Mitigation through re-establishment of Historic Ecological Communities

Section 10.3.1.1, A.H. considers the use of non-type-for-type mitigation in re-establishing historic ecological communities when appropriate.

> **10.3.1.1** In general, mitigation is best accomplished through creation, restoration, enhancement, or preservation of ecological communities similar to those being impacted. **However, when the area proposed to be impacted is degraded, compared to its historic ecological community and hydrologic condition, mitigation is best accomplished through creation, restoration, enhancement or preservation of the ecological community that was historically present.** When impacts are proposed to wholly artificial systems, such as borrow pits, ditches, and canals, mitigation is best accomplished through creation, restoration, enhancement or preservation of the native ecological community to which it is most analogous in function. **For wetlands or other surface waters that have been altered from their native community type, the historic community type at that location shall be used as a reference, unless the alteration has been of such a degree and extent that a different native community type is now present and self-sustaining.** Mitigation involving other ecological communities is acceptable if impacts are offset and the applicant demonstrates that greater improvement in ecological value will result.

This has direct applicability to mitigation within watersheds around the state. In many cases, wetlands have been degraded by altered hydrology and altered fire regimes. Resources for identifying and understanding changes of ecological communities over time are provided below.

Tampa Bay-

For projects located in the basins surrounding Tampa Bay, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's (TBEP) plan cited below may provide insight into the historic communities within Tampa Bay. The document may be useful in determining the appropriateness of mitigation through the establishment of historic ecological communities and whether such mitigation complies with Section 10.3.1.1, A.H.

Master Plan for the Protection and Restoration of Freshwater Wetlands in the Tampa Bay Watershed, Florida. 2014. Technical Report **#05-14** of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. Prepared by Scheda Ecological Associates, Inc. (T. Ries and S. Scheda).

> **Summary-** The Master Plan identifies freshwater wetland losses that have occurred in the Tampa Bay area since 1950 and establishes TBEP's goal of restoring the balance of freshwater wetlands by using both publicly-funded

restoration and privately-funded mitigation to increase the acreage of disproportionately impacted community types that were historically present in this region.

Disclaimer: The Master Plan document summarizes TBEP's findings with regard to historical trends of ecological communities within the Tampa Bay watershed. It is not a publication of the Department, and is referenced here solely for informational purposes with respect to those ecological community trends. Policy recommendations contained therein are solely those of TBEP, and should not be interpreted as a policy of the Department. Agency staff must, in all cases, review and evaluate all projects in accordance with the applicable rules and statutes.

GIS files of the Tampa Bay watershed, including historic (circa 1950s) and current (2007/2008) freshwater wetland coverage, and screening criteria layers, can be obtained by contacting the TBEP:

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