In 2011, issues were identified regarding errors in archival documents that had been previously scanned and entered into Oculus, and, multiple corrective actions were implemented in response to the issues noted above.

Report of Quality Assurance Activities and Issues for the 2011 Calendar Year

1. Quality Assurance Training Activities

In the past year, several of the Bureau of Land Acquisition, Florida Communities Trust staff participated in two training courses to assist in stewardship site visits:

- The Archaeological Resource Management (ARM) training introduced state land managers and those involved in the decision-making process to the nature of archaeological resources, Florida archaeology and the role of the Division of Historical Resources in the management of state-owned archaeological resources.
- The 2011 Tree ID Lab through the University of Florida/IFAS – Leon County Extension training provided additional knowledge of trees, shrubs and vegetative communities. This knowledge is beneficial in assessing the vegetative communities on the project site as well as identifying trees and invasive exotics which need to be removed.

Also achieved in 2011 were two trainings to ensure that the Bureau of Public Land Administration can better operate oversight of necessary specialized audits:

- The Bureau of Public Land Administration's Audit program area participated in a training session held with both the Division of Water Resource Management and Environmental Assessment and Restoration program areas within the Department, to share information on mining activities and terminology to better audit the Board of Trustees' commercial leases.
- The Bureau of Public Land Administration's Audit program area also participated in a series of discussions with DOR to share tax information to better audit submerged land lease fee reports submitted by leaseholders annually to fulfill the lease requirements and to assist DOR with tax collections associated with the sales and rentals of slips.

2. Quality Assurance Audit Activities

- In the past year, DSL underwent an Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) audit performed by the Office of Inspector General that identified both noteworthy accomplishments and areas to consider for improvement so that Division management may strengthen policy practices.

- The Department of Environmental Protection, Land Acquisitions Operational Audit, was conducted in October 2011, and published by The Office of the Auditor General. The audit focused on operations within the Bureau of Land Acquisition and the Bureau of Appraisal. The Bureau of Appraisal will be undertaking several actions in response to specific areas to consider, as put forth through the audit.

The resolution to a specific concern in the audit report had already been implemented. The issue was that in several cases the “conflict of interest” affidavit had not been received from the appraisers prior to hiring the appraiser, the affidavit was received after the hiring. A new database and tracking software program (APIS) had been implemented for the Bureau of Appraisal which contains a field indicating whether or not the affidavit has been received. This will ensure that the affidavit is received prior to hiring the appraiser.

Amending the multi-party agreements with non-profits organizations, which assist in the land acquisition process, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements is another recommendation contained in the audit report. The Department is not pursuing amending the multi-party agreements at this time as the Department does not foresee the need to use non-profit organizations in the acquisition process. However, if the need arises, the multi-party agreement will be updated prior to using a non-profit to assist in the acquisition process.

- The Division of State Lands completed a prior audit follow-up in October, 2011, to the most recent Leases, Easements and Other Uses of State-Owned Lands audit undergone by the division.

3. Quality Assurance Issues

The division discovered errors in archival documents that had been previously scanned and entered into Oculus.

4. Quality Assurance Corrective Action Activities

- The ESA audit in 2011 brought about changes in how managers weigh risk when determining which environmental investigatory product the Division should utilize during each land transaction process. Division management will implement a new process that will enable contract managers to order a complimentary product in regards to each proposed acquisition, donation or land exchange. The Division will then choose from a plethora of due diligence environmental assessment products after completing this new process.

In response to the *Land Acquisition Operational Audit*, the Bureau of Appraisal will undertake the following actions:

1. Revise a checklist appraisers are to use and include in their appraisal reports submitted to the Department which helps ensure that the appraisal reports comply with the Supplemental Appraisal Standards for Board of Trustees Land, particularly in regard to the “highest and best use” analysis in appraisal reports.
 2. Implement a procedure for written pre-approval of extraordinary assumptions and hypothetical conditions which an appraiser intends to use in an appraisal.
 3. Write a procedures manual to ensure compliance with applicable laws and rules pertaining to appraisal requirements.
- A systematic correction effort for Land Use Plan and Land Management Plan compliance tracking data has been put into place by the Office of Environmental Services.
 - The Office of Environmental Services has also put into effect the systematic correction of scanned document entry errors in Oculus, coupled with a delay in the project until third-party scanning and entry standards can be upgraded.

5. Division of State Lands’ Quality Assurance Goals for 2012

The Division of State Lands is wholly committed to performing the QA/QC duties that function as a part of the everyday business it will continue to conduct into and throughout the 2012 calendar year. The division will also continue to cooperate with the many audits and reviews that may be assigned in the 2012 calendar year and implement any necessary corrections to correspond to identified issues. DSL also looks forward to taking advantage of any applicable training opportunities available to its employees throughout the 2012 calendar year.