

Appendix 12-2: Restoration Plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River

Restoration Plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River

**South Florida Water Management District
Watershed Management Department
Coastal Ecosystems Division
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The unique ecosystem of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, with its quiet beauty, has captured the attention and imagination of residents and visitors, agency and community leaders for many years. Consisting of 9.5 miles of federally-designated Wild and Scenic River, it provides essential habitats that support a wide spectrum of ecological resources including freshwater riverine floodplain vegetation such as bald cypress, freshwater and estuarine fishes, and tidal floodplain vegetation such as mangroves, oysters and seagrasses. The natural pre-developed Loxahatchee Watershed originally covered a much larger area than what is left today, where basin modifications and drainage has significantly altered the hydrology and ecology of the area. Historically, the Loxahatchee River Watershed drained through Loxahatchee and Hungryland Slough to the Northwest Fork. The permanent opening of the Jupiter Inlet in 1947, along with sea level rise, has resulted in significant saltwater encroachment where a saltwater tolerant, mangrove-dominated community has moved into the freshwater, bald cypress-dominated floodplain. Furthermore, the watershed has been permanently altered by the construction of canals for drainage. The C-18 Canal and S-46 Structure were constructed in the 1960s, which diverted flows from the Northwest Fork to the Southwest Fork for flood control purposes. Now reduced amounts of freshwater flows into the Northwest Fork, especially in the dry season, do not retard saltwater encroachment that adversely impacts the freshwater floodplain ecosystem. Restoration and protection of the floodplain ecosystem depends largely on augmenting flows to the Northwest Fork at appropriate times, such as during the dry season.

In April 2003 the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) adopted a Minimum Flows and Levels Rule, Chapter 40E-8, Florida Administrative Code, with a minimum flow (MFL) for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. As required by legislation, a Recovery Strategy was incorporated into the MFL Rule, which included a commitment by the SFWMD to develop, in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), “a practical Restoration Plan and goal” for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. With this guidance in mind, it was the purpose of the plan to: document data collection and analysis, develop models and other analytic tools, identify constraints and assumptions, and identify alternative restoration flow scenarios. In summary, the best available scientific and technical information was used to develop a practical restoration goal and plan that provides restorative flows to the ecosystem of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Together, the staff of the SFWMD, FDEP, Florida Park Service-District 5 (FPS), and the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) collected and analyzed data used to develop and evaluate restoration flow alternatives. After an analysis of historic and current flora and fauna communities, the Northwest Fork ecosystem was partitioned into the five Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs, See Chapter 4):

1. Cypress swamp and hydric hammock in the freshwater riverine floodplain (River Mile [RM] 16 to RM 9.5),
2. Cypress swamp in the tidal floodplain (RM 9.5 to RM 5.5),
3. Fish larvae in the low salinity zone (RM 9.5 to RM 5.5),
4. Oysters in the mesohaline zone (RM 6.0 to RM 4.0) and,
5. Seagrasses in the polyhaline zone downstream (RM 4.0 to RM 0.0).

The health of the VECs is assumed to reflect the health of the ecosystem. Performance Measures (PM) for each VEC were developed to relate flow and stage in the floodplain and salinity in the river, to the ecological health of the VECs and were used to evaluate the relative biological effects of each restoration flow alternative.

Formulation and evaluation of restoration alternatives were based on the successful application of hydrologic and salinity models developed for this project. These models are, a watershed hydrologic model (WaSh) that simulates long-term freshwater inflows of tributaries to the Northwest Fork, a 2-D estuarine, hydrodynamic and salinity model (RMA) that simulates short-term influences of these inflows and tide on estuarine salinity, and a long-term salinity management model (LSMM) developed from the RMA results, capable of predicting daily salinity in the estuary for the period of record used in the watershed model.

An initial set of alternative flow scenarios represented five constant low flow targets during the 39-year period of record (1965 to 2003). These scenarios included constant flows of 65 cfs, 90 cfs, or 200 cfs over the Lainhart Dam coupled with 30 cfs, 65 cfs, 110 cfs, or 200 cfs in flows from the other tributaries of Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek. The results from these flow scenarios were compared with the base condition (See Chapter 7). The ecological evaluations of the five constant flow scenarios indicated a few of the scenarios achieved some of the restoration goals; however, the overall ecological goals were not being fully achieved. Furthermore, a constant flow of 200 cfs over the Lainhart Dam during the dry season was considered to be harmful to the freshwater riverine floodplain and estuarine biota.

In response to the findings from the constant flow scenarios and public reaction to the results of the first five scenarios gained through a series of public meetings sponsored by the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC), three variable flow scenarios were developed to simulate a more natural, hydrological variability to achieve the restoration goal. Each variable flow scenario represented the Lainhart Dam flows with varying amount of augmented flows (mostly 65 cfs to 90 cfs during the dry season), added to which were three variable flows from the downstream tributaries, 60 cfs, 90 cfs and 120 cfs. Evaluation of each variable flow scenario to achieve the restoration goal resulted in the selection of the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario**. It incorporates both dry and wet season hydrologic flow patterns and provides the greatest ecological benefit to freshwater riverine and tidal floodplain VECs, with minimal impact on the estuarine VECs.

In summary, the Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario is a variable dry season flow between 50 cfs and 110 cfs, with a mean monthly flow of 69 cfs over Lainhart Dam, while providing an additional 30 cfs of flow from the downstream tributaries.

Scientific information and modeling analysis found the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** to be a flow condition simulated by the **LV90 – TV60** model run using daily time-steps during a 39 year period of record (1965 through 2003). Generally, the LV90 model run represents variable flows over the Lainhart Dam providing flow augmentation when the daily flow falls below 70 cfs during the months of February through May, 130 cfs during the months of August through November, and 80 cfs during the transitional months. Adding flow during the wet season achieves 120 days of inundation (> 110 cfs at Lainhart Dam) of the cypress swamp in the riverine floodplain each year. The TV60 model run represents flows from the tributaries downstream of the Lainhart Dam, providing an additional 30 cfs of flow augmentation to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, when the total flows are less than 300 cfs. The combination of the LV90 and TV60 provides a **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** of adequate fresh water flows to protect and enhance the riverine floodplain, maintain conditions for the propagation of cypress trees in the tidal floodplain, and promote a healthy estuarine system in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. This flow scenario reflects the seasonal variations that are needed for protecting, enhancing and restoring the biological values of the Northwest Fork ecosystem. In addition, it includes rainfall driven monthly and daily flow variability also necessary for restoration. The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** provides a dynamic flow pattern with dry season mean monthly flows of 69 cfs over Lainhart Dam to maintain total daily flows greater than

150 cfs within the Northwest Fork, to push the saltwater wedge downstream of RM 7.5 more than 70% of the time during the 39 year period of record.

By implementing the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** it is expected that saltwater intrusion will be reversed and portions of the tidal floodplain will be restored to freshwater swamp where during the dry season the proposed restored flows will push the salinity wedge from its current location, near RM 9, downstream to a location near RM 7.5. At this location the salinity is expected to be below 1 ppt most of the time, increasing to approximately 2-3 ppt during periods of low flow conditions (occurring only about 10 percent of the time). The modeling analysis of the entire 39 year modeling period, indicates that the 2 ppt salinity wedge (2 ppt) for the LV90-TV60 Flow Scenario reaches no further upstream than RM 8.1 which is the river reach immediately downstream of the confluence of Kitching Creek. Limiting saltwater intrusion within this portion of the floodplain will ensure suitable conditions for the propagation of seedlings and healthy growth of bald cypress and other freshwater species.

It is anticipated that with restorative flows the cypress swamp, between RM 16 and RM 9.5, will be inundated for approximately 4 to 8 months and the hydric hammocks will be inundated for about 30 to 60 days in a year. During the dry season, restoration flows will maintain low water levels in the freshwater riverine floodplain, without completely drying it out every year. In the tidal floodplain, between RM 9.5 and RM 5.5, flows will push the saltwater front downstream from RM 9.5 to between RM 8 and RM 7.5. This will allow for recruitment of freshwater species in the upper tidal floodplain. Freshwater species will be expected to expand in number and dominate the canopy to the mouth of Kitching Creek near RM 8.1. There will also be recruitment of pond apple in the tidal floodplain due to the improvement in the freshwater environment near RM 7.5.

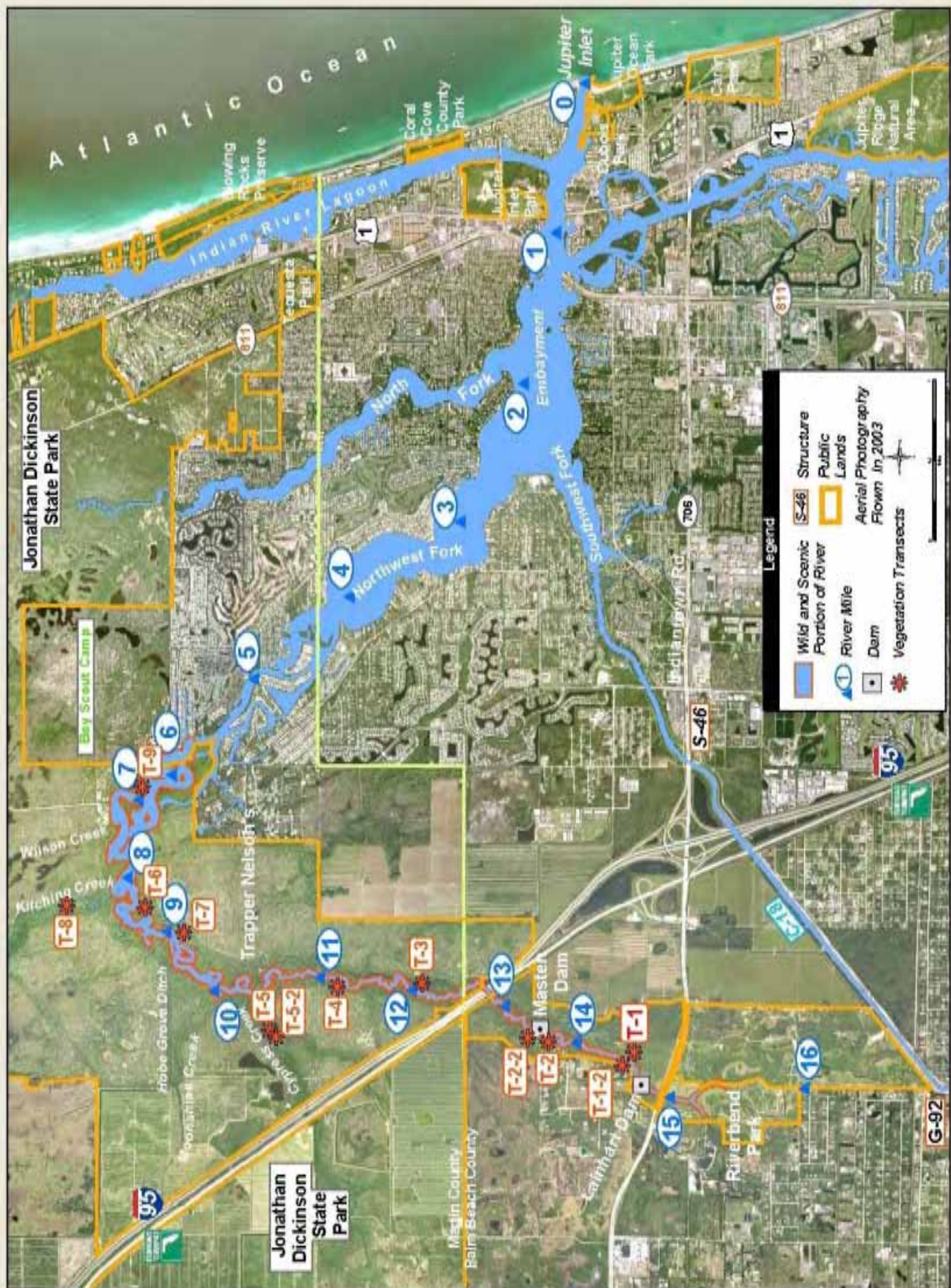
The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** is also designed to minimize the impact on the estuarine ecosystems. The low salinity zone, located between RM 9.5 and RM 5.5, requires a salinity regime of 2 ppt - 8 ppt during the dry season to function as a nursery for many saltwater fishes. Although restorative flows will move the appropriate salinity range downstream, the low salinity will still remain within an area that will provide suitable habitat for juvenile fish development. The optimal salinity range for oysters is from 10 ppt to 20 ppt, which is currently located between RM 6 and RM 4. With increased flows during the dry season these salinity levels will be moved downstream and the upstream oyster beds at RM 6 will be lost. However, the majority of the oysters are located downstream of RM 5 and will not experience harmful drops in salinity levels. The addition of oyster substrate near RM 4 will mitigate the loss of oysters at RM 6. It will have minimal impact on seagrasses in the Central Embayment area.

The Restoration Plan supports existing monitoring activities and proposes new activities and programs necessary to monitor the water quantity, water quality, timing and distribution of increased dry season flows and improved wet season flows in the Northwest Fork. The response of the biological communities to the effects of the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** needs to be scientifically monitored. In addition to existing vegetation monitoring programs, new monitoring programs for fish and wildlife data are proposed, (See Chapter 10). A science plan to clearly identify and justify basic monitoring programs, and special studies necessary for comprehensive adaptive management decisions to evolve is under development. The information collected from these monitoring programs and special projects will be used to update the restoration plan by the SFWMD, FDEP, FPS and LRD every five years from the date of acceptance. The Science Plan data will be the basis for adaptive management decisions in the development of operational protocols and other implementation projects

Implementation of the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River Restoration Plan with its **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** is being achieved through important plans and projects, which are currently underway within the Loxahatchee River Watershed. These include:

- Initial and Project Water Reservations for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, (SFWMD)
- Implementation of the North Palm Beach County CERP Project, Part I elements, (SFWMD, USCOE)
- Construction of additional water management/control structures, (SFWMD)
- Development and implementation of operational protocols, (SFWMD)
- JDSP Unit Management Plan, (FPS)
- Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan (FDEP),
- Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI), and
- Loxahatchee River National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan 2000 (LRMCC)

Continued community participation through the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC) and community groups such as the Loxahatchee River Coalition will ensure that this important resource is protected. This plan was developed through interagency participation and cooperation, which is essential to successful restoration of the Northwest Fork. Implementation of the projects identified in this plan document and listed above by the SFWMD, FDEP, FPS, JDSP, LRD, USACE, local governments and community action will restore, preserve and protect the irreplaceable natural resources of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River for today and for the future.



Vegetation Transects on the Loxahatchee River

**River Miles of the Creeks, Dams, Highways, Other Landmarks, Vegetation Transects and
Data Collection Sites on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River**

Landmark Sites	Old River Miles	New River Miles
Riverbend Park	13.50	15.00
Indiantown Road	12.80	14.93
Lainhart Dam	12.50	14.78
Masten Dam	--	13.50
Turnpike/I-95	--	12.76
Trapper Nelson Camp	10.80	10.50
Cypress Creek	10.00	10.33
Moonshine Creek	--	10.00
Hobe Grove Ditch	--	9.07
Boy Scout Dock	6.00	5.92
Transect Sites	Old River Miles	New River Miles
T 1-1	--	14.50
T 1-2	--	14.50
T 2-1	--	13.57
T 2-2	--	13.43
T 3-1	--	12.07
T 3-2	--	12.07
T 4-1	--	11.18
T 6-1	--	8.43
T 7-1	--	9.10
T 9-1	--	6.46
Salinity and Ecological Assessment Sites	Old River Miles	New River Miles
USGS Monitoring Station	9.10	9.12
USGS Kitching Creek	8.02	8.13
VT9	--	7.06
USGS Boy Scout Dock	6.00	5.92
Oyster Site 6	--	5.45
Oyster Site 5	--	4.93
Oyster Site 4	--	4.13
Oyster Site 3	--	3.74
Oyster Site 2	--	3.26
Oyster Site 1	--	2.70
Seagrass Site – Pennock Pointe	--	2.44
USGS Pompano Drive	--	1.77
Seagrass Site – Sand Bar	--	1.74
Seagrass Site – North Bay	--	1.48
USGS Coast Guard	--	0.70

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Executive Summary	iii
Table of Contents	vii
Table of Contents for the Appendices	xi
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xii
 Chapter 1: Table of Contents	 1-1
 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN	 1-3
General Description and Geographic Location	1-5
Partnership with Jonathan Dickinson State Park and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection	1-7
Plans and Implementation Activities	1-7
DOCUMENT STRUCTURE	1-11
SUMMARY	1-12
 Chapter 2: The Loxahatchee River Watershed	 2-1
Watershed Description	2-3
Drainage Basin	2-4
Watershed Hydrology	2-8
Climate, Rainfall and Seasonal Weather Patterns	2-8
Tributary and Canal System	2-10
Water Quality	2-11
Water Quality Monitoring Activities	2-11
Salinity and Tide	2-12
Nutrients	2-13
Water Quality Summary.....	2-15
Water Resource Utilization	2-16
Water Supply	2-16
Flood Protection	2-17
Navigation and Recreation	2-18
 Chapter 3: The Ecosystems of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary.....	 3-1
Overview	3-4
The Northwest Fork	3-4
The Estuary	3-5
The Floodplain Ecosystem	3-5
Historical Floodplain Studies	3-6
Description of Floodplain Forest Communities	3-14
Transect Vegetation Summaries	3-22
Animals	3-30
The Estuarine Ecosystem	3-32
Oligohaline Ecozone – Fish Larvae	3-32

Mesohaline Ecozone – Oysters	3-33
Polyhaline Ecozone - Seagrasses	3-33
Benthic Macrofauna	3-36
Fishes	3-38
Threatened or Species of Special Concern	3-40
Chapter 4: Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) and Performance Measures (PMs).....	4-1
The Floodplain Ecosystem	4-4
Riverine Floodplain VEC: Swamp and Hydric Hammock Forest Communities	4-6
Tidal Floodplain VECs: Swamp Communities	4-8
The Estuarine ecosystem	4-15
Low Salinity Zone VEC: Fish Larvae and Juvenile Fish	4-15
Mesohaline Zone VEC: Oysters	4-24
Polyhaline Zone VEC: Seagrasses	4-30
Chapter 5: Determining Hydroperiods and Flow Requirements in the Riverine Floodplain	5-1
Habitat Quality Evaluation	5-4
Hydrologic Evaluation of the Riverine Floodplain	5-9
Controlled Release Study	5-11
Episodic Field Study	5-14
General Observations and Conclusions	5-27
Chapter 6: Modeling Freshwater Flows and Salinity in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary	6-1
Introduction	6-5
Modeling Freshwater Flows	6-6
The Watershed (WaSh) Model Description	6-6
Implementing the WaSh Model	6-12
WaSh Model Simulation Results	6-23
Modeling Salinity	6-28
The Hydrodynamic/Salinity (RMA) Model Description	6-28
Implementing the RMA Model	6-29
RMA Model Simulation Results	6-37
Long-term Salinity Management Model	6-47
Summary	6-52
Chapter 7: Northwest Fork Ecosystems Constant Flow Restoration Scenario Evaluation.....	7-1
Constant Flow Scenarios.....	7-6
Constant Flow Simulations.....	7-6
Salinity Simulations.....	7-8
Ecological Evaluation of Constant Flow Scenarios.....	7-9
Evaluation of Riverine Floodplain.....	7-9
Evaluation of Tidal Floodplain.....	7-22

Evaluation of Low Salinity Zone: Fish Larvae.....	7-29
Evaluation of Mesohaline Zone: Oysters.....	7-31
Evaluation of Polyhaline Zone: Seagrasses.....	7-45
Summary	7-53

Chapter 8: Development of the Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario for the Northwest Fork 8-1

Introduction.....	8-4
Variable Flow Scenarios.....	8-4
Ecological Evaluation of Variable Flow Scenarios.....	8-10
Evaluation of Riverine Floodplain	8-10
Evaluation of Tidal Floodplain.....	8-12
Evaluation of Estuarine Biota	8-18
Anticipated Ecological Change.....	8-31
Summary	8-32

Chapter 9: The Saltwater Barrier as a Restoration Alternative . 9-1

Introduction.....	9-5
Summary of Previous Saltwater Barrier Proposals.....	9-5
The 1975 Proposal.....	9-5
The 1986 Feasibility Study	9-6
Preliminary Modeling Evaluation of Salinity Management with Saltwater Barriers.....	9-6
Development of a 3-D Model for Hydrodynamic and Salinity Simulations of Saltwater Barriers	9-6
Evaluation of Salinity Barrier Alternative Models	9-19
Ecological Considerations of the Type 2 Salinity Barrier	9-21
Ecological Fragmentation	9-21
Water Quality	9-22
Floodplain Vegetation Communities	9-23
Conclusions	9-23

Chapter 10: Ecological Monitoring for Adaptive Management 10-1

Introduction	10-3
Northwest Fork Systemwide Monitoring	10-4
Rainfall Data	10-4
Water Quality	10-4
Groundwater Monitoring	10-6
Lainhart Dam Flow	10-6
Other Tributary Flows	10-7
Tide and Salinity Monitoring	10-7
Floodplain Ecosystem Monitoring	10-7
Animal Monitoring	10-7
Riverine Floodplain Vegetation Monitoring	10-10
Tidal Floodplain Vegetation Monitoring	10-10
Estuarine Ecosystem Monitoring	10-11
Oligohaline (Low salinity zone) Ecozone: Fish Monitoring	10-11
Mesohaline Ecozone: Oyster Monitoring	10-11

Polyhaline Ecozone: Seagrass Monitoring	10-12
Seagrass Mapping	10-12
Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring	10-13
Synopsis of Existing monitoring Programs	10-15
Special Studies	10-15
Loxahatchee River Watershed and Estuarine Modeling	10-15
Jonathan Dickinson State Park Vegetation Demonstration Project	10-16
Vegetation Response to Severe Storms or Droughts	10-16
Soil Studies	10-16
Cypress Seedling Studies	10-16
System Response to rainfall events and Droughts	10-16
Mesocosm Studies	10-17
Oysters	10-17
Fish Larvae	10-17
Conclusions	10-18
 Chapter 11: Implementation of the Restoration Plan	 11-1
Introduction	11-3
CERP North Palm Beach County Project	11-4
North Palm Beach County – Part 1	11-4
North Palm Beach County – Part 2	11-5
Flows to the Northwest Fork over Lainhart Dam	11-5
Tributary Flows to the Northwest Fork	11-5
Regulatory Implementation	11-6
Minimum Flows and Levels Rule	11-6
Initial Water Reservations	11-6
Project Water Reservations	11-7
Operational Protocols	11-8
Monitoring and an Adaptive Management Approach to Plan	
Implementation.....	11-8
Additional Implementation Activities	11-9
SFWMD Activities	11-9
Partners in Plan Development and Implementation	11-10
 Glossary	 12-1
 References Cited	 13-1

Appendices

Appendix A: 1975 Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District and the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District Agreement.....	A-1
Appendix B: 1982 Consent Decree	B-1
Appendix C: 1989 Agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the South Indian River Water Control District.....	C-1
Appendix D: Water Quality, Tide and Salinity Monitoring Information	D-1
Appendix E: 2003 Vegetation Survey – Forest Type Summaries	E-1
Appendix F: 2003 Vegetation Survey – Forest Canopy Species by Transect	F-1
Appendix G: 2003 Vegetation Survey – Transect Profiles.....	G-1
Appendix H: Fish Larvae Studies	H-1
Appendix I: Vegetation Transects Groundwater and Soils Characteristics.....	I-1

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

°C or C	degrees in Centigrade
°F	degrees in Fahrenheit
ADCP	acoustic doppler current profiler
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASR	Aquifer Storage and Recovery
BD	Boy Scout Dock station
bls	below land surface
BOD	biological oxygen demand
BWP	box and whisker plot
CERP	Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
cfs	cubic feet per second
CG	U.S. Coast Guard station
CH3D	3-D model that simulates supercritical flows
cm	centimeter
CSFFCP	Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project
CUP	Consumptive Use Permitting
<i>Db</i>	mean number of days between salinity events
dbh	diameter at breast height (tree measurement)
DBHydro	SFWMD's corporate environmental database
District	South Florida Water Management District
<i>Ds</i>	mean duration in days of salinity event
<i>Ds/Db</i>	calculated salinity ratio
E	Endangered species
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ET	evapotranspiration
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FCREPA	Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals
FDA	Florida Department of Agriculture
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
FDNR	Florida Department of Natural Resources (now FDEP)
FFWCC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (now FWC)

FGFWFC	Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
FNAI	Florida Natural Areas Inventory
FPS	Florida Park Service, a division of FDEP
ft	feet
F.S.	Florida Statutes
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FWF	Florida Wildlife Federation
FWQI	Florida Water Quality Index
FWRI	Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	global positioning system
GUI	Graphic user interface
H⁰	null hypothesis
HSPF	Hydrologic Simulation Program – FORTRAN
Hz	hertz
ICW	Intracoastal Waterway
in	inches
IRL	Indian River Lagoon
JDSP	Jonathan Dickinson State Park
JID	Jupiter Inlet District
KC	Kitching Creek station
KHz	Kilohertz
km	kilometers
LEC Plan	Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan
LECsR	Lower East Coast Subregional Model
LIDAR	LIght Detection And Ranging
LOSM	Loxahatchee Oyster Stress Model
LRD	Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District
LRPI	Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative
LSMM	Long-term Salinity Management Model
LSUR	Length-scale parameter for surface drainage
LSZ	low salinity zone
LT	lower tidal reach
LU	land use

LZS	lower zone storage
m	meters
MAP	Monitoring and Assessment Program
MFL	minimum flow and level
MGD or mgd	million gallons per day
mg/L	milligrams per liter
mm	millimeters
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	not applicable or not available
NAVD	North American Vertical Datum
NFSP	Northwest Fork Science Plan
NGVD	National Geodetic Vertical Datum
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration
Northern Plan	North Beach Palm County Comprehensive Water Management Plan
NPBC	North Palm Beach County
NPS	National Park System
PD	Pompano Drive station
P.L.	Public Law
PLRGs	Pollution Load Reduction Goals
PM	performance measure
POR	Period of Record
ppb	parts per billion
ppt	parts per thousand
PT	pretreatment score
R	riverine reach
RBA	relative basal area
RECOVER	REstoration COordination VERification
RM	river mile
RMA-2/RMA-4	2-D hydrodynamic and salinity models developed by Resource Management Associates, Inc.
RMS	root mean square
RRE	relative RMS error

SAVELOX	SAlinity and VEgetation model for the LOXahatchee
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SFWMM	South Florida Water Management Model
SIRWCD	South Indian River Water Control District
SJRWMD	St. Johns River Water Management District
sp.	species
sq.	square
S.R.	State Road
SSC	species of special concern
STA	stormwater treatment area
T	Threatened
TBD	to be determined
TMDL	total maximum daily load
TN	total nitrogen
TP	total phosphorus
TSI	Florida Trophic State Index
UCF	University of Central Florida
U.S.	United States
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDC	United States Department of Commerce
USDOI	United States Department of Interior
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
UT	upper tidal reach
UZS	upper zone storage
VEC	valued ecosystem component
WaSh	Watershed Model
WRAP	Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedures
WSE	Water Supply and Environmental

CHAPTER 1**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN.....	3
GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	5
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FLORIDA PARK SERVICE, DISTRICT FIVE AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	7
PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES	7
Loxahatchee River National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan.....	7
Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan.....	8
Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan	9
North Palm Beach County CERP Project – Part 1.....	9
Minimum Flows and Levels Rule, Chapter 40E-8, F.A.C.....	9
Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan	10
Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative.....	10
Jonathan Dickinson State Park Unit Management Plan	11
Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve	11
Jupiter Inlet District Management Plan for the Loxahatchee River	11
DOCUMENT STRUCTURE	12
SUMMARY.....	13

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1-1.** 1943 Vegetation Map of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. Source: Davis (1943)
Vegetation Map of Southern Florida, Florida Geological Survey Bulletin 25, Figure 71.**4**
- Figure 1-2.** The Loxahatchee River and its Tributaries. The River Miles depicted on this map
are based on the 2003 GPS and GIS analyses for the Northwest Fork.....**6**

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1-1.** The River Mile Locations of Landmark Sites on the Northwest Fork of the
Loxahatchee River..... **6**

Chapter 1

Overview

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The unique ecosystem and quiet beauty of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River has captured the attention and imagination of residents and visitors, agency and community leaders for many years. Efforts at all levels of government to preserve this ecosystem have lead to public ownership and management. The Loxahatchee River is generally referred to as the “last free flowing river in Southeast Florida” and represents one of the last vestiges of native cypress river swamp within southeast Florida. In May 1985, 9.5 miles of the Northwest Fork was federally designated as Florida’s first National Wild and Scenic River. Portions of the river and estuary were designated Aquatic Preserves, and Outstanding Florida Waters. The Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve is one of four preserves established in the State of Florida to protect freshwater flora and fauna. Large sections of the river’s watershed and river corridor are included within Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP), which includes outstanding examples of the region’s natural biological communities.

In recent history, adverse environmental impacts to this ecosystem have occurred due to alterations in watershed hydrology and sea level rise. The most widely recognized alteration is the reduction of dry season flows to the Northwest Fork and associated saltwater intrusion into freshwater wetland vegetation communities downstream. Most of the surface water runoff from the Loxahatchee River Watershed historically drained through Loxahatchee and Hungryland Sloughs to the Northwest Fork where tidal interaction was limited (**Figure 1-1**). However, today the C-18 Canal diverts much of the runoff from the Northwest Fork to the Southwest Fork of the river. Over the last century canals and levees were constructed to provide drainage and flood protection for development. Construction of numerous small drainage canals in the early part of the Twentieth Century and the C-18 Canal in 1958 diverted freshwater flows to tidal waters of the Southwest Fork at Structure S-46. In addition, prior to the 1940s, Jupiter Inlet periodically opened and closed to the Atlantic Ocean as a result of natural storm events. Since 1947 the inlet has been kept permanently open, and is presently maintained by periodic dredging conducted by the Jupiter Inlet District (USACE 1966). The permanent opening of the Jupiter Inlet has had a significant impact on the primarily freshwater system of the Northwest Fork through saltwater intrusion. During the past 58 years the vegetation along the river corridor in the Northwest Fork has changed from freshwater floodplain swamp to mangrove forest due to the saltwater intrusion from Jupiter Inlet and the reduced freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork.

In response to identification of these problems, remedial actions by many agencies, state and local, have influenced the management of flows to the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River. The first restoration flows to the Northwest Fork commenced through an agreement between the SFWMD and the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) signed in 1975 (**Appendix A**). The SFWMD constructed the G-92 water control structure to improve the flow linkage of the Loxahatchee Slough, through C-18, to the Northwest Fork in 1975. The objective of these activities was to maintain the environmental quality of the Northwest Fork with supplemental flows through “deliveries of water from the C-18 Canal.” In 1982, a lawsuit was filed by the Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF; **Appendix B**) concerning flows to the Northwest Fork, and operations of S-46. As a result, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Florida Department

of the Environmental Protection (FDEP) entered into a Consent Decree to provide 50 cfs to the Northwest Fork “subject to the presence of available water supplies.” In addition, a 1989 agreement between the South Indian River Water Control District, and the SFWMD provided operational guidelines for 400 cfs flows through G-92 to the Northwest Fork when feasible and allowing flood waters to backflow to the C-18 under certain conditions (**Appendix C**).

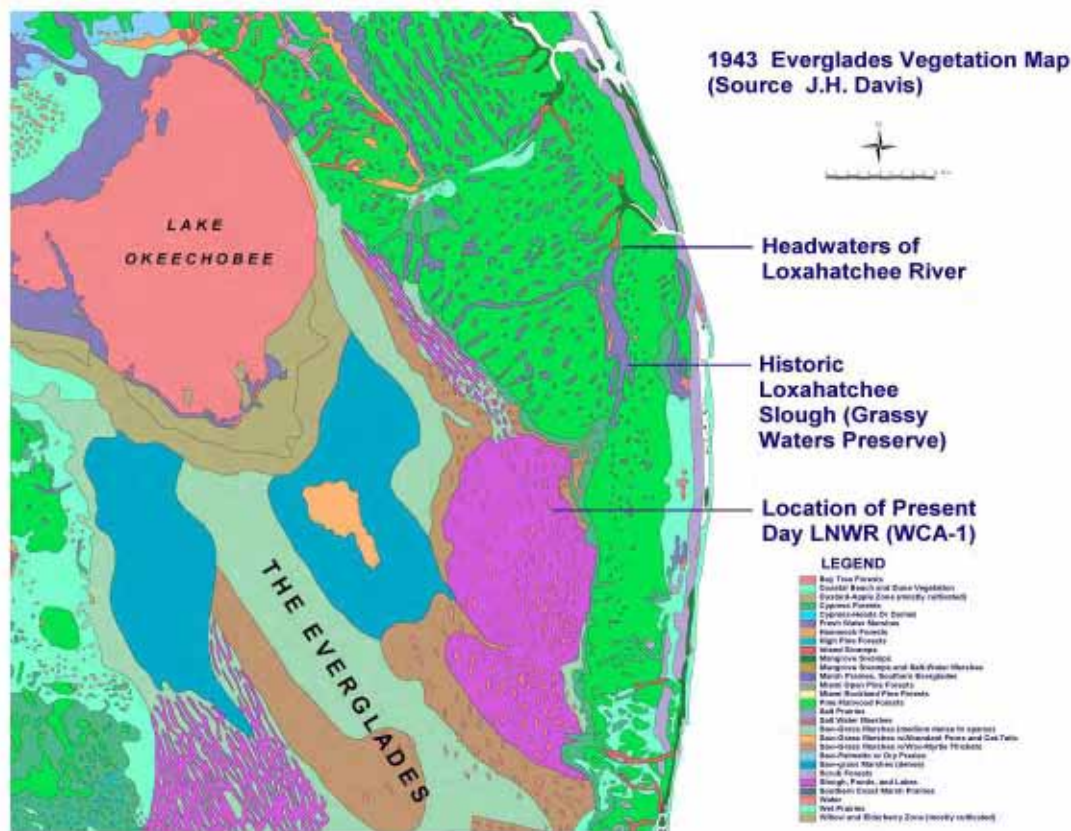


Figure 1-1. 1943 Vegetation Map of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. Source: Davis (1943) Vegetation Map of Southern Florida, Florida Geological Survey Bulletin 25, Figure 71.

In April 2003 the SFWMD adopted Minimum Flows and Levels Rule, Chapter 40E-8, F.A.C. with a minimum flow (MFL) for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. It was recognized that upon adoption, the SFWMD would be unable to meet the MFL criteria during dry periods. Therefore, as required by legislation, a Recovery Strategy was incorporated into the Rule, which included a commitment by the SFWMD to develop a practical Restoration Plan and goal for this tributary in partnership with the FDEP.

The purpose of this plan is to (1) document data collection and analysis conducted; (2) identify models and other analytical methods used in the development of the plan; (3) identify restoration alternatives; and (4) describe the constraints and assumptions of the plan made by staff

of the SFWMD, the FDEP and FPS. The plan will address the environmental stresses facing the Northwest Fork ecosystems, describe the constraints of the existing water management system, and conduct the evaluation of restoration alternatives. It will provide the best available technical information to support environmentally sensitive dry and wet season flows or hydrographs for the ecosystems. A careful balance of the timing and distribution of flows will be provided. Protection of the Northwest Fork ecosystems requires reducing or reversing the saltwater intrusion and subsequent environmental impacts on upstream freshwater wetland communities of vegetation and wildlife (e.g. fishes, alligators, turtles and otters). This major objective will be accomplished with minimum environmental impact on estuarine communities and their functions.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The Loxahatchee River and Estuary are located along the Lower East Coast of Florida. The natural predeveloped Loxahatchee River Watershed originally covered a much larger area than what is left today. Presently, this watershed drains an area of approximately 240 square miles within northern Palm Beach and southern Martin Counties and connects to the Atlantic Ocean via the Jupiter Inlet, in Jupiter, Florida. Just west of the inlet, the river opens into a Central Embayment area, which is formed at the confluence of three major tributaries – the Northwest Fork, the North Fork and the Southwest Fork (**Figure 1-2**).

The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River originates at the G-92 Structure in northern Palm Beach County, flows north into Martin County and bends east through JDSP. Flows continue southeast back to Palm Beach County, near the Central Embayment area of the Loxahatchee River.

In 1983, the Loxahatchee River Wild and Scenic Designation and Preservation Act (Chapter 83-352, Laws of Florida, established the Wild and Scenic designation of the Northwest Fork to be 7.5 miles in length, beginning at Boy Scout Dock (River Mile 5.92) and ending at Riverbend Park (RM 15.5). Using the measurement techniques available at the time, the river was measured from Jupiter Inlet to Riverbend Park and found to be 13 miles in length. In 2003, the SFWMD used Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to map the river more accurately, delineating its numerous oxbows, twists and turns. The recalculated length of the river from Jupiter Inlet to Riverbend Park is 15.5 miles and the “Wild and Scenic” portion of the river has been established as 9.5 miles in length. **Table 1-1** shows landmark sites of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River with the old River Miles used in existing documents (when applicable) and the new River Miles used throughout this document. (Note: The new River Miles are also used in the MFL Rule documents, Chapter 40E-8, F.A.C.)

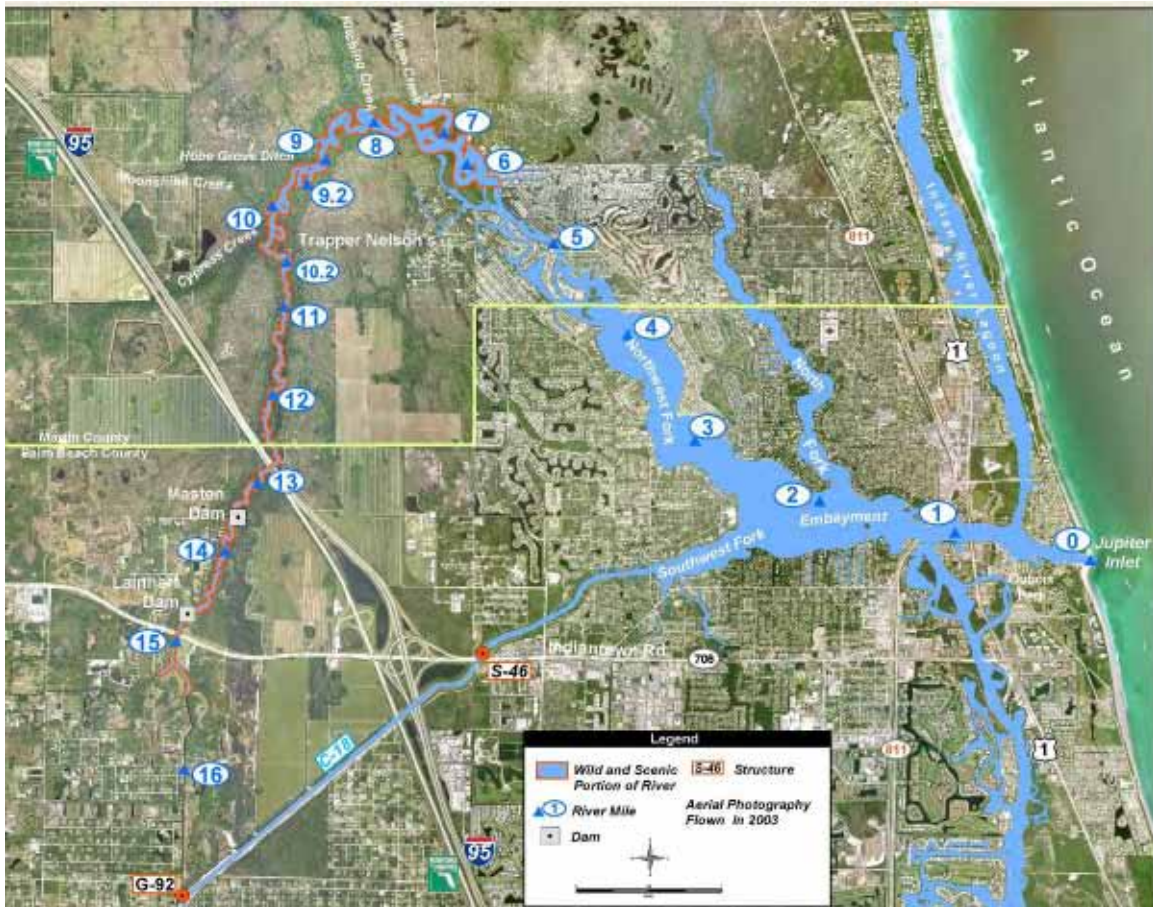


Figure 1-2. The Loxahatchee River and its Tributaries. The River Miles depicted on this map are based on the 2003 GPS and GIS analyses for the Northwest Fork.

Table 1-1. River Mile Locations of Landmark Sites on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Landmark Site	Old River Miles	New River Miles
Boy Scout Dock	6.00	5.92
Kitching Creek – USGS Monitoring Station	8.02	8.13
Hobe Grove Ditch	--	9.07
USGS Monitoring Station	--	9.12
Moonshine Creek	--	10.00
Cypress Creek	10.00	10.33
Trapper Nelson's	10.80	10.50
Turnpike/I-95	--	12.76
Masten Dam	--	13.50
Lainhart Dam	12.50	14.78
Indiantown Road	12.80	14.93
Riverbend Park	13.50	15.43

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FLORIDA PARK SERVICE, DISTRICT FIVE AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The FDEP has statutory responsibility and authority, Chapter 258.037, Florida Statutes, to “conserve these natural values for all time.” Chapter 373.016, Florida Statutes, authorizes the SFWMD to “to preserve natural resources....” Toward the development of the restoration plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which includes the Florida Park Service (FPS), and Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP), has actively engaged in a partnership with the SFWMD to conduct research and examine technical issues surrounding restoration. Much of this plan is based on that partnership.

On April 22, 2004, a meeting attended by staff representatives from FDEP, FPS and SFWMD was held to discuss the guiding principles for the development of a practical restoration goal and plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Those in attendance at the meeting agreed on the following principles:

- Restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will occur between River Mile 6.0 and River Mile 15.5 to the extent practicable.
- A “practical” and “achievable” restoration goal for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will be based on best available data.
- One part of the Loxahatchee River Watershed will not be sacrificed to benefit another part of the Watershed. This principle also applies to areas of the river within the “Wild and Scenic” portion of the Northwest Fork.
- The Restoration Goal and Plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will balance water supply, flood protection, water quality and environmental enhancement.
- The Restoration Goal and Plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will be based on a seasonal hydrograph.
- To the extent practicable, ecological benefits will be maximized system wide.
- The focus of the goal and plan will be the restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River; therefore, the title of the goal and plan will reflect that emphasis.

In addition, it was agreed that the estuarine area of the Loxahatchee River, which is located from RM 2.0 to RM 6.0, will be protected or improved through reductions of high freshwater flows, when possible, from S-46 to the Southwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

PLANS AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

During the past 20 years several plans and restoration-oriented activities have been initiated to protect and restore the Loxahatchee River, especially the Northwest Fork:

Loxahatchee River National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan

In May 1985, the largely pristine portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River was designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior for inclusion in the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System, following designation by the state of Florida as a Wild and Scenic River in 1983

(Chapter 83-358, Laws of Florida, approved June 1983). The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River was the first river in the state of Florida to receive this designation.

An outcome of the state and federal government actions was the formation of the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council. Comprised of regional, state, federal agency and local government representatives, it oversees the impacts of proposed development, tracks plans and programs in areas adjacent to the Northwest Fork and its corridor, and is responsible for the development of a management plan.

Written by the FDEP and the SFWMD, The *Loxahatchee National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan* (2000) ensures that special consideration be given to the watershed surrounding the river corridor so that it is protected to maintain natural flow conditions, good water quality and the preservation of high quality natural areas. The plan is updated every five years to track the successful accomplishments of the member agencies and local governments and to identify new projects and programs, all of which are necessary for the protection and restoration of the Northwest Fork.

Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan

In May 2000, the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District adopted the Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan (LEC Plan). The purpose of the LEC Plan is to fulfill the requirements of Section 373.0361, Florida Statutes (F.S.) for regional water supply plans. Implementation of the LEC Plan will do the following:

- Create a water supply that fully meets the future (2020) needs of almost seven million people, agriculture and industries during a 1-in-10 year drought.
- Reduce the number of severe violations of Minimum Flow and Levels (MFL) criteria for the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the Biscayne aquifer by 2020.
- Reserve from allocations sufficient water to allow for the restoration of the Everglades and enhancement of other significant natural systems.
- Reduce the uncertainty for issuing long-term permits for water users as they invest in tomorrow's water supply infrastructure.
- Provide public forums to modernize District operational procedures and promote greater flexibility in the operation of the regional water management system.

Several LEC Plan recommendations also provide the foundation for various actions to protect and restore the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River:

LEC Recommendation 3:	Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan
LEC Recommendation 21:	L-8 Project
LEC Recommendation 32:	Periodic Operational Flexibility
LEC Recommendation 34:	Water Reservations
LEC Recommendation 35:	Establish MFLs

Water Supply Plans are updated every five years, and an update to the LEC Plan is underway, with a completion date of December 2005.

Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan

Initiated in 1995, the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan (Northern Plan) was accepted by the SFWMD Governing Board in May 2002 (SFWMD 2002a). The sub-regional Northern Plan focuses on the southern L-8 Basin, the City of West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area (WCA-1) or Grassy Waters Preserve, C-18, the Loxahatchee Slough, and the Loxahatchee River, especially the Northwest Fork. The plan projects future water supplies for urban, agricultural and environmental uses for the year 2020 and identifies projects that when built will bring supplemental water into the northern Palm Beach County area.

The Northern Plan calls for a series of system improvements to be constructed in the area of Palm Beach County north of Southern Boulevard, generally east of the L-8 Levee, and west of I-95. When all the proposed system improvements are in place, the Northern Plan will provide the projected 2020 public water supply demands of the area, hydrologic restoration of the Loxahatchee Slough, and protection of the Grassy Waters Preserve and a target base flow of 65 cubic feet per second (cfs), in the dry season, to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, measured at the Lainhart Dam. Construction has started on several of the Northern Plan components: the Loxahatchee Slough structure (G-160) was completed in January 2004; design of the Northlake Boulevard structure (G-161) was initiated in 2004 with construction expected to be completed in 2006; and, the regional reservoir storage at the Palm Beach Aggregates site was increased to 47,000 acre-feet in 2004. The Northern Plan forms the basis for the North Palm Beach County CERP Project, Part 1.

North Palm Beach County CERP Project – Part 1

The overall purpose of the North Palm Beach County CERP Project – Part 1 is to:

- (1) increase water supplies to the Grassy Waters Preserve and Loxahatchee Slough;
- (2) provide flows to enhance hydroperiods in the Loxahatchee Slough;
- (3) increase base flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River; and
- (4) reduce high flows to the Lake Worth Lagoon and Loxahatchee Estuary.

The North Palm Beach County CERP Project includes six individual elements including Pal-Mar and J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area Hydropattern Restoration, L-8 Basin Modifications, C-51 and L-8 Reservoir, Lake Worth Lagoon Restoration, C-17 Pumping and Treatment, and C-51 Pumping and Treatment. These elements have been combined into a single project to address the interdependencies and tradeoffs between the different elements and provide a more efficient and effective design of the overall project. Further details on this project are presented on the District's Website at <http://www.evergladesplan.org>.

Minimum Flows and Levels Rule, Chapter 40E-8, F.A.C.

Minimum Flows and Levels criteria for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (SFWMD 2002b) were developed to protect the remaining floodplain swamp community and downstream estuarine resources from “significant harm.” Adopted in April 2003, the minimum flow is defined as “The limit at which further withdrawals would be significantly harmful to water resources or ecology of the area...”

More specifically, the criteria for the determination of an MFL violation are as follows:

A MFL violation occurs within the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River when an exceedance of the minimum flow criteria occurs more than once every six years. An

“exceedance” is defined as when Lainhart Dam flows to the Northwest Fork of the river decline below 35 cubic feet per second for more than 20 consecutive days within any given calendar year.

It was recognized that upon adoption, the District would be unable to meet the MFL criteria for the Northwest Fork during dry periods. Therefore, as required by legislation, a Recovery Strategy was incorporated into the Rule, which includes the following:

1. Construction of projects which will increase flows to the Northwest Fork and which are identified in the *Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan*, the North Palm Beach County CERP Project, Part 1 and the *Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan* projects,
2. In partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Park Service, continue the development of a practical Restoration Plan and goal for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River,
3. Adoption of an initial water Reservation for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River to protect existing water used for the protection of fish and wildlife, and subsequent reservations to protect water made available for the recovery and restoration of the Loxahatchee River through implementation of projects which will increase flows in the dry season. These water reservations are intended to prevent the future allocation to consumptive uses the freshwater intended for restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River,
4. Continue to operate the G-92 Structure and associated structures to provide flows of approximately 50 cfs or more over Lainhart Dam to the Northwest Fork, when the District determines that water supplies are available, and
5. It is the intent of the District to continue the current operational protocols of the G-92 Structure so as not to reduce the historical high, average and low flows as estimated over the 30-year period of rainfall record used as the basis for the MFL for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan

In July 1996, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection organized the Loxahatchee River Watershed Planning Committee with representatives from various state, local and federal agencies. A Loxahatchee River Watershed map was developed and through the development of the watershed boundaries, a comprehensive list of problems could be identified for each subbasin. In addition, water quality data and other environmental information were compiled to form a realistic view of the watershed. In October 2002 the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan was completed (FDEP 2002). The purpose of this plan was to identify natural resource problems within the watershed subbasins and solutions for those problems. One of the more successful results of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan is the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI), which has succeeded in gaining state appropriations for projects that contribute to the restoration and protection of the Loxahatchee River and Watershed.

Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative

The Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI) is the outgrowth of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan. In the past, several key projects crucial to preserving the long-term health of the Loxahatchee River could not be implemented due to lack of resources and other regional priorities taking precedence. To address this problem, the LRPI was formed in 2000 with the single purpose of seeking funds for projects that would improve and protect the natural

resources within the watershed. The LRPI has been successful in obtaining approximately six million dollars for projects. Urban stormwater improvements and the restoration of tributaries to the Loxahatchee, including the estuarine portion of the river system, are projects emphasized by the LRPI.

Jonathan Dickinson State Park Unit Management Plan

This plan serves as a basic statement of policy and direction of JDSP as a unit of Florida's State Park System (FDEP 2000). It identifies the objectives, criteria and standards that guide each aspect of park administration and sets forth specific measures that will be implemented to meet management objectives. The plan is divided into three interrelated components: resource management, land use and operations. Park goals and objectives include preserving the park's natural resources, creating awareness and appreciation for the park, enhancing organized programs and increasing attendance and visitation.

The park consists of approximately 11,471 acres in Martin County and northern Palm Beach County. Within the park, 2,600 acres comprise a wilderness preserve and 2,100 acres consist of the highly endangered scrub community. Twelve natural communities occur within the unit, including six wetland communities. The park also contains most of the National Wild and Scenic Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and all the waters within the unit have been designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. These rare natural features create an exceptional environment for plants and wildlife including many designated species.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve

The Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve was adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund in 1970 and is managed by the FDEP Southeast Aquatic Preserves Field Office in Fort Pierce. The area north of RM 5.5 on the Northwest Fork was designated as a "wilderness preserve". The primary management objective for this area is the maintenance of the Northwest Fork ecosystems in an essentially natural state. The area south of RM 5.5 has been designated as an "urban preserve". The management objective for this area is the maintenance of existing natural systems and restoration to that condition where possible. Management, which is achieved primarily through the permit review process, is also directed to public recreational opportunities while assuring the continued propagation of fish and wildlife. Primary management concerns include saltwater intrusion into the Northwest Fork, water quality, altered hydroperiod and diversion of water from the watershed due to potable water withdrawals and water for irrigation, and the presence of invasive exotic species. Aquatic Preserve staff relies heavily on research and monitoring data provided by the LRD, SFWMD and local researchers to protect the natural resources associated with the Loxahatchee River.

Jupiter Inlet District Management Plan for the Loxahatchee River

This plan is intended to continue public recreational uses, improve the productivity of the river, and preserve and enhance the natural resources and multiple uses of the Loxahatchee River for which JID has authority (JID 1993). The plan addresses the portion of the Loxahatchee River west of the F.E.C. Railroad trestle including the Central Embayment, North Fork, Northwest Fork, Southwest Fork, C-18 Canal, and minor tributaries. Thirty prioritized options were included in the plan. One of the specific actions that have been taken is the restoration of four oxbows in the Northwest Fork to preserve natural hydrological functions.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

There are eleven chapters in the plan document. The next section of the document is **Chapter 2, The Loxahatchee River Watershed**; which describes the Loxahatchee River and its tributaries, the Loxahatchee estuary, and the surrounding land areas. The watershed is divided into 12 drainage basins based on hydrology and land use. Water quality and water resource utilization of the watershed are also described.

Chapter 3, The Ecosystems of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary, describes the floodplain and estuarine ecosystems of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The historic and present day distributions of species in the floodplain forest communities and oligohaline, mesohaline, and polyhaline ecozones are also presented. The occurrence of endangered, threatened or species of special concern are included in the ecosystem descriptions.

Chapter 4, Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) and Performance Measures (PMs), describes the Valued Ecosystem Components selected to represent the freshwater and tidal floodplain, and estuarine ecosystems. The Performance Measures used to assess the results of the restoration flow scenario evaluation process are also identified.

Chapter 5, Determining Hydroperiods and Flow Requirements in the Riverine Floodplain, describes habitat quality and floodplain hydrologic evaluations.

Chapter 6, Modeling Freshwater Flow and Salinity in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary, describes the watershed hydrology and the models used to predict long-term freshwater flow and salinity. Results from the model calibration, validation, and long-term simulations are presented. The freshwater flow and salinity relationships are summarized.

Chapter 7, The Northwest Fork Restoration Flow Scenarios: Initial Evaluation, describes the alternative constant flow scenarios formulated for modeling, the modeling results and the ecological assessment of the initial alternatives.

Chapter 8, Development of the Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, describes the variable flow scenarios analyzed to identify an effective restorative flow scenario that will protect the riverine freshwater floodplain, restore the tidal floodplain to the extent possible and protect the estuarine VECs of the Northwest Fork.

Chapter 9, The Saltwater Barrier as a Restoration Alternative, describes the 3-D salinity model used, the preliminary modeling study of salinity management using different types of salinity barriers, and the ecological considerations associated with saltwater barriers.

Chapter 10, Ecological Monitoring for Adaptive Management, identifies the vegetation and hydroperiod monitoring in the freshwater floodplain, vegetation and salinity monitoring in the tidal floodplain, benthos/fish larvae monitoring in the oligohaline ecozone, oyster monitoring in the mesohaline ecozone, and seagrass monitoring in the polyhaline ecozone necessary to evaluate the effects of restorative flows to the Northwest Fork.

Chapter 11, Restoration Implementation, identifies the programs such as CERP, the projects such as the L-8 Reservoir and regulatory efforts such as Water Reservations that will create and establish the means to achieve the flow targets for the Northwest Fork. Improved operations that will be required in the coming decades to achieve these restorative flows are also addressed.

SUMMARY

In summary, the overall purpose of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Restoration Plan is to establish a combination of flows and other water management practices that will restore and protect the ecological health of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Development of a restorative dry season/wet season hydrologic flow pattern will:

- Maintain or improve the hydroperiod of the riverine floodplain,
- Increase the growth and recruitment of desired freshwater vegetation and control the expansion of mangroves and exotic species in the tidally influenced floodplain, and
- Minimize the impact on the habitats of estuarine biota in the Northwest Fork, Central Embayment Area and Estuary.

The improved wet season/dry season flows to the Northwest Fork over the Lainhart Dam and from its tributaries, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek and other dry season measures are intended to protect the freshwater floodplain and improve the quality of the tidally influenced portion of the floodplain. This will maintain and protect vegetation, fish and wildlife values within the constraints of the influence of the Jupiter Inlet, sea level rise, and existing levels of flood control, C-18, G-92 and S-46. Current levels of navigation and recreation on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will be maintained.

CHAPTER 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Watershed Description	3
Drainage Basins	4
Basin 1: Kitch Gauge.....	6
Basin 2: North Fork.	6
Basin 3: Park River.....	6
Basin 4: Lox Estuarine.	6
Basin 5: C-18/Corbett.....	7
Basin 6: Historic Cypress Creek.....	7
Basin 7: Pal-Mar	7
Basin 8: Grove West.	7
Basin 9: Grove East.	7
Basin 10: Jupiter Farms.	7
Basin 11: Wild and Scenic.....	8
Basin 12: Coastal.	8
Adjacent Basin: L-8/Grassy.....	8
Watershed Hydrology	8
Climate, Rainfall and Seasonal Weather Patterns.....	8
Tributary and Canal System	10
Water Quality	11
Water Quality Monitoring Activities	11
Salinity and Tide	12
Nutrients	13
Water Quality Summary.....	15
Water Resource Utilization.....	16
Water Supply	16
Flood Protection.....	17
Navigation and Recreation	18

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1. Location of the Loxahatchee River, Major Tributaries, Natural Areas, and Water Control Structures in the Watershed.....	4
Figure 2-2. The 12 Major Drainage Basins in the Loxahatchee River Watershed	5
Figure 2-3. Long-Term Annual Rainfall for Northern Palm Beach and Southern Martin Counties (1914–2000) Based on the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM).	9
Figure 2-4. Average, Minimum and Maximum Rainfall Values, by Month, for Northern Palm Beach and Southern Martin Counties (1914–2000) Based on the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM).	9
Figure 2-5. Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Water Quality Sampling Stations.....	12
Figure 2-6. Average Annual Salinity at Five Locations in the Loxahatchee Estuary from November 1, 2003 to October 31, 2004.....	13
Figure 2-7. Total Phosphorus Concentrations for Estuarine Locations from 1994 to 2000 (Dent 2001).	14
Figure 2-8. Total Nitrogen Concentrations for Estuarine Locations from 1994 to 2000 (Dent 2001).	15

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1. Loxahatchee River Watershed 1995 Land Use By Drainage Basin - Developed Areas Updated for the Year 2000 (Acres/Square Miles).....	6
Table 2-2. Comparison of Dry Season Salinity with Annual Average Salinity (ppt) for 2004.	13

Chapter 2

The Loxahatchee River Watershed

WATERSHED DESCRIPTION

The Loxahatchee River Watershed is located within northern Palm Beach and southern Martin counties and currently drains an area of approximately 240 square miles. Much of the watershed remains as undeveloped sloughs and wetlands. In the upper portion of the watershed, nearly half of the drainage basin is comprised of wetlands. Agriculture and forested uplands in the northern area of the basin comprise one quarter of the watershed. The remaining quarter of the watershed consists of developed urban areas.

The current headwaters of the Wild and Scenic portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River begin in the Hungryland Slough and Loxahatchee Slough. From the Loxahatchee Slough, water flows north in the C-18 Canal, through the G-92 Structure, over the Lainhart Dam into the natural river stream of the Northwest Fork. It enters Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP), first in Palm Beach County and then Martin County, and continues along a northerly course, then bends east and continues southeast finally entering the Central Embayment area of the Loxahatchee River. Although the majority of the water that feeds the Northwest Fork comes from northern Palm Beach County, water also flows to the Northwest Fork from southern Martin County, through Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, Wilson Creek, Moonshine Creek and Kitching Creek. The North Fork headwaters are defined by the Atlantic Coastal Ridge in eastern Martin County and flow south-southeast into the Central Embayment. In 1957 the Southwest Fork was channelized to form the C-18 Canal to move water flows to the northeast, providing flood control to northern Palm Beach County. The Loxahatchee Estuary's Central Embayment is located at the center of three major tributaries – the Northwest Fork, the North Fork and the Southwest Fork (**Figure 2-1**).



Figure 2-1. Location of the Loxahatchee River, Major Tributaries, Natural Areas, and Water Control Structures in the Watershed.

The Loxahatchee River Watershed contains a number of natural areas that are essentially intact and publicly owned. These areas include the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, JDSP, Hungryland Slough Natural Area, Grassy Waters Preserve/West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area, Loxahatchee Slough, Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, Juno Hills Natural Area, Jupiter Ridge Natural Area, Pal-Mar, Cypress Creek and the Atlantic Coastal Ridge. These natural areas contain pinelands, sand pine scrub, xeric oak scrub, hardwood hammocks, freshwater marshes, wet prairies, cypress swamps, mangrove swamps, ponds, sloughs, river and streams, seagrass and oyster beds, and coastal dunes (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1999). These natural areas support diverse biological communities which contain many protected species (FDEP 2002).

DRAINAGE BASINS

Some of the major tributaries of the Loxahatchee River Watershed, such as the North Fork, the Northwest Fork and Kitching Creek, exist today largely within their historic banks. Other tributaries, such as the Southwest Fork, Limestone Creek and parts of Cypress Creek, have been altered over time.

The watershed drainage patterns have been significantly altered with the building of roads (e.g., S.R. 710, I-95 and the Florida Turnpike), construction of the C-18 Canal and other

associated water control structures, and the development of an extensive secondary canal network. Canals were designed to provide drainage and flood protection for agricultural and urban development and the conveyance of water for potable use and irrigation. Over time, drainage and development in the watershed have lowered ground water levels and altered natural flow regimes and drainage patterns.

For this plan the Loxahatchee River Watershed has been delineated into 12 drainage basins. These delineations were based first on the location of historic flow gauges in the watershed. Other information considered in the delineation included hydrology, land use, topography, permit information, detailed aerial photography, Kitching Creek Water Quality Improvement Project (Earth Tech 1999), Pal-Mar/Cypress Creek and the Groves Basin Study (Tomasello Consulting 2003), Loxahatchee Watershed Action Plan (FDEP 2002), and field observations. These 12 basins represent the same areas as the 7 sub-basins described in the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan (FDEP 2002); four of the FDEP sub-basins have been subdivided into separate basins to reflect the specific needs of this plan. The basins vary in size from 5 square miles to 100 square miles, and they provide flow to the three forks of the Loxahatchee River (Figure 2-2). This delineation shall be refined as additional information becomes available.

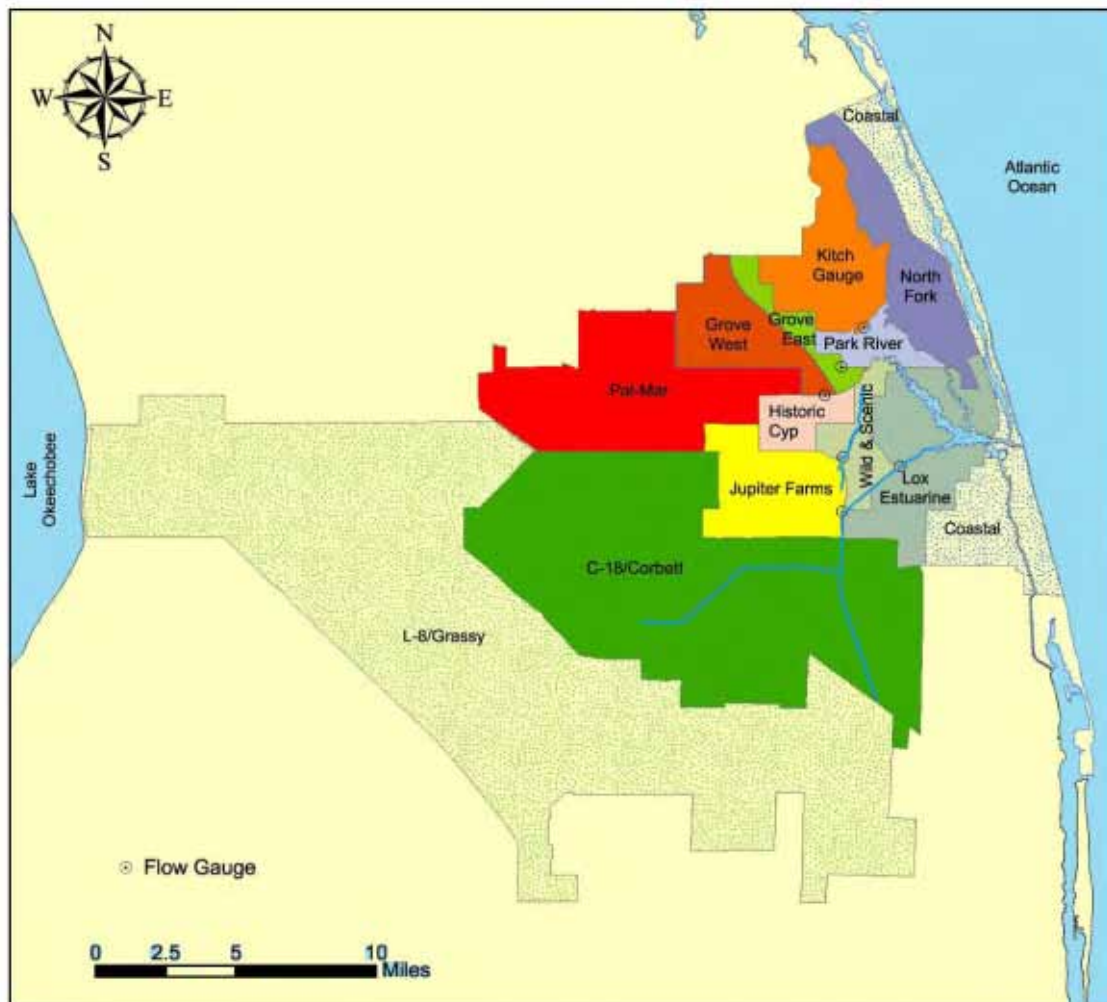


Figure 2-2. The 12 Major Drainage Basins in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

The 1995 land use for these basins has been modified to include changes in the developed areas for the year 2000. For purposes of this plan, the 133 land use codes were reduced to six land use categories; Citrus & Vegetables, Forest, Marsh Wetland, Other Wetland, Urban, and Other Land. **Table 2-1** shows the breakdown of land use by basin for the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

Table 2-1. Loxahatchee River Watershed 1995 Land Use By Drainage Basin - Developed Areas Updated for the Year 2000 (Acres/Square Miles).

Basin	Land Use (acres)						Total Area by Basin	
	Citrus & Vegetables	Forest	Marsh & Wet Prairie Wetland	Other Wetland	Urban	Other Land	Acres	Square Miles
1. Kitch Gauge	16	876	4,954	1,010	309	3,177	10,342	16.2
2. North Fork	0	95	8,238	735	1,774	156	10,999	17.2
3. Park River	14	60	2,483	47	31	408	3,044	4.8
4. Lox Estuarine	591	305	1,155	617	10,536	34	13,237	20.7
5. C-18/Corbett	1,821	822	43,591	4,749	9,199	3,312	63,494	99.5
6. Historic Cypress Creek	340	12	2,993	132	85	20	3,581	5.6
7. Pal-Mar	266	88	19,477	555	1,672	605	22,663	35.4
8. Grove West	4,107	168	2,878	86	54	906	8,199	12.8
9. Grove East	1,709	143	397	105	309	345	3,010	4.7
10. Jupiter Farms	8	89	494	168	9,359	128	10,246	16.0
11. Wild & Scenic	752	142	2,562	220	278	392	4,345	6.8
12. Coastal	0	2,190	2,212	2,180	8,899	391	15,872	24.9
Total Area by Land Use	Acres	9,624	4,990	91,434	10,603	42,505	9,874	169,031
	Square Miles	15.1	7.8	143.3	16.6	66.6	15.5	264.9

Note: Blue shaded rows are watershed basins that flow into the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Basin 1: Kitch Gauge. This basin contains the 16.2-square mile area that contributes water to the USGS Kitching Creek flow gauge in Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP). Almost 50 percent of this basin, 4,654 acres, is characterized as marsh wetland. Downstream of this basin Kitching Creek flows into the Northwest Fork near River Mile 8.2.

Basin 2: North Fork. This basin contains the 17.2-square mile area that contributes water to the North Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Approximately 75 percent of this basin (8,238 acres) is marsh wetland. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Basin 3: Park River. This basin contains the 4.8-square mile area that drains to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. It includes the portion of land draining to Kitching Creek downstream of the USGS gauge and some smaller tributaries such as Wilson Creek and the creek flowing through the Boy Scout Camp. Approximately 82 percent (2,483 acres) of this basin is marsh wetland. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Basin 4: Lox Estuarine. This central drainage basin contains the 20.7-square mile area that is highly developed with urban land uses that contribute significant runoff to the Central Embayment of the Loxahatchee River. This basin provides aquatic recreational opportunities that sometimes exceed the river's carrying capacity on weekends and holidays. Runoff and

groundwater from this basin flow to brackish waters of the estuary. Approximately 80 percent (10,536 acres) of this basin is urban. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Basin 5: C-18/Corbett. Covering nearly 100 square miles, this is the largest basin in the Loxahatchee River Watershed. Much of the land in this basin encompasses the southwestern portion of the watershed, and is publicly owned and protected. This basin includes the remnants of the Hungryland and Loxahatchee Sloughs, which historically fed the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. At one time, the Loxahatchee Slough extended south into what is now known as the Grassy Waters Preserve (West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area), which is the source of drinking water for the City of West Palm Beach. Water from this basin flows to the C-18 Canal, and either flows to the Southwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River through the S-46 Structure or flows through the G-92 Structure to the upper end of Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Approximately 69 percent (43,591 acres) of this basin is marsh wetland. Flow gauges are located at the G-92 and the S-46 structures.

Basin 6: Historic Cypress Creek. Cypress Creek is a 5.6-square mile basin that drains to Cypress Creek just downstream of the Cypress Creek flow gauge. The majority of this basin has recently been purchased by state and local governments for restoration and preservation. Water from this basin flows into Cypress Creek, which then flows into the upper end of the Northwest Fork near River Mile 10.3. Approximately 84 percent (2,993 acres) of this basin is marsh wetland. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Basin 7: Pal-Mar. Pal-Mar is a large 35.4-square mile basin. It drains a sizable wetland located along the western edge of the watershed and is one of the major tributaries to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Most of these wetlands remain intact; however, the eastern flow ways leading to Cypress Creek have been disturbed by rural development. Approximately 86 percent (19,477 acres) of this basin is marsh wetland. Water from this basin flows into Cypress Creek upstream of the Cypress Creek flow gauge and then flows into the Historic Cypress Creek Basin.

Basin 8: Grove West. The predominant land use in this 12.8-square mile basin is citrus. Although the hydrology in this basin was altered to support agriculture, wildlife utilization is good and the land provides a valuable greenway link between large natural areas within the watershed. Approximately 50 percent (4,107 acres) of this basin is used for vegetables and citrus. Water from this basin flows into Cypress Creek upstream of the Cypress Creek flow gauge and then flows into the Historic Cypress Creek Basin.

Basin 9: Grove East. The predominant land use in this 4.7-square mile basin is citrus. Although the hydrology in this basin was altered to support agriculture, wildlife utilization is good and the land provides a valuable greenway link between large natural areas within the watershed. Approximately 57 percent (1,709 acres) of this basin is used for vegetables and citrus. Water from this basin flows into Hobe Grove Ditch (RM 9.07) and Moonshine Creek (RM 10.0), which both flow into the Northwest Fork near River Mile 9.0.

Basin 10: Jupiter Farms. This basin is 16.0 square miles and supports substantial rural residential development known as Jupiter Farms. The South Indian River Water Control District (SIRWCD) manages a stormwater management system of canals to serve this area. Water quality and saltwater intrusion in the Northwest Fork are concerns in this basin (FDEP 2002). Water from this basin flows into the SIRWCD C-14 Canal which flows over Lainhart Dam feeding the upper end of the Northwest Fork. The C-18 Canal is connected to this basin by the G-92 Structure, which also provides periodic flows of water over the Lainhart Dam from the C-18 Canal. Approximately 91 percent (9,359 acres) of this basin is urban land. There is a flow gauge at both G-92 and Lainhart Dam.

Basin 11: Wild and Scenic. This basin contains the “Wild and Scenic” Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and the northern portion of Riverbend Park. Approximately 59 percent of the 6.8-square mile area (2,562 acres) is marsh wetland. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Basin 12: Coastal. The coastal basin contains the 25-square mile area that drains to the Atlantic Ocean or the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) and out the Jupiter Inlet. This basin has been developed for maximum urban residential, commercial and recreational use. Very few small and isolated natural areas remain. Most of the surface water and ground water from this basin flow to marine waters rather than toward the freshwater portion of the Northwest Fork. The flow from this basin is not gauged.

Adjacent Basin: L-8/Grassy. This 192.5-square mile basin is not considered part of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. However, this basin has several outflow locations, one of which is to the C-18/Corbett Basin. Thus, the inter-basin transfers of waters from Grassy Waters to the C-18 Canal are considered in this plan. There are no flow gauges at this inter-basin location.

WATERSHED HYDROLOGY

CLIMATE, RAINFALL AND SEASONAL WEATHER PATTERNS

The subtropical regional climate for the area has daily temperatures ranging from an average of 82°F in summer (May-October) to 66°F in winter (November-April) with an annual temperature of 75°F (Breedlove Associates, Inc. 1982). Prevailing marine east/southeast winds with an average velocity of approximately 10 miles per hour keep the air within the watershed area moist and unstable, leading to frequent rain showers of short duration.

Annual rainfall amounts received within northern Palm Beach and southern Martin counties are summarized in **Figure 2-3** and represent the years from 1914 to 2000 (data from South Florida Water Management Model, version 9.7). Mean annual rainfall for the entire 86-year period of record was 60.4 inches with a median of 57.7 inches. The maximum annual rainfalls recorded were 92.9 inches in 1947 and 91.6 inches in 1994. Minimum rainfall values occurred in 1956 (38.4 inches) and 1961 (41 inches). Review of the distribution of annual rainfall data over time showed that a variance of about 10 percent of the mean (± 6 inches) occurs about once every 3 years on average. Extreme dry and wet periods can be defined as a variance of more than 20 percent of the mean (± 12 inches). Based on this definition, the long-term record shows that an extreme dry period occurs within the watershed once every 8.6 years, while extreme wet periods occur about once every 5.7 years.

The average, minimum, and maximum monthly rainfall amounts for northern Palm Beach and southern Martin counties for 1914-2000 are summarized in **Figure 2-4**. On average, the highest rainfall of 8.7 inches per month occurs during September, while minimum average values range from 2.3 inches to 2.8 inches per month and occur during December, January and February. May and November are transitional months and sometimes represent key months for prolonging or reducing a drought or flood condition. Dent (1977a) reported that since the early 1960s, about two-thirds of the annual precipitation (40.63 inches) occurs during the wet season (June–November), while the remaining one-third (20.42 inches) falls during the dry season (December–May). During the winter and early spring, some years have long periods of little or no rainfall, resulting in a regional drought condition. In contrast, during the wet season, tropical storms or hurricanes over the area can produce as much as 6 inches to 10 inches of rainfall in one day.

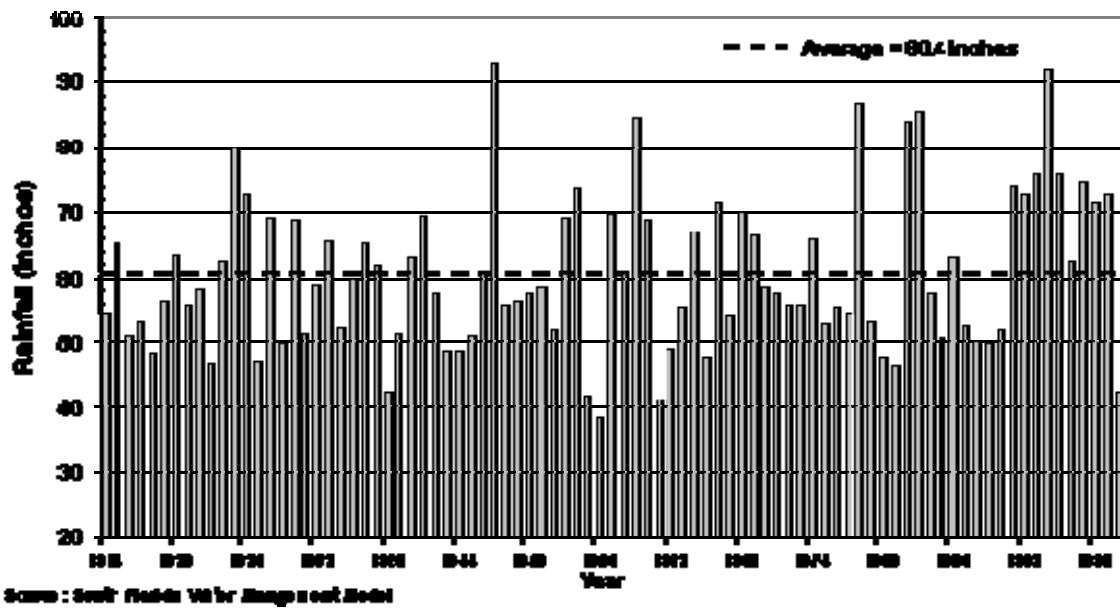


Figure 2-3. Long-Term Annual Rainfall for Northern Palm Beach and Southern Martin Counties (1914–2000) Based on the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM).

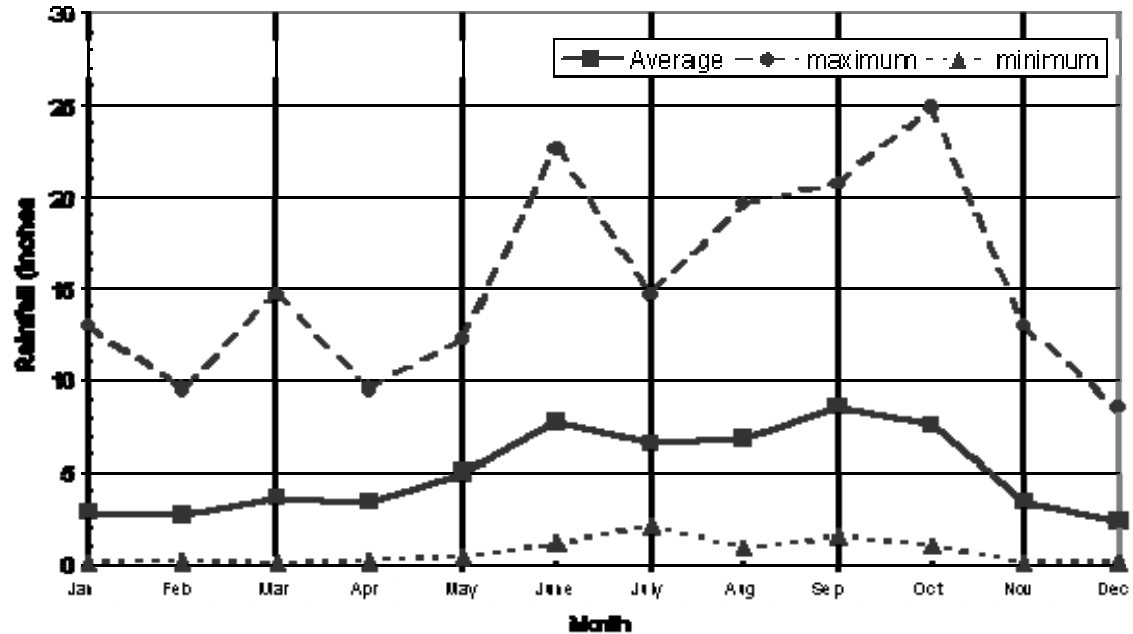


Figure 2-4. Average, Minimum and Maximum Rainfall Values, by Month, for Northern Palm Beach and Southern Martin Counties (1914–2000) Based on the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM).

TRIBUTARY AND CANAL SYSTEM

The Northwest Fork once drained the majority of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. The headwaters to the river began in the marshes of the Loxahatchee and Hungryland Sloughs, and in what is now Grassy Waters Preserve (**Figure 2-1**). The Loxahatchee Slough once extended south to the Grassy Waters Preserve (West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area). Increased urban and agricultural development over the last 100 years has greatly altered the natural system of the Loxahatchee River Watershed from what once was defined by natural landforms. Navigation, drainage and flood control activities have significantly altered the volume, timing and distribution of freshwater flow, both in quality and quantity, throughout the Loxahatchee River and Estuary system. The reduction in flow can be attributed to the diversion of the historic Northwest Fork flows by the construction of C-18 Canal. This area, once drained as sheet flow across flat landscape, has become divided by canals, levees and drainage ditches. Over time these changes have lowered the water table and have allowed the land to drain much faster. Along with the stabilization of the Jupiter Inlet, reduced flows to the Northwest Fork have allowed salt water to move further upstream.

The C-18 Canal drains through a gated water control structure, S-46. In order to reduce the amount of fresh water lost to tide, the operation of S-46 was modified in 1981 to provide water storage in the canal. The automated operation of the gates at S-46 maintains an optimum headwater elevation of 14.8 feet when sufficient water is available. When C-18 Canal levels are more than 15 feet above mean sea level, water is released through S-46 to the Southwest Fork. The S-46 Structure also prevents salt water from moving upstream into the C-18/Corbett Basin.

Water is conveyed from the Loxahatchee Slough north through the C-18 Canal, diverted through the G-92 Structure to the SIRWCD C-14 Canal, where it meets the Northwest Fork and then flows over the Lainhart and Masten Dams. The G-92 Structure was installed to direct flow into the Northwest Fork from C-18. Updated in 1987 to a gated control structure, G-92 is capable of providing 400 cfs of water to the Northwest Fork. Operation of this structure is by remote telemetry under a Consent Agreement between the SFWMD and the South Indian River Water Control District to allow conveyance of environmental flows to the Northwest Fork (1989; **Appendix E**). This Consent Agreement requires the SFWMD to operate the G-92 Structure to provide 50 cfs of flow, when available to the Northwest Fork. During extremely wet storm events, G-92 moves excess water into the C-18 for flood protection.

The Lainhart Dam, built in the 1930s, and the Masten Dam have slowed the flow of freshwater through the upper Northwest Fork. Today, the reconstructed Lainhart Dam provides close to 50 percent of the total flow to the Northwest Fork. In some months, flow can be as low as 28 percent or as high as 72 percent.

At RM 10.3, Cypress Creek provides a considerable volume of surface water to the Northwest Fork especially during low flow periods. Located downstream from the Trapper Nelson site (RM 10.5) in JDSP, this tributary enters the river from the west providing on average 26 percent to 32 percent of the total flow to the Northwest Fork. Flows from Cypress Creek are controlled by a structure operated by Hobe St. Lucie Water Control District, a local drainage district.

The Hobe Grove Ditch drains to the east of the Florida Turnpike entering the Northwest Fork at River Mile 9.07. Flows from this ditch average approximately 5 percent of the freshwater into the Northwest Fork. A water control structure at this ditch is operated by the Hobe St. Lucie Water Control District.

At RM 8.13, Kitching Creek contributes 11 percent to 13 percent of all the flows to the Northwest Fork. Kitching Creek is located in an area of ponds and marshes that includes properties just north of and within JDSP. Water retention in this area is high because it is the least developed of all the major tributaries contributing flows to the Northwest Fork.

Direct rainfall, surface water flow and groundwater seepage are the three sources from which water enters the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Rainfall is also the major source of freshwater that fills the surface water bodies and channels and recharges the shallow aquifers. Because of the network of canals and ditches and the lack of storage, most of the rainfall flows as stormwater runoff during the rainy season. Therefore, less water is available during the dry season to maintain sufficient flows to the Northwest Fork.

WATER QUALITY

WATER QUALITY MONITORING ACTIVITIES

During the last 25 years, the surface waters of the Jupiter Inlet-Loxahatchee River have been extensively sampled and analyzed for water quality. In the 1970s and 1980s, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) provided a water quality monitoring presence from the federal perspective. The FDEP and the SFWMD each sponsored monitoring programs from the state and regional perspective. On the county and local level, the Palm Beach County Health Department, the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management and the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) also monitored water quality. Water quality as well as water quantity improvements are a major concern for Loxahatchee River Watershed. The LRD continues bi-monthly water quality monitoring to document the status and progress of improved water quality conditions.

Since 1992, the LRD has assumed responsibility for comprehensive monitoring in the river and now monitors 43 stations every other month (**Figure 2-5**, see also **Appendix D**). Of these sites, 18 are located in the Northwest Fork. In the early 1990s, the LRD, in cooperation with a technical advisory committee comprised of representatives of the other monitoring agencies, organized the existing water quality data by tabulating and screening all previously collected data. A common database was established and the data presented in a format which could be indexed, composited and compared to Florida State values and standards. The resultant information was further organized by dividing the Loxahatchee River into 29 sample locations in four ecological segments (Marine, Estuarine, Wild and Scenic, and Freshwater Tributaries). Five time-groupings covering 22 specific water quality parameters were developed. This procedure was initiated in 1995 and the water quality data are updated every six months.

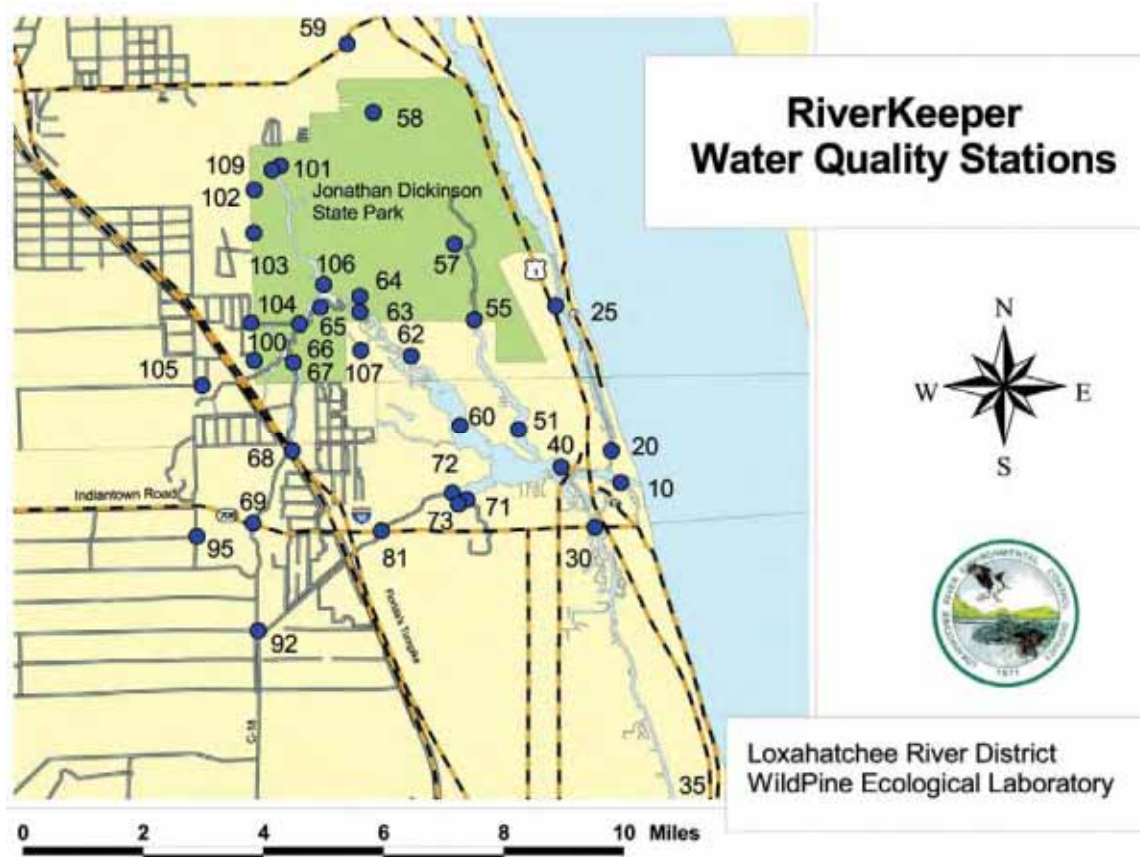


Figure 2-5. Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Water Quality Sampling Stations.

SALINITY AND TIDE

The Loxahatchee Estuary was formed several thousands years ago when sea water flooded the embayment area as a result of sea level rise. Now the saltwater front has reached the upper Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The mean tidal range in the estuary is approximately 2 feet; the estimated mean tidal prism at A1A Bridge is approximately 3226 acre-feet. (McPherson et al. 1982).

Salinity distribution in the Loxahatchee Estuary is characterized by longitudinal and vertical salinity gradients that change daily with tides and seasonally with the quantity of the freshwater flow. A network of tidal and salinity monitoring stations has been deployed in the estuary since October 2002. **Figure 2-6** shows the annual average salinity over the period from November 1, 2003 to October 31, 2004.

The salinity measurements were taken at five stations in the Northwest Fork and the estuary: RM 9.1; RM 8.1 (KC) the confluence of the Northwest Fork and Kitching Creek; RM 5.9 (BD) the Boy Scout Camp Dock; RM 1.8 (PD) Pompano Drive on the south shore of the embayment area; and RM 0.7 (CG) the Coast Guard station near the Jupiter Inlet. **Table 2-2** compares the monthly average salinity in April 2004 with the annual average salinity of 2004. April was a relatively dry month for the year 2004 so there was a reduced amount of fresh water entering the estuary which resulted in a higher salinity than the annual average salinity. This difference was the most apparent at the Boy Scout Camp station near River Mile 5.9.

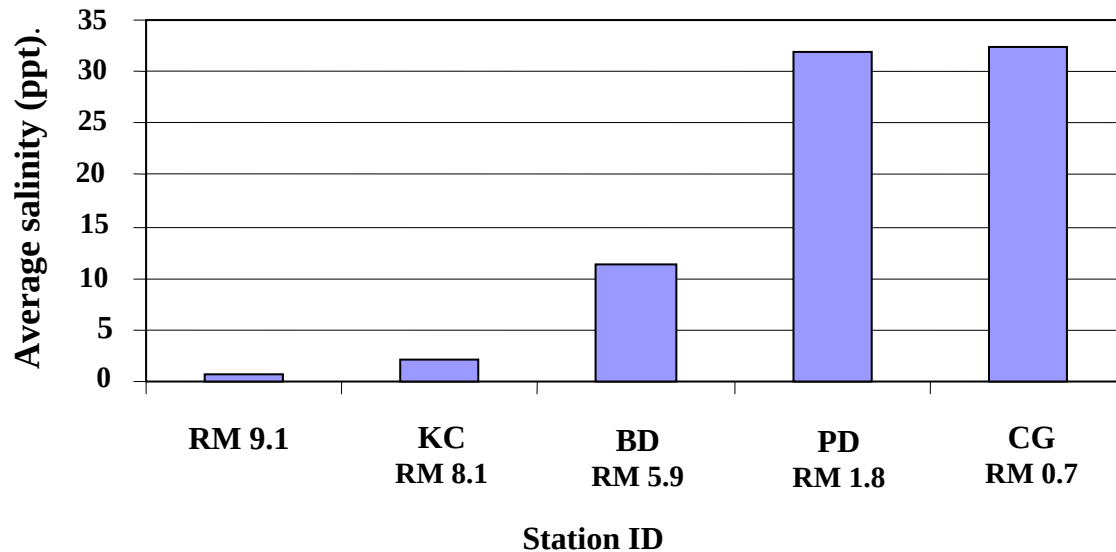


Figure 2-6. Average Annual Salinity at Five Locations in the Loxahatchee Estuary from November 1, 2003 to October 31, 2004.

Table 2-2. Comparison of Dry Season Salinity with Annual Average Salinity (ppt) for 2004.

Station ID	RM 9.1	KC	BD	PD	CG
Dry season salinity (ppt)	1.43	5.13	18.26	34.87	34.96
Annual average salinity (ppt)	0.61	2.17	11.34	32.04	32.36

The upstream migration of salt water into the historic freshwater reaches of the Loxahatchee River is the likely cause of the altered floodplain bald cypress forest community along the Northwest Fork and some of its tributaries (McPherson et. al. 1982). A hydrodynamic/salinity model was developed to study the influence of freshwater input on the salinity conditions in the Loxahatchee River Estuary. Both the field data and model simulations indicate a strong correlation between freshwater flow and the salinity regime in the estuary (See **Chapter 6**).

The salinity values in **Table 2-2** are annual average or dry season average salinities. The actual salinity in the Loxahatchee River varies greatly in response to the amount of freshwater flow and tides. The salinity changes hourly in response to tides, however, it can take days to respond to changes in freshwater flow from the tributaries.

NUTRIENTS

Large amounts of nutrients are typically present in any estuary system. Nutrient sources can include groundwater, runoff from fertilizers, other chemicals entering the system through precipitation and rainfall, and the normal breakdown of soil and water. In addition, with the tidal transition from freshwater to saltwater there is high organism mortality which contributes to the rapid cycling of nutrients and high productivity in the estuary (SFWMD 2002).

The Florida Water Quality Index (FWQI), a composite of clarity, oxygen, organic demand, nutrients, bacteria and biological integrity, is used to compare sampling sites statewide giving values ranging from 0 to 90. Lower values indicate better water quality conditions (Dent 1998). The LRD sampled two stations in the Northwest Fork twice a year between 1992 and 1997. Station #60 is located 3.2 miles upstream of the Jupiter Inlet and Station #62 is located 2.1 miles further upstream from Station #60 (**Figure 2-5**). The FWQI values for these two stations averaged 37 and 41, respectively. These values indicated a water quality rating of good (Dent 1998).

A 24-year average (1970-1993) FWQI for the freshwater tributaries flowing into the Wild and Scenic corridor has remained fair at 48; however, the index improved to good with a 43 by the mid 1980s. This improvement was most likely due to an increase in flows to the Northwest Fork from the C-18 Canal, a Class I waterbody that is rated superior for the FWQI. This statewide water quality index considers a 45 or less to be a good rating and ranges above 45 are fair. Florida stream sites on average have a rating of 43 (FDEP 2000).

The Florida Trophic State Index (TSI) developed by the FDEP in the 1980s provides a way of classifying the trophic state of lakes and estuaries in Florida. The index categorizes the trophic status (oligotrophic, mesotrophic or eutrophic) based on the following parameters; nitrogen, phosphorus, chlorophyll and clarity as measured by secchi disc depth. The scale ranges from 0-100 with values of less than 50 receiving a good rating (oligotrophic), values ranging from 50 to less than 60 receive a fair rating (mesotrophic) and values of 60 or above receive a poor rating (eutrophic). For the 7-year period from 1994 to 2000 the TSI index rating in the NW Fork at Station #60 was 46 (good) and for Station #62 was 49 (good) (Dent 2001).

The annual average total phosphorus (TP) concentrations for the period 1994–2000 for seven estuarine stations ranged from 31 ppb to 75 ppb (see **Figure 2-7**). This range of values is considered high and is similar to the concentrations observed prior to 1990. These surface water concentrations were much lower than the statewide average of 80 ppb for the 1990 to 1998 period (Dent 2001).

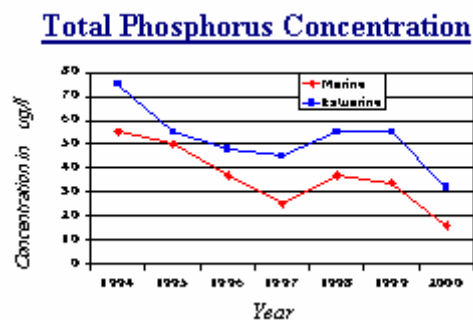


Figure 2-7. Total Phosphorus Concentrations for Estuarine Locations from 1994 to 2000 (Dent 2001).

The total nitrogen (TN) annual mean concentrations for these same seven stations ranged from 1.0 mg/L to 1.8 mg/L (**Figure 2-8**). The trend for this 7-year period showed an improvement from 1994 to 2000. Historically, TN values in the 1970s averaged 0.7 mg/L, which was significantly lower than the 1994-2000 values. In general, the concentrations are slightly higher than the statewide average of 1.2 mg/L for TN in estuarine waters. (Dent 2001)

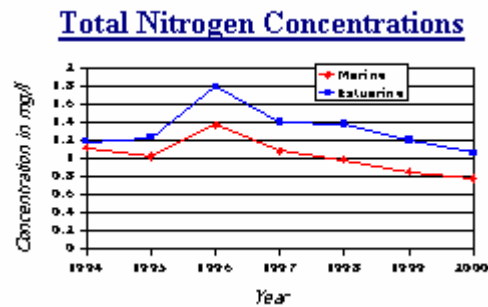


Figure 2-8. Total Nitrogen Concentrations for Estuarine Locations from 1994 to 2000 (Dent 2001).

WATER QUALITY SUMMARY

Seven groups of stations have been monitored over the years within the “Wild and Scenic” portion of the Northwest Fork. Additionally, six sampling sites are located in the freshwater tributaries flowing into the Northwest Fork. In general terms, the sampling results show that the water quality of the flows from the freshwater tributaries have remained fair for the period of record between 1970 and 1993. The trend is an overall decline in the quality of the flows from the tributaries over time. However, the water quality trend in the Northwest Fork is graded fair for the first portion of the monitoring period, and the grade improved to good in the mid-1990s.

The major reason for the improvement and apparent inconsistency with the declining quality of the input flows is believed to be the increased freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork from the C-18. The C-18 is a Class I water body and has rated superior to the other freshwater inputs and has not shown significant degradation over time.

In summary, water quality data have been compiled and analyzed by FDEP to determine current status and trends in this system. Results of this analysis indicate that water quality is generally adequate to meet the designated uses, which include the following:

- Class I, Potable water supply
C-18 Canal, upstream of S-46.
- Class II, Shellfish Harvesting and Propagation
The Northwest Fork
The North Fork,
Estuarine Waters and Aquatic Preserves
- Class III, Recreation and the Propagation of Fish and Wildlife
C-14 Canal
Downstream from the Florida East Coast Railroad Bridge to the Jupiter Inlet

A few exceptions have been noted at some locations where these standards are not met periodically as follows:

- Low levels of dissolved oxygen occur periodically in some parts of the system.
- Total coliform concentrations exceed safe standards periodically in the Northwest Fork near JDSP, in the North Fork near the Girl Scout Camp and at Dubois Park near the Jupiter Inlet.

- Rapid changes in salinity and increased turbidity are associated with high volume releases of freshwater through the S-46 Structure on the C-18 Canal during and after severe storm events. Also, increased turbidity is associated with flows from Cypress Creek into the Northwest Fork.
- Waters flows from agricultural lands occasionally contain measurable quantities of pesticides and low concentrations of dissolved oxygen that may cause fish mortality.
- Low levels of dissolved oxygen occur within the North Fork, Northwest Fork, Kitching Creek, Cypress Creek, Floodplain/Jupiter Farms, Jonathan Dickinson State Park, and the C-18 Canal water body segments.

Aside from the salinity issues, water quality issues in the Northwest Fork will be addressed through the identification of impaired water bodies and development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) criteria for segments of the river and its tributaries that have significant problems. Kitching Creek, Cypress Creek, Floodplain/Jupiter Farms, and the C-18 Canal are on the FDEP Verified List of Impaired Waterbodies for Biology and must be associated with causative pollutants, and will require further evaluation through the TMDL Program (FDEP 2003b).

WATER RESOURCE UTILIZATION

WATER SUPPLY

Water withdrawals for public water supply and agricultural irrigation in the watershed come directly from either groundwater through the surficial or Floridan aquifer, and/or through surface water from lakes. Most irrigation permits with a permitted surface water source also have groundwater allowance. Water withdrawals from the surficial aquifer can influence the water levels in the adjacent wetlands and affect the groundwater flow to the river and estuary and are therefore limited. To meet regional urban water supply demands, the use of alternative sources of water supply in the basin has been essential to ensure the long-term health of the Northwest Fork ecosystem. Wastewater reuse supplies for irrigation in the region are almost completely utilized. Most of the public water supply utilities desalinate brackish water withdrawn from the Floridan Aquifer to augment supplies while preserving limited fresh water supplies for the environment. Due to the confined nature of the deep Floridan aquifer, withdrawals from this source do not directly influence water flows to local wetlands, the river or estuary.

The land uses in the Loxahatchee River Watershed consist of about 20,000 acres of agriculture (11% of the watershed), 32,000 acres (18%) urban and industrial, 120,000 acres (67%) water bodies and conservation lands, and 8,000 acres (4%) recreational. Total water use in the basin is estimated at about 100 million gallons per day (mgd), of which public water supply is 68 percent, agriculture accounts for an estimated 18 percent, and golf courses and industrial uses account for about 14 percent.

Access to fresh groundwater is limited due to shallow, thin aquifers, the saline tides coming from the inlet and the presence of several isolated wetlands to the west. The low permeable fine sand, silt and hardpan beds slow down the vertical flow of water through the mixed layer aquifer. Rainfall provides the major source of freshwater, filling surface water bodies and channels and eventually recharging the shallow aquifer system. Water is generally found between 80 feet and 150 feet below the surface. Surficial aquifer wells in the watershed draw 150 gallons to 300 gallons per minute depending on the size of the well and its location relative to the substrate.

A significant amount of water is withdrawn from the Floridan aquifer for public water supply in this area. The Town of Jupiter has constructed brackish water desalination facilities capable of

producing 13.7 mgd from the Florida aquifer, while the Village of Tequesta has constructed a desalination facility which has the potential to provide approximately 2.5 mgd.

The SFWMD regulates all surface water or groundwater withdrawals for consumptive use through permits, except for domestic uses. Consumptive use permits (CUP) are issued for public water supplies, agricultural and golf course irrigation, dewatering, and industrial withdrawals. Seawater, reclaimed water, and water used for domestic self-supply and fire-fighting are excluded from the permitting process. Permits issued have a fixed duration and applicants must reapply for renewal once they expire. To receive a CUP the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed water use is reasonable - beneficial; it will not interfere with existing legal users and is consistent with the public interest. The combined annual allocation for all water use permits within the watershed as of May 2002 was 37,672 million gallons per year which is an overall average of about 100 million gallons per day.

During drought conditions, fresh water supplies from the Surficial aquifer are reduced while demands for public water supplies and irrigation normally increase. In such circumstances, increased withdrawals from the Surficial aquifer have the potential to cause significant harm to the water resources in the watershed. Therefore, during water shortages, the SFWMD restricts the consumptive use withdrawals, based on the concept of equitable distribution between users and the water resources. Under this program there are four levels or phases of water shortage restrictions that are imposed relative to the severity of the drought conditions. Golf courses that use reclaimed wastewater for irrigation are exempt from water shortage restrictions.

FLOOD PROTECTION

The C-18 Canal, with its many secondary and tertiary networks, is part of the regional primary drainage system of the SFWMD providing flood protection to the Loxahatchee River Watershed. The C-18 Canal was constructed through the central portion of the Loxahatchee Slough in 1957 as part of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project (CSFFCP) to improve drainage and provide flood protection for adjacent agriculture, residential, and industrial land as well as J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area.

The G-92 Structure reconnects the C-18 Canal and the Loxahatchee Slough with the Northwest Fork. As a gated control structure, G-92 can pass 400 cfs in either direction especially during storm events via remote telemetry. In addition, it is designed to convey environmental flows of 50 cfs to the Northwest Fork when adequate water is available.

A major secondary drainage system, which is adjacent to the Northwest Fork, is operated and maintained by the South Indian River Water Control District (SIRWCD). This system lies north and west of C-18 Canal and serves a rural-residential area known as Jupiter Farms. Seven east-west collector canals drain this area into the C-14 Canal, which then directly flows into the Northwest Fork, just south of the Indiantown Road Bridge. A North-South canal, C-14, parallels the C-18, re-diverting water from the C-18 back to the Northwest Fork through G-92 Structure. The C-14 Canal ends where the natural meandering pattern of the river begins in the Northwest Fork. In 2004, sheet pile weirs, each with operable gates, were constructed at the east ends of Canals 2, 3, 4 and 5 and C-14 Canal north of its intersection with Canal 6. These structures will improve groundwater recharge in this area, reduce overdrainage in the dry season, and improve the quality of water flows into the Northwest Fork.

The primary flood control facility for the Loxahatchee River Watershed, water control structure S-46, is a reinforced concrete, gated spillway located on the C-18 Canal with flow by three stem-operated, vertical lift gates, which are remotely controlled. S-46 also supports water level gauges upstream and downstream by remote digital recorders, a gate position recorder and a rain gauge with a remote digital recorder. Gates are automatically controlled so that the operating

system opens or closes the gates in accordance with standard operational criteria. It is located approximately 0.5 miles east of the Florida Turnpike/Interstate-95 (I-95). It maintains optimum upstream water control stages in the C-18 Canal. The S-46 Structure is designed to pass 50 percent of the Standard Project Flood without exceeding the upstream flood design stage; it restricts downstream flood stages and channel velocities to non-damaging levels.

The managed water levels in the river and canal systems of the Loxahatchee Watershed provide for drainage of land and some storage of water during the wet season. The C-18 Canal also provides for adequate conveyance capacity to protect lives and property in the surrounding upland residential areas from flood damage during severe storm events. The amount of area available for storage in the C-18/Corbett Basin is limited.

NAVIGATION AND RECREATION

The Loxahatchee River's natural features and its proximity to the urban areas of southeast Florida make it exceptionally well suited to provide outdoor recreation. Historically, canoeing has been the main recreational use of the Northwest Fork and its surrounding area, but other activities include kayaking, fishing, nature study, wildlife observation and motor boating. Motor boating in the Northwest Fork is effectively restricted to areas downstream from Trapper Nelson Interpretive Site because of the naturally narrow channel, numerous natural obstructions and natural shallow depth of the upper reaches. Carrying capacity has been an important issue that JDSP has considered and studies. The concept of carrying capacity is intended to safeguard the quality of park resources and the visitor experience.

The reaches of the Northwest Fork included in the "Wild and Scenic" designation have relatively limited public access points; the primary access point is located within JDSP at the concession store. Existing access and major facilities that support public use are clustered at each end of the "Wild and Scenic" portion of the Northwest Fork. Most existing river-related recreational uses and major facilities occur within JDSP. In the future other facilities will be provided and managed by Palm Beach County Department of Recreation at Riverbend Park when it is opened to the public. Riverbend Park is located south of Indiantown Road and west of the C-18 Canal. It comprises more than 600 acres and when open will provide a half-mile long "recreational" segment of the Northwest Fork.

CHAPTER 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN OVERVIEW.....	4
THE NORTHWEST FORK.....	4
THE ESTUARY	5
THE FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM	5
HISTORICAL FLOODPLAIN STUDIES.....	6
DESCRIPTION OF FLOODPLAIN FOREST COMMUNITIES	14
Forest Community Types.....	14
Threatened or Endangered Plants.....	20
TRANSECT VEGETATION SUMMARIES.....	22
Riverine Transects	22
Tidal Transects	27
ANIMALS.....	30
THE ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM.....	32
OLIGOHALINE ECOZONE – FISH LARVAE.....	32
MESOHALINE ECOZONE - OYSTERS	33
POLYHALINE ECOZONE - SEAGRASSES.....	34
BENTHIC MACROFAUNA	36
FISHES.....	38
THREATENED OR SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN.....	40
Manatees (<i>Trichechus manatus</i>)	40
Opossum Pipefish (<i>Microphis brachyurus lineatus</i>).....	40
Johnson’s Seagrass (<i>Halophila johnsonii</i>)	41

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3-1. Photograph of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River taken in 1971 by T. Alexander.....	7
Figure 3-2. Changes in Cypress Tree Ring Size and Quality Through Time Downstream of RM 9.0, Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (from Duever, unpublished USGS data).....	8
Figure 3-3. Changes in Cypress Tree Ring Size and Quality Through Time Upstream of RM 9.0, Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (from Duever, unpublished USGS data) ...	8
Figure 3-4. Location of the 10 Vegetation Transects of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.....	9
Figure 3-5. 1940 Aerial Interpretation of Floodplain Vegetative Communities Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.....	11
Figure 3-6. 1995 Aerial Interpretation of Floodplain Vegetative Communities Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.....	11
Figure 3-7a. Reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Between RM 4.5 and I-95 (RM 12.76).	13
Figure 3-7b. Upper Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Between I-95 (RM 12.76) and the G-92 Structure.	13
Figure 3-8. An Example of Forest Type Rsw1 (Bald Cypress Swamp).....	17
Figure 3-9. An Example of Forest Type UTmix (Pond Apple, Bald Cypress, Red Maple, Wax Myrtle and Cabbage Palm in a Selectively Logged Area).	18
Figure 3-10. An Example of Forest Type LTsw1 (Red Mangrove Swamp).....	19
Figure 3-11. An Example of Forest Type LTsw2 (White Mangrove Swamp with Dead Bald Cypress).....	19
Figure 3-12. Water Hickory in Bottomland Hardwood Plot on Transect #4.....	23
Figure 3-13. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species- Transect # 1	25
Figure 3-14. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #2.	25
Figure 3-15. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #3.	26
Figure 3-16. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #4.	26
Figure 3-17. Cabbage Palm Utilizing a Hummock Among Red Mangroves and Pond Apples (UTsw1) on Transect #6.	27
Figure 3-18. Location of Transect #9 on a Peninsula Near Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP).....	29
Figure 3-19. Critical Habitat for Johnson's Seagrass within the Loxahatchee Estuary.....	36
Figure 3-20. Location of Loxahatchee Estuary Macroinvertebrate Sampling Stations Used by Dent et al. 1998.....	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1. Forest Community Types by Reach for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and its Major Tributaries.....	12
Table 3-2. Guidelines for Determining Reach and Forest Type (2003 Canopy Study) in the Floodplains of the Loxahatchee River and its Major Tributaries (modified from Light et al. 2003).....	15
Table 3-3. Threatened and Endangered Wetland Plant Species in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.	20
Table 3-4. Threatened and Endangered Animals and Species of Special Concern in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.	31
Table 3-5. Surface Area and Length of the Loxahatchee Estuary Oligohaline (Low Salinity Zone) Ecozone from River Miles 4.0 to 10.5.	33
Table 3-6. Summary of Benthic Taxa Present in the Loxahatchee Estuary.	37
Table 3-7. Relative Abundance and Ranking of the Most Abundant Fishes in the Loxahatchee Estuary During 1982–1983 (Hedgepeth et al. 2001)	39
Table 3-8. Numbers of Fish Collected in Loxahatchee Estuary as a Function of Salinity (1982–1983).	40

Chapter 3

The Ecosystems of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary

OVERVIEW

The upstream floodplains, freshwater and tidal, of the Northwest Fork and the Loxahatchee River Estuary are unique regional resources in several ways. Much of the Loxahatchee River watershed's natural areas remain intact. Within Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP) the rare biological community of coastal sand pine scrub is found. Other terrestrial habitats found within the watershed include pinelands, xeric oak scrub, hardwood hammocks, freshwater marshes, wet prairies, cypress swamps, mangrove swamps, seagrass beds, tidal flats, oyster beds and coastal dunes (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1999). There are also distinct aquatic environments within the Loxahatchee River system: the freshwater zone, the oligohaline (low salinity) zone, the mesohaline zone, and the polyhaline zone. These terrestrial and aquatic habitats support diverse biological communities including many protected species such as the manatee, an aquatic mammal which is restricted to Florida during the winter, and the four-petal pawpaw, a shrub which is found only in Martin and Palm Beach counties. The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is home to one of the last vestiges of native cypress floodplain swamp within southeast Florida.

THE NORTHWEST FORK

Some of the first changes to this natural system occurred in the 1930s when private individuals constructed the Lainhart and Masten Dams on the Northwest Fork to maintain water levels in the Northwest Fork. Re-constructed in the 1980s these dams helped to maintain higher surface water levels behind the dams, especially in the dry season, thereby reducing over drainage of the area. During the 1950s, the C-18 Canal was built through the Loxahatchee Slough to provide flood protection and to redirect water to the Southwest Fork. This project greatly reduced freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork and in 1974, the North-South Canal, C-14, was improved to re-direct water from the C-18 Canal back into the Northwest Fork. The C-14 Canal ends where the natural meandering of river begins in the Northwest Fork. The G-92 Structure was also constructed during this time allowing a flow of 50-100 cfs through the Northwest Fork at the intersection of C-18 and the Northwest Fork. Today G-92, a gated control structure now operated by remote telemetry, allows up to 400 cfs of water to flow into the Northwest Fork. In addition, a 1989 agreement between the South Indian River Water Control District, the SFWMD, and the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District (LRD) allowed for flows through G-92 into the Northwest Fork when feasible.

Within the natural river channel, the Northwest Fork averages 3 to 6 feet deep (Chiu 1975) with a maximum depth ranging up to 16 feet near Cypress Creek. Maximum depths further upstream (beyond RM 10.3) are generally less than 10 feet. Most of the watershed remains in a

natural, undeveloped state, protected in parks or preserves or in low-intensity agricultural use leaving the water quality of the runoff good in most areas.

The estuarine portion of the Northwest Fork begins at the embayment (RM 2.5) and extends upstream approximately 1.5 miles to RM 4. From there, the estuary narrows significantly and becomes the river channel. The average width of this estuary segment is about one-half mile with a depth of 4.2 to 12.5 feet and covers 320 acres.

The Northwest Fork originally drained most of the Loxahatchee River basin and continues to provide about 65 to 67 percent of the total freshwater flow to the estuary during the wet season and 89 to 94 percent during the dry season. The brackish waters in the estuarine area are dependent upon flows and tides. Bottom salinities in this part of the Northwest Fork remain above 25 ppt (parts per thousand) and range from 20 ppt to 35 ppt during typical wet season conditions. During extreme storm-related discharge events, salinities can drop below 10 ppt (Russell and McPherson 1984). This brackish water system supports diverse communities of estuarine fish, benthic fauna and oyster populations in its upper portions and marine seagrass communities as it nears the embayment.

THE ESTUARY

Saline waters from the Atlantic Ocean flow through the Jupiter Inlet and merge with the freshwaters flowing from the North, Northwest and Southwest Forks of the Loxahatchee River to form the Loxahatchee Estuary or Embayment. This shallow embayment has an average depth of 3.5 feet, a maximum depth of 15 feet and covers an area of 380 acres (Russell and McPherson 1984; FDEP 1998; Antonini et al. 1998).

Development along the east coast of Florida has changed the hydrology of the Loxahatchee River Estuary. The Jupiter Inlet once opened and closed because of natural events. During storm events the inlet was kept open due to flows from the Loxahatchee River, Lake Worth Creek and the southern part of the Indian River Lagoon. However at the turn of the century, the construction of the Intracoastal Waterway and Lake Worth Inlet and modifications to the St. Lucie Inlet diverted water flows and caused the inlet to remain closed most of the time. Since 1947, the Jupiter Inlet has been kept permanently open by the Jupiter Inlet District (JID).

THE FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM

In this section, the characteristics of the floodplain forest reaches and community types found on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will be examined. River floodplains are an important part of any watershed system. They provide storage and filtration of surface water, diverse habitats for plants and animals, corridors for the movement of animals and dissemination of plants, and provide a supply of nutrients to estuarine environments (Darst et al. 2003). In Mitsch and Gosselink (1993) these riparian zones are described as “the interface between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.” Gregory et al. (1991) described riparian zones as ecotones that encompass distinct gradients of environmental factors, ecological processes and plant communities and are composed of mosaics of landforms, communities and environments within larger landscapes.

The floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River consist of tropical and temperate zone riparian forest. As a riparian forested wetland system, these vegetative communities vary from dry to occasionally flooded as the river and its tributaries react to local rainfall events. Hydric and mesic hammocks commonly signify a higher elevation within the

floodplain topography. Riparian forests are generally referred to in the Southeastern United States as bottomland hardwood forests. They contain diverse vegetation that varies along gradients of flooding frequency. These forests are generally considered to be more productive than the adjacent upland forests because they receive a periodic inflow of nutrients, especially when flooding is seasonal rather than continuous (Mitsch and Gosselink 1993). Swamps are defined as woody wetlands that have standing water for most if not all of the growing season. Swamps on the floodplains of the Loxahatchee River consist primarily of bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), red and white mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle* and *Laguncularia racemosa*), pond apple (*Annona glabra*) and pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*). The Loxahatchee River contains some of the last pristine subtropical cypress swamps in Southeast Florida.

HISTORICAL FLOODPLAIN STUDIES

During April 1967, Taylor Alexander studied vegetation quadrats along a transect on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River near RM 7.5 (personal communication). His transect contained temperate and subtropical species, salt tolerant and non-salt tolerant species, and three classes of cypress trees: dead, stressed but living, and healthy. His transect was reexamined in the FDEP/SFWMD 2003 vegetative study and one living cypress was found.

Alexander and Crook (1975) utilized aerial photographs and groundtruthing to examine plant communities along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and Kitching Creek (**Figure 3-1**). Upon identifying the signature of the most abundant community types, they were able to use photo interpretation to identify the major vegetative communities from a 1940 aerial photograph. Areas of dead and living cypress canopy within a mangrove understory were then field verified in 1973. They concluded that since 1940, areas of wet prairie and swamp hardwoods had been converted to pinelands and mangrove communities because of the lowered groundwater table and the saltwater encroachment between RM 6.0 and RM 8.0. They were able to identify areas of past logging in the aerial photographs, which could explain the loss of mature trees within portions of the watershed. Also, they mentioned the impact of fire, hurricanes and heavy frost on the major plant communities. At RM 6.5, they collected freshwater peat at a depth of 24 inches below the surface. Based on this information, they further concluded that there was no evidence that cypress forest had extended much further downstream than about RM 6. Finally, Alexander and Crook (1973) predicted that the mangrove invasion would accelerate, if anthropogenic activities in the upper floodplain of the river further reduced the freshwater head.



Figure 3-1. Photograph of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River taken in 1971 by T. Alexander.

Between 1979 and 1982, Duever (personal communication) documented the extent of environmental stress in the bald cypress community along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The study examined core samples collected from cypress trees at 21 sites (69 trees in total) located along the river to identify changes in tree rings over time. The results of the study indicated that although all of the trees sampled had experienced stress at periodic intervals during their life histories, the proportion of stressed trees downstream of RM 9.0 increased from 30 percent in 1940 to 80 percent in 1982 (**Figure 3-2**). The proportion of stressed trees upstream from RM 9.0 decreased from 11 percent to 3 percent during the same 40-year period (**Figure 3-3**). The study also found a high correlation between the incidence of growth stress and high salinity in surface water and soils.

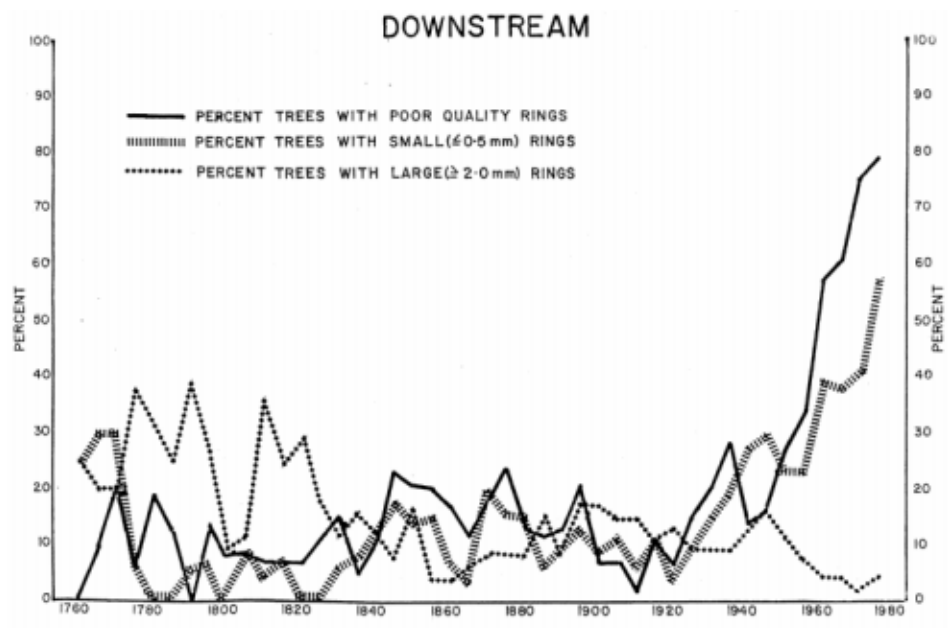


Figure 3-2. Changes in Cypress Tree Ring Size and Quality Through Time Downstream of RM 9.0, Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (from Duever, unpublished USGS data).

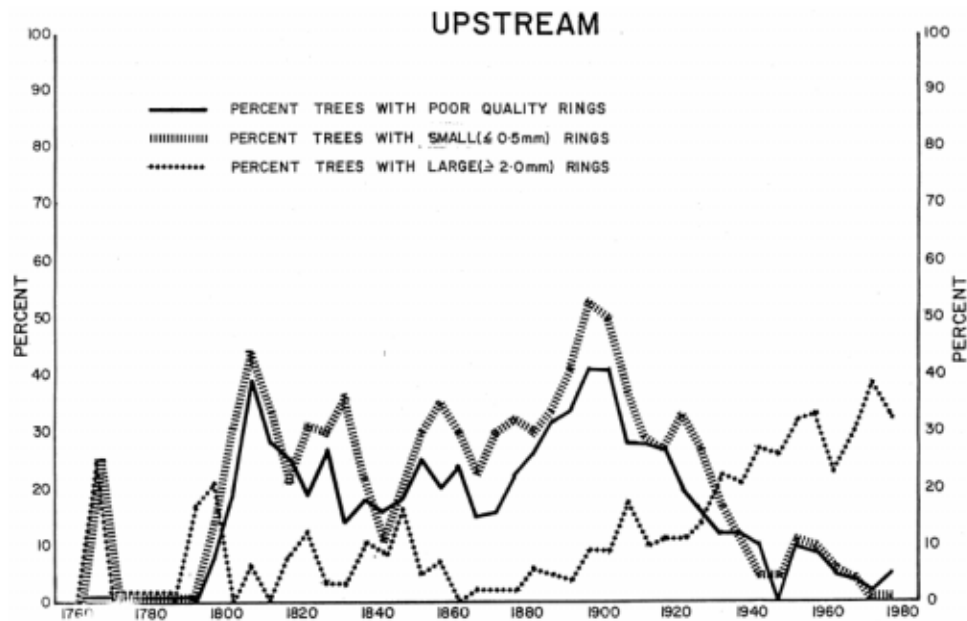


Figure 3-3. Changes in Cypress Tree Ring Size and Quality Through Time Upstream of RM 9.0, Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (from Duever, unpublished USGS data)

McPherson (1981) studied the transitional area between the cypress forest community and the mangrove community on the Northwest Fork. In May of 1981, the surface salinities around an area of dead and stressed cypress were 20 to 30 ppt. In another area of intermediately stressed cypress, surface salinities ranged from 15 to 20 ppt. In areas with shallow groundwater, salinities decreased as depth below the land surface and distance from the river increases, especially in areas where freshwater seepage was observed from nearby higher pinelands. McPherson concluded that there was no evidence that cypress forest ever extended much further downstream from his Site 7E (approximately RM 5.5) on the Northwest Fork.

Dewey Worth established six, 10m wide vegetation transects along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River as a part of South Florida Water Management District's Loxahatchee River Restoration Plan (1983-1984). The transects were surveyed and ground and surface water elevations were recorded. In addition, several shallow groundwater monitoring wells were established. SFWMD scientists have obtained the datasets to examine for trends.

Between October 1993 and January 1994, Ward and Roberts (1996) re-examined Worth's six vegetative transects between Indiantown Road (S.R. 706) and the Ornamental Gardens. Each 10m wide belt transect was partitioned into 10m² plots. A total of 79 plots were surveyed during the study. Generally the density (stems/hectare) of bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) increased upstream from Transect #6 (RM 8.4) near the Ornamental Gardens to Transect #1 (RM 14.5) just north of S.R. 706. A noticeable decrease in cypress density occurred at Transect #3 (RM 12.1), which was heavily populated with pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*). These six transects (**Figure 3-4**) were re-examined in the 2003 vegetative study and four new transects were added. Comparisons of the 1993-1994 and 2003 vegetation studies are being prepared for a report summarizing the 2003 vegetation survey.

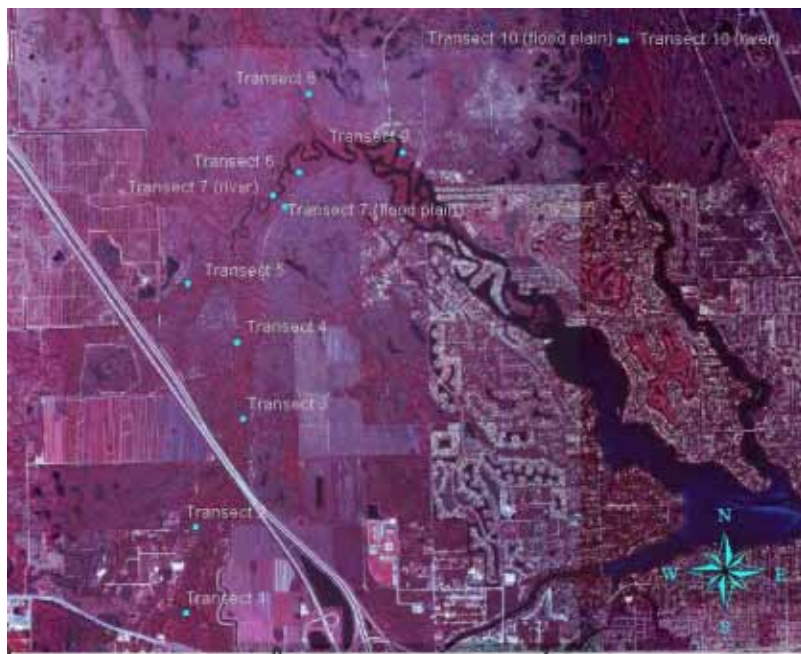


Figure 3-4. Location of the 10 Vegetation Transects of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Note: Transects #1 – #6 are D. Worth transects (1983-1984); Ward and Roberts (1993-1994); Transects #7 - #10 are Hedgepeth and Roberts (2003-2004).

In an examination of aerial photography from 1940 to 1995, major vegetative communities were identified along the floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (SFWMD 2002). The results of the study indicated that the floodplain vegetation coverage had decreased due to shoreline bulkhead construction, filling for development, Jupiter Inlet stabilization in 1947, and changes in vegetation types (i.e. changes from wetlands to transitional and upland species, from marsh to mangrove, and from wet prairie to pine forest). The 1940 aerial photographs of the watershed indicate an abundance of swamps, wet prairies, inland ponds, and sloughs. Freshwater swamp hardwood and cypress communities were dominant from RM 4.5 to RM 8.9, comprising about 73 percent of the vegetative coverage, while mangroves represented 22 percent (**Figure 3-5**). Mangroves were dominant from RM 4.5 to RM 6.0 and were present upstream to RM 7.8. By 1985, freshwater communities represented 61 percent of the coverage, while mangroves represented 25 percent of the coverage. Mangroves were dominant between RM 5.5 and RM 8.7 and extended up to RM 10.5. There was a loss of approximately 80 acres of mangroves due to development between RM 4.5 and RM 5.5. **Figure 3-6** shows the 1995 floodplain vegetation coverage. There were no major changes between cypress and mangrove floodplain coverages between 1985 and 1995.

Semi-quantitative and quantitative vegetation surveys (species composition and abundance) were conducted along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River as a part of the Minimum Flows and Levels Project (Zahina 2004). Twenty-three semi-quantitative sites were sampled in November 2000 and December 2001. Eight sites were re-investigated from the series of semi-quantitative survey sites to produce a quantitative database in 2002. The vegetation studies indicate a decline in species richness, reduction in tree height, reduction in canopy diameter and in stem diameter that was related to salinity. The report addressed distribution of plant species and communicates along the salinity gradient, and the relationship between salinity exposure and freshwater floodplain decline.

In 2003 vegetation and groundwater monitoring studies were established for plant community composition and structure and groundwater in order to document baseline and future plant community health along the floodplains of the North and Northwest Forks of the Loxahatchee River and Cypress and Kitching Creeks. The project examined the six historical vegetation transects and established four new transects in additional areas of concern (**Figure 3-4**). These locations are representative of riverine (predominantly non-impacted freshwater) and upper tidal (saltwater intruded with fresh and brackish water) communities. Seven transects are located at designated locations along the middle and upper segments of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Additional transects were established in the lower segment of Kitching and Cypress Creeks (tributaries of the Northwest Fork), and in the upper North Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Data from the historical transects of Alexander (1967, unpublished), Worth (1984, unpublished SFWMD), and Ward and Roberts (1993-1994, unpublished) will be compared with the 2003 baseline data to determine changes in the composition and structure of these forest communities over time.

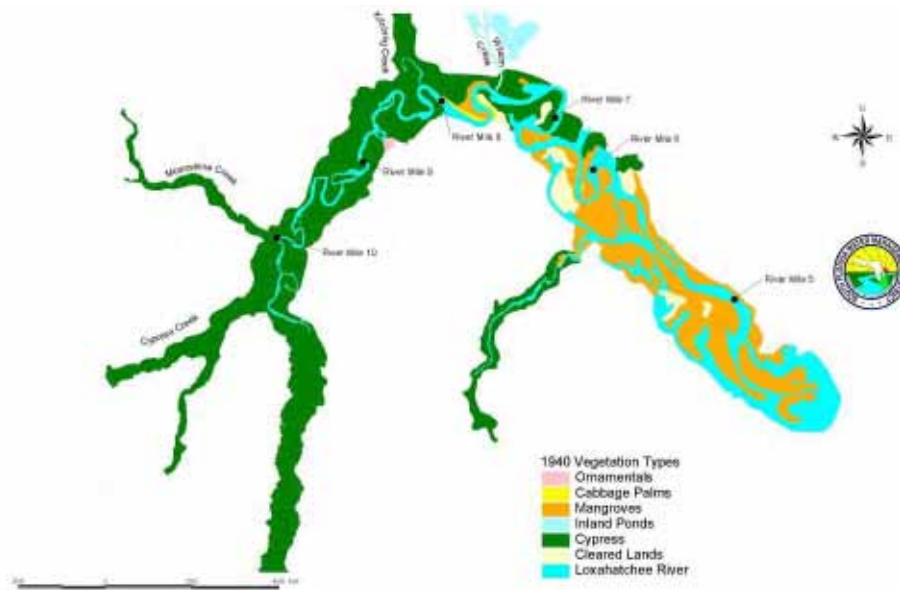


Figure 3-5. 1940 Aerial Interpretation of Floodplain Vegetative Communities Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

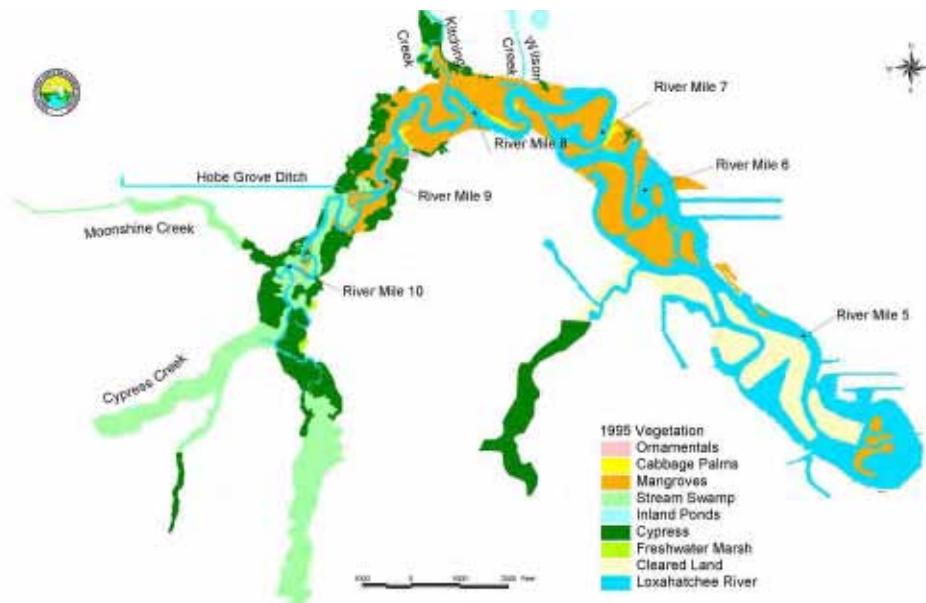


Figure 3-6. 1995 Aerial Interpretation of Floodplain Vegetative Communities Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

For the analysis of canopy data from the 2003 Vegetation study, plant communities of the floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River were divided into three distinct groups or reaches (**Table 3-1** and **Figures 3-7a** and **3-7b**) **riverine (R)**, **upper tidal (UT)** and **lower tidal (LT)**. These groups were distinguished based on hydrological conditions, vegetation, and soils (modified from USGS 2002a). The boundaries were based on distribution of the different canopy tree species using the 1995 aerial photography and the corresponding GIS coverage. The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River contains approximately 320 hectares of riverine, 24 hectares of upper tidal and 45 hectares of lower tidal floodplain forests.

Table 3-1. Forest Community Types by Reach for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and its Major Tributaries.

Forest Type	Riverine (R)	Upper Tidal (UT)	Lower Tidal (LT)
Swamp	Rsw1 Rsw2 (FPsw1 ^a)	UTsw1 UTsw2 (FPsw1 ^a) UTsw3 (LRsw3 ^b)	LTsw1 (RMsw1 ^c) LTsw2
Low Bottomland Hardwood	Rblh1 Rmix	UTmix	LTmix
High Bottomland Hardwood	Rblh2 Rblh3		
Hammock	H (Mesic and Hydric)	H (Hydric only)	H (Hydric only)
Upland	U	U	U

^a Another name for *Fraxinus caroliniana* swamp.

^b Another name for *Laguncularia racemosa* swamp.

^c Another name for *Rhizophora mangle* swamp.

Riverine reach information is generally presented in this report with a green background color. Upper tidal reach information is generally presented in this report with a yellow background color. The lower tidal reach information in this report is generally presented with a beige color background.

The riverine reach is that part of the floodplain forest having primarily freshwater canopy forest that is generally unaffected by salinity. On the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, this area ranges from just north of the G-92 Structure (**Figure 3-7b**) downstream to RM 9.5 (**Figure 3-7a**). Vegetative communities in this reach are dominated by bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) with pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), pond apple (*Annona glabra*), water hickory (*Carya aquatica*) and other trees present with less frequency.

The upper tidal reach is that part of the floodplain forest having a mixed freshwater/brackish canopy forest that has experienced some saltwater intrusion due to tidal influences and lack of freshwater flow in the dry season. On the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River this area occurs between RM 9.5 and RM 8.13 (the mouth of Kitching Creek), as illustrated in **Figure 3-7a**. Upper tidal reach communities are dominated by pond apple, red and white mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle* and *Laguncularia racemosa*) and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) with some communities of bald cypress present in the inner floodplain areas away from the riverbed.

The lower tidal reach is that part of the Northwest Fork having primarily salt tolerant species and is highly influenced by tides and salinity in the water and soils (**Figure 3-7a**). This area extends from approximately RM 8.13 to RM 5.5 although several smaller areas can be found around RM 4.5 and in the embayment area. The lower tidal reach is dominated by red and white mangrove.

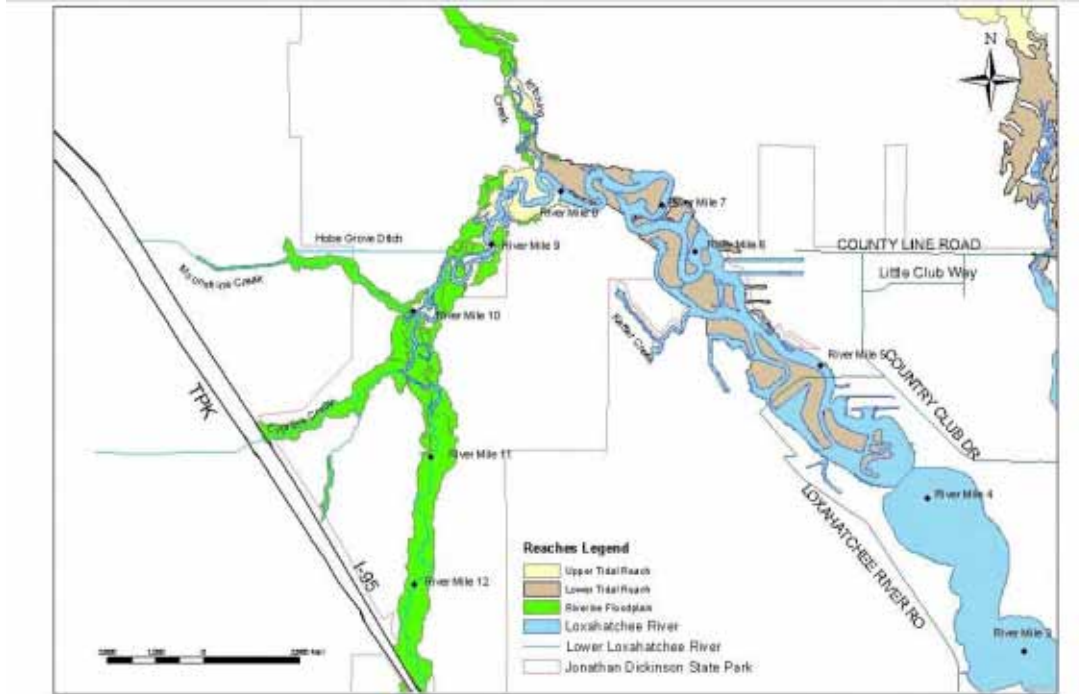


Figure 3-7a. Reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Between RM 4.5 and I-95 (RM 12.76).

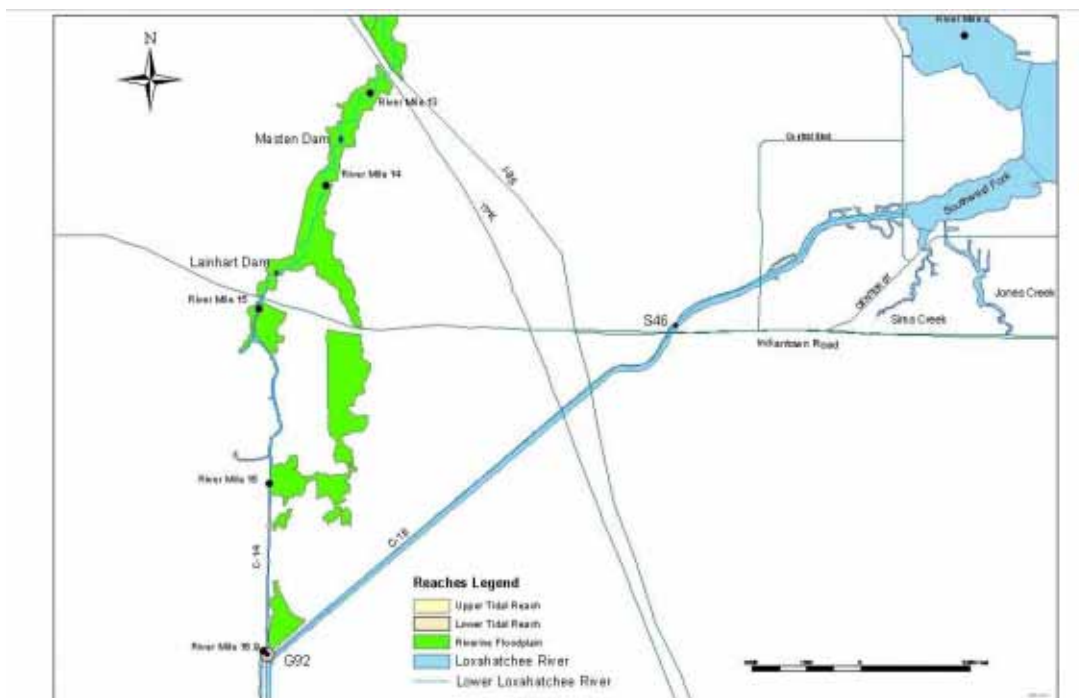


Figure 3-7b. Upper Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Between I-95 (RM 12.76) and the G-92 Structure.

DESCRIPTION OF FLOODPLAIN FOREST COMMUNITIES

The identification of floodplain forest community type was based on the canopy tree species that generally grow together in recognizable communities (modified from Darst et al. 2003). Tree canopy data from both the 1995 Ward and Roberts study (76 10m² plots) and the 2003 transect study (130 10m² plots) were collected; the relative basal area (RBA) of each tree species within a plot was determined using diameter at breast height (dbh) measurements. RBA is calculated by dividing the total basal area of a species (in m²) by the total basal area of all species within a 10m² plot. Multi-trunk trees were considered separate trees for this analysis. The most common multi-trunk trees observed were pond apple (*Annona glabra*), red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) and bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*).

Forest Community Types

Guidelines were developed to identify the 16 forest community types by reach (**Table 3-2**). For each area, the major vegetative community category was identified as swamp (S), bottomland hardwood (low and high Blh), hydric or mesic hammock (H), or uplands (U). Then the reach and type of the forest community was determined based on species composition. Using these guidelines, it was possible to consistently distinguish among forest community types (i.e., distinguish a riverine swamp community from an upper tidal swamp community).

Split plots and mixed plots also occurred. A split plot had two major forest types split 50-50 based on relative basal area (RBA) on either side of the plot such as Hammock/Rsw1. A mixed plot has several forest types mixed together within the plot. These plots were classified as Rmix, Utmix, or LTmix. A total of 28 canopy species were identified during the 2003 belt transect survey and were categorized by their most common occurrence in the floodplains. Forest types clearly differ as a result of changes in hydrology, topography, vegetation, soils, and proximity to the coast (Darst et al. 2003). Other factors that influence forest type include logging and fire history, presence or absence of exotic species, and the availability of nutrients and light.

DuBois wrote in her book “The History of the Loxahatchee River” (1981) that logging leases to two townships on the Loxahatchee were purchased by the Hunt brothers from Green Cove Springs in 1891. Other logging operations were conducted, cutting pine from the uplands and cypress from the river’s edge. Before logging a portion of their property, local pioneers, John and Bessie DuBois purposely saved 27 large cypress trees on Kitching Creek. The last recorded logging operations on the Loxahatchee River were in 1941. The cypress swamp community on the Upper Northwest Fork near Indiantown Road (S.R. 706) remains largely intact. Many of the cypress trees along this reach of the river are over 300 years old. Evidence of past logging activities on the Transects #3, #6, and #7 was verified by the presence of tree stumps without the fallen trees.

Oak/pine upland forests are present in both the riverine and tidal reaches of the floodplain and are inundated only for short periods of time during the highest floods. Most of the species found in this forest community type can only survive brief periods of inundation. On the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, these upland systems are dominated by slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*) and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) may occur as an exotic pest species in many of the forest community types if there is sufficient elevation for its growth.

Table 3-2. Guidelines for Determining Reach and Forest Type (2003 Canopy Study) in the Floodplains of the Loxahatchee River and its Major Tributaries (modified from Light et al. 2003).

Category		Species	Rules for Determination of Reach
Swamp	Riverine	<i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	1) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> + <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> + <i>Acer rubrum</i> + <i>Carya aquatica</i> > 80% THEN reach is riverine. 2) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> + <i>Acer rubrum</i> + <i>Carya aquatica</i> < 20% and <i>Annona glabra</i> + <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> > 60% OR 3) IF <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> + <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> + <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> > 60%, THEN reach is upper tidal. 4) IF <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> > 80% OR 5) IF <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> + <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> > 75% and <i>Annona glabra</i> < 10%, THEN reach is lower tidal.
	Tidal	<i>Annona glabra</i> <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> <i>Rhizophora mangle</i>	
Bottomland Hardwood (blh)	Low	<i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> <i>Persea palustris</i> <i>Salix caroliniana</i> <i>Syzygium cumini</i>	Rules for Determination of Forest Type 1) IF Upland ≥ 75%, THEN forest type is upland. 2) IF Upland < 50% and hammock > 50%, THEN forest type is hammock. Riverine reach forest types: 1) IF riverine swamp > 50% THEN 2) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> ≥ 80%, OR 3) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> + <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> ≥ 80% and <i>Taxodium distichum</i> > 50% THEN forest type is Rsw1. 4) IF <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> ≥ 80%, OR 5) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> + <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> > 80% and <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> > 50%, THEN forest type is Rsw2. 6) IF <i>Taxodium distichum</i> < 50% and hammock > 40% but < 60 % THEN forest type is Rmix. 7) IF riverine swamp < 50% THEN 8) IF low blh > 80%, OR 9) IF <i>Acer rubrum</i> ≥ 80%, THEN forest type is Rblh1. 10) IF high blh + low blh > 80% and high blh > 50%, THEN forest type is Rblh2. 11) IF high blh + up or hammock ≥ 70%, THEN forest type is Rblh3. 12) IF hammock ≥ 80%, OR 13) IF hammock + high blh is > 80% and hammock > 50%, Then forest type is hammock.
	High	<i>Carya aquatica</i> <i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> <i>Citrus spp.</i> <i>Ilex cassine</i> <i>Psidium cattleianum</i> <i>Quercus laurifolia</i> <i>Roystonea regia</i>	
Hammock		<i>Ficus microcarpa</i> ^a <i>Ficus aurea</i> ^a <i>Myrica cerifera</i> <i>Persea borbonia</i> <i>Quercus virginiana</i> ^c <i>Sabal palmetto</i> ^d	Upper tidal reach forest types: 1) IF mixed swamp ^b ≥ 70% and <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> < 30%, THEN forest type is UTsw1. 2) IF mixed swamp ^b < 70% and <i>Annona glabra</i> > 30%, THEN forest type is UTsw2. 3) IF <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> > 50% THEN forest type is UTsw3. 4) IF mixed swamp ^b < 50% and hammock + upland > 60% OR 5) IF hammock + blh < 75%, THEN forest type is UTmix. 6) IF hammock > 75%, THEN forest type is hammock.
			Lower tidal reach forest types: 1) IF LT swamp > 50% OR 2) IF <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> is > 80%, THEN forest type LTsw1. 3) IF <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> + <i>Annona glabra</i> is > 70%, THEN forest type is LTsw2. 4) IF LT swamp < 50% THEN, 5) IF <i>Sabal palmetto</i> ≥ 50% and <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> + <i>Annona glabra</i> > 40%, THEN forest type is LTmix. 6) IF <i>Sabal palmetto</i> + <i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> ≥ 75%, THEN forest type is hammock.
Upland		<i>Pinus elliotii</i> <i>Quercus myrtifolia</i> <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> <i>Serenoa repens</i>	

^a Present as epiphytes at Transects #7 and #9.^b Both riverine and tidal swamp species present.^c Dominant canopy species in Mesic Hammock.^d Dominant canopy species in Hydric Hammock.

Species in Red Font-are Exotics.

Hammocks are also found in both the riverine and tidal reaches of the Loxahatchee River. Hammocks support a vast diversity of tropical and temperate plants including hardwood trees, palms, orchids and other epiphytes (Mitch and Gosselink, 1993). Hydric hammock communities are dominated by cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) whereas mesic hammocks are dominated by live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*). Mesic hammocks are found at higher elevations than hydric hammocks. No mesic hammocks were found in the tidal reaches of the Loxahatchee River. Other fairly common species in hammock areas are myrsine (*Rapanea punctata*), mulberry (*Morus rubra*), red bay (*Persea borbonia*), and ficus (*Ficus aurea*). Hammocks are generally found between the uplands, bottomland hardwood and swamp areas, although with changes in elevation within the floodplain they may appear as isolated islands or may border the riverbed where elevations are higher. Hammocks are briefly inundated by storm surges but characteristically have a high water table due to their proximity to deeper wetland areas. Hydric hammocks are flooded continuously for several weeks or longer every 1 to 3 years depending on reach. Mesic hammocks are rarely flooded because of their high elevations. Soils are generally sandy in both types of hammock.

In the riverine reach, high bottomland hardwoods are found on higher ridges while low bottomland hardwoods are found on swamp margins. Periods of inundation generally occur for 1 to 2 months every few years for high bottom land hardwood (Rblh2 and Rblh3) and about 2 months of every year for low bottomland hardwood (Rblh1). Characteristic Rblh1 species include red maple (*Acer rubrum*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) and Carolina willow (*Salix caroliniana*) while characteristic Rblh3 species are water hickory (*Carya aquatica*), cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*), dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*) and laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). The forest type Rblh1 is characterized by a dominance of red maple and is found at lower elevations than either Rblh2 or Rblh3. The forest type Rblh2 has approximately equal amounts of low and high bottomland species whereas the Rblh3 forest has combinations of high bottomland mixed with hammock species or even some upland representatives. The Riverine Mixed (Rmix) forest type is characterized by even more disparate species: bald cypress and hammock species are almost equally mixed. The exotic plant species, java plum (*Syzygium cumini*) and strawberry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*) are found in both areas of the riverine and tidal bottomland hardwoods. The occurrence of a few royal palms (*Roystonea regia*) is attributed to their spread from the adjacent Ornamental Garden property. Java plum and strawberry guava may have been introduced by Trapper Nelson.

Riverine swamps are characterized with the lowest elevations and wettest areas with either inundation or saturation most of the year. Soils are generally sandy with some loam and clay. On the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, older riverine swamps are dominated primarily by bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) communities (Rsw1; **Figure 3-8**), while younger subcanopy swamp communities and impacted areas (i.e. logged) are dominated by pop ash (*Fraxinus caroliniana*, Rsw2). Occasional bald cypress/cabbage palm (swamp/hammock) and bald cypress/red maple/cabbage palm (swamp/low bottomland hardwood/hammock) communities are present and are categorized as Riverine Mixed (Rmix). Pond apples are found in the riverine swamps but are generally only associated with the riverbanks.



Figure 3-8. An Example of Forest Type Rsw1 (Bald Cypress Swamp).

As with riverine swamps, upper tidal swamps are present at elevations below median monthly high stage. Unlike riverine swamps, upper tidal surface soils are generally permanently saturated mucks. On the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, upper tidal swamps are a mixture of brackish and freshwater vegetative communities primarily consisting of pond apple, red and white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*) with smaller amounts of bald cypress, pop ash, red maple and Carolina willow (**Table 3-2**). Areas of riverine swamp Rsw1 (i.e. mostly older bald cypress) are present and have probably survived at the back of the tidal floodplains as a result of surface and groundwater runoff from the adjacent uplands. UTsw1 is defined as a community of 70 percent mixed swamp with less than 30 percent white mangrove while UTsw2 is defined as less than 70 percent mixed swamp but with greater than 30 percent pond apple. White mangroves are more dominant in the UTsw3 forest type. White mangroves are generally found at higher elevations than red mangrove, bald cypress, and pop ash; therefore, they are less frequently found in the deeper mixed swamp communities. When mixed swamp communities are less than 50 percent and hammock, uplands and/or bottomland hardwood species are greater than 60 percent, then the forest type is identified as upper tidal mixed (UTmix; **Figure 3-9**). However, if hammock represents greater than 75 percent then the forest type is identified as hammock. No bottomland hardwood plots are found in the upper or lower tidal reaches.



Figure 3-9. An Example of Forest Type UTmix (Pond Apple, Bald Cypress, Red Maple, Wax Myrtle and Cabbage Palm in a Selectively Logged Area).

Lower tidal forest types are primarily mangrove forest (i.e. swamps) with some areas of hammock which represent areas with very little change in topography within the floodplains. Soils are generally mucky with some areas of sand. LTsw1 is representative of a swamp dominated by red mangrove (**Figure 3-10**). The LTsw2 is representative of a white mangrove swamp with infrequent pond apple and red mangrove (**Figure 3-11**). Other plots contain mixtures of white mangrove, pond apple, and cabbage palm. If cabbage palm is at least 50 percent and white mangrove and pond apple are greater than 30 percent then the forest type is identified as lower tidal mixed (LTmix). If cabbage palm and cocoplum (*Chrysobalnus icaco*) are greater than 75 percent then the forest type is identified as hammock. Cabbage palm is found intermixed and in clumps with swamp species; however those palms that were found at these low elevations and exposed to salt water did not appear to be as healthy as those found at obviously higher elevations. Other palms were found growing on small mounds or hummocks. Today, cabbage palms are quite common along the shoreline of the tidal Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The river channel has widened between 1940 and 1995 between the JDSP boundary at RM 5.92 and Trapper Nelson's Interpretative Site at RM 10.50 (SFWMD 2002). This widening suggests that erosion has occurred within these cabbage palm communities leaving them exposed to greater tidal fluctuations and saltwater exposure.

Mangrove swamp is the dominant feature of the lower tidal reach and the embayment area. The dominant species are red mangrove, *Rhizophora mangle*, and white mangrove, *Laguncularia racemosa*. Black mangroves, *Avicennia germinans*, are occasionally found among white mangrove; however, they are more frequent along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway system. Presently, mangroves first appear as thin borders of vegetation along natural shorelines of the estuary and begin to occur as substantial "forest" at approximately RM 6.0 of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. They are eventually replaced by the freshwater riverine floodplain community by RM 10.0.



Figure 3-10. An Example of Forest Type LTsw1 (Red Mangrove Swamp).



Figure 3-11. An Example of Forest Type LTsw2 (White Mangrove Swamp with Dead Bald Cypress).

Mangroves are very salt tolerant and tend to colonize shorelines where the substrate has been stabilized or protected from the effects of wave action or erosion. The continued spread of mangroves upstream in the river floodplain, displacing less salt tolerant species such as cypress and hardwoods, has been viewed as an impact to the ecosystem. These slow changes in river vegetation communities over time are linked to the combined effects of saltwater intrusion caused by permanent stabilization of Jupiter Inlet, dredging of the estuary, construction of C-18 Canal and reduced flows from the headwaters.

Even though the spread of mangroves into formerly freshwater environments is viewed as an adverse condition for the river, mangroves serve an important role in the estuary ecosystem, since these plants provide a stable substrate for many other species to colonize (Savage 1972). Mangroves are also a significant source of primary productivity and the physical and bacterial decomposition of mangrove leaf litter provides a major food source for detritivores in the estuary food chain (Heald and Odum 1970). Mangroves are susceptible to frost damage and may be highly impacted during a hard freeze.

Threatened or Endangered Plants

In addition to the dominant species used to define forest communities along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River State, many rare, endangered, or threatened plants also coexist in these communities. Within Jonathan Dickinson State Park alone, there are 40 plant species that are protected by the state or federal government. A list of protected plant species that occur within the Northwest Fork watershed are shown in **Table 3-3**.

Table 3-3. Threatened and Endangered Plant Species in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

Scientific Name	Common Name	FCREPA ^a	FDA ^b	USFWS ^c
<i>Asclepias curtissii</i>	Curtiss' milkweed		E	
<i>Asimina tetramera</i>	Four-petal pawpaw		E	E
<i>Azolla caroliniana</i>	Mosquito fern		T	
<i>Bletia purpurea</i>	Pine pink orchid		T	
<i>Calopogon barbatus</i>	Bearded grass pink		T	
<i>Calopogon multiflorus</i>	Many-flowered grass pink		E	
<i>Campyloneurum latum</i>	Strap fern		E	
<i>Campyloneurum phyllitidis</i>	Long strap fern		E	
<i>Chamaesyce cumulicola</i>	Sand dune spurge		E	
<i>Chrysophyllum oliviforme</i>	Satinleaf		E	
<i>Cladonia perforata</i>	Perforate reindeer lichen		E	E
<i>Conradina grandiflora</i>	Large-flowered rosemary		E	
<i>Drosera intermedia</i>	Water sundew		T	
<i>Encyclia cochleata</i>	Clamshell orchid		E	
<i>Epidendrum rigidum</i>	Rigid epidendrum		E	
<i>Ernodea littoralis</i>	Beach creeper		T	
<i>Eulophia alta</i>	Wild coco		T	
<i>Habenaria nivea</i>	Snowy orchid		T	
<i>Halophila johnsonii</i>	Johnson's seagrass			T
<i>Lechea cernua</i>	Nodding pinweed		T	
<i>Lechea divaricata</i>	Pine pinweed		E	

Scientific Name	Common Name	FCREPA ^a	FDA ^b	USFWS ^c
<i>Lilium catesbaei</i>	Catesby's lily		T	
<i>Nemastylis floridana</i>	Celestial lily	T	E	
<i>Nephrolepis biserrata</i>	Giant sword fern		T	
<i>Ophioglossum palmatum</i>	Hand adder's tongue fern	E	E	
<i>Peperomia humilis</i>	Low peperomia		E	
<i>Phlebodium aureum</i>	Polyplody fern		T	
<i>Pinguicula caerulea</i>	Blue-flowered butterwort		T	
<i>Pogonia ophioglossoides</i>	Rose pogonia		T	
<i>Polygala smallii</i>	Small's milkwort		E	E
<i>Psilotum nudum</i>	Whisk fern		T	
<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>	Non-crested coco		T	
<i>Saccola lanceolata</i>	Leafless red beak orchid		T	
<i>Salvinia minima</i>	Water spangles		T	
<i>Spiranthes laciniata</i>	Lace-lip ladies' tresses		T	
<i>Spiranthes vernalis</i>	Ladies' tresses		T	
<i>Thelypteris interrupta</i>	Aspidium fern		T	
<i>Thelypteris kunthii</i>	Aspidium fern		T	
<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	Aspidium fern		T	
<i>Thelypteris serrata</i>	Dentate lattice vein fern		E	
<i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i>	Inflated wild pine		T	
<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>	Common wild pine		E	
<i>Tillandsia flexuosa</i>	Twisted air plant	T	E	
<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>	Giant wild pine		E	
<i>Tillandsia variabilis</i>	Soft-leaved wild pine		T	
<i>Tolumnia bahamensis</i>	Dancing lady orchid		E	

Data from Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (1999) and Jonathan Dickinson State Park Unit Management Plan, State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (February 2000).

^a Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals.

^b Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

^c United States Fish and Wildlife Service. E=Endangered, T=Threatened.

TRANSECT VEGETATION SUMMARIES

In the 2003 vegetation survey of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, Transects #1, #2, #3, and #4 were examples of riverine forest types. Transects #6 and #7 were examples of the upper tidal reach and Transect #9 was an example of the lower tidal reach. The forest type of each 10m² plot based on relative basal area is shown in **Appendix E**, while total number of canopy trunks by species by transect is shown in **Appendix F**. Survey profiles of each transect are illustrated in **Appendix G** and express elevation as feet NGVD29.

Riverine Transects

Transect #1 is located just downstream of Lainhart Dam at RM 14.5. This transect transverses the north and south sides of the Northwest Fork with 15 10m² plots (**Appendix E, Table 1A**). It has several elevation changes from 13.74 feet NGVD at the top of the mesic hammock to about 9.34 feet NGVD in the deeper swamp areas and 5.44 feet NGVD in the river channel (**Appendix G**). The exterior sides of Transect #1 are dominated by several plots of upland and hammock before dropping down into the floodplains as a cypress swamp (Rsw1) that borders the riverbed. One higher area adjacent to the bank of the river is classified as Rblh1 because red maple occurs within the plot and water hickory just outside of the measured plot. Cabbage palm, live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), and slash pine dominate the hammock and uplands plots while a stand of mostly very old bald cypress with an average dbh of 49 cm dominates the Rsw1 plots (**Appendix F**). The smallest bald cypress has a dbh of 9.9 cm. Because the canopy is well established and there are high flow velocities in this area, there is very little indication of a shrub layer and groundcover is probably seasonal in the swamp area. Also, there is no evidence of logging (i.e. stumps only) in this area. Shrubs and groundcover in the Rsw1 areas are dominated by swamp lily (*Crinum americanum*), tri-veined fern (*Thelypteris interrupta*) and downy shield fern (*Thelypteris dentata*). The exotic plants wild taro, *Colocasia esculenta*, and arrowhead vine, (*Syngonium podophyllum*), were also present as groundcover within the cypress swamp community.

Transect #2-1 is located at RM 13.6 just upstream of the western side of Masten Dam while Transect #2-2 is located downstream of Masten Dam (RM 13.4) on the same side of the river. There are several elevation changes between hammocks (approximately 9 feet to 11 feet NGVD), a very deep cut braided stream (6.32 feet NGVD), and the swamp areas (approximately 7.47 feet to 8.47 feet NGVD; **Appendix G**). Water appears to flow continuously through the cut, which is connected to the river above and below Masten Dam. Transect #2-2 has more hammocks (4 out of 6 plots) than does Transect #2-1 (3 out of 7 plots). Two and a half of the four plots on Transect #2-2 are mesic hammock and one half plot is hydric hammock (**Appendix E, Table 1B** and **Appendix F**). The mesic hammock is 100 percent cabbage palm. The Rsw1 and the Rmix plots are a little more diverse with younger pop ash, red maple and water hickory intermixed with the bald cypress. Bald cypress had an average dbh of 73.6 cm with the largest dbh at 114.5 cm while red maple and pop ash, average 23 cm and 9.7 cm, respectively. Also, there is one water hickory with a dbh of 9.2 cm. The smaller size of the red maple, pop ash and water hickory may indicate a trend towards subcanopy species that prefer shorter hydroperiods than bald cypress (**Figure 3-12**). The larger size of these bald cypress trees suggests that they may be several hundred years old, whereas the smaller red maple, pop ash, and water hickory may be no more than a few decades old (NPS 1984). This marked age difference may indicate that other deciduous tree species are taking advantage of the shortened hydroperiods experienced by the older bald cypress community during the last 50 years. Shrubs and groundcover are primarily tri-veined fern, Meniscium fern (*Thelypteris serrata*), leather fern, Virginia willow (*Itea*

virginica), downy shield fern, royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*), and swamp lily. Tri-veined fern, day flower (*Commelina diffusa*) and wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*, a hammock or uplands species) are prevalent in the Rlbh1 plot.

Transect #3 is located at RM 12.1 downstream of I-95 and the Florida Turnpike on the east side of the river. In the past, the site has been impacted by selective logging and by the presence of Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*). There are multiple braided streams within the floodplain at this site. Elevations range from 5.54 feet NGVD at the benchmark to 2.03 feet NGVD at the bottom of the braided streams, and -9.87 feet NGVD in the river channel (**Appendix G**). The majority of the floodplain has an elevation of approximately 4 feet NGVD in this area. Nine of the 13 plots are either Rsw1 or Rsw2 (**Appendix E, Table 1C; Appendix F**). Bottomland hardwood and hammock are present near the uplands and adjacent to the riverbed. Transect #3 has the highest concentration of pop ash of any of the 10 transects. The average dbh is 17 cm for pop ash; however, the range is 5 cm to 41 cm. Only 4 bald cypress trees are present within the transect canopy but they are very large with an average dbh of 91.5 cm. Pond apple and red maple trees are also present with an average dbh of 7.1 cm and 14.4 cm, respectively. Shrubs and groundcover on Transect #3 are primarily leather fern, maiden fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*), meniscium fern, and lizard's tail in the swamp, while tri-veined fern and swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*) are the most prominent in the bottomland hardwood plots.

Transect #4 is located at RM 11.18 on the west side of the river approximately 1 mile upstream of Trapper Nelson's Interpretive Site. This transect is just downstream from an old logging road that crossed the floodplains and river. There are several elevation changes between the upland edge of the floodplain and the riverbed. The benchmark for this site is near a very large dead pine tree, which is on the slope at about 5.62 feet NGVD. From the hammock the transect drops down into several Rsw1 plots intermixed with plots of Rlbh2 and Rlbh3 (**Appendix E, Table 1D; Appendix F**). Bottom elevations of the swamp plots are approximately 2.17 feet NGVD while the bottom of the river channel is -2.45 feet NGVD (**Appendix G**). Most of the plots closer to the river are bottomland hardwood with some of the largest water hickory observed in the watershed (**Figure 3-12**). Some of these large hickory trees exhibit the allelopathic nature of this species as little groundcover or shrubs are present beneath their canopy. Elevations of the Rlbh2 and Rlbh3 plots are approximately 2.51 feet to 3.91 feet NGVD. The average dbh of water hickory on the transect is 36.1 cm and with the largest at 88.6 cm. Bald cypress trees vary considerably in size and age across Transect #4. The average cypress dbh is 30.0 cm; but the dbh ranges from 5.7 cm to 83.6 cm indicating that several generations of trees are present. Pop ash and red maple averaged 12.2 cm and 11.0 cm dbh, respectively. Shrubs and groundcovers are primarily leather fern, maiden fern, downy shield fern, Virginia willow, swamp fern, royal fern, lizard's tail, swamp lily and pond apple.



Figure 3-12. Water Hickory in Bottomland Hardwood Plot on Transect #4.

Evidence of plant species intrusion (i.e. a shift in plant species from wetter forest community types to dryer) can be found throughout the riverine transects (**Figures 3-13 through 3-16**). On Transect #1, it was evident in recent generations that slash pines were moving into hammock areas and cabbage palms were moving into swamp areas (**Figure 3-13**). On Transect #2, Rsw1 and the Rmix plots were more diverse with younger pop ash, red maple and water hickory intermixed with the cypress. Bald cypress had an average dbh of 73.6 cm with the largest dbh at 114.5 cm while red maple and pop ash, average 29.5cm. Also, there was one water hickory with a dbh of 9.2cm. Again, this large age and size difference suggested that other deciduous tree species (i.e. red maple and water hickory, **Figure 3-14**) take advantage of the shortened hydroperiods experienced by the older bald cypress community over the last 50 years. In addition, there was evidence of red maple, and cabbage palm in the swamp, and slash pine in the hammock. On Transect #3, there was Brazilian pepper in the hammock and swamp, wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa* and *sulzneri*), myrsine, and cabbage palms in the bottomland hardwood, and wax myrtle, grapevine, and Caesar's weed (*Urena lobata*) in the swamp (**Figure 3-15**). On Transect# 4, young red maple and water hickory (bottomland hardwood species) were evident in the pop ash dominated swamp communities while the wild coffee, Brazilian pepper, and laurel oak had intruded into the bottomland hardwood and swamp communities (**Figure 3-16**).

Historical inundation analysis revealed that the riverine floodplain was unavailable for fish and aquatic wildlife utilization about 75 percent of the time for most years because of the lack of sufficient floodplain inundation. The need for baseline field monitoring and the plan for study are outlined in **Chapter 10** (Ecological Monitoring for Adaptive Management). A more natural hydroperiod in the riverine floodplains would potentially increase food resource availability (i.e. invertebrates, amphibians, fish and birds) and provide a multitude of aquatic habitats. Amphibians in particular are important indicators of ecological health because they require out of channel aquatic habitat to breed successfully. South Florida amphibians need various lengths of continuous inundation for the metamorphosis from larvae to adult (**Table 10-2**). Larval and juvenile riverine fishes utilize the shallow floodplain habitat to hide from larger predators. Depending upon water depth, fishes of all sizes migrate into the floodplains and use the vast plant and invertebrate food resources. Several recent publications have illustrated the significance of submerged snags as habitat to increase invertebrate populations, which also increases food resources for several other biological communities. Benke (2001) found that benthic invertebrate assemblages in the floodplains of the Ogeechee River (Georgia) were different from both snags and benthos of the main channel. Benke also indicated that the regular exchange of water, nutrients and other organic matter between the river channel and floodplain was a critical connection. These factors support the need to provide additional floodplain inundation on the riverine floodplains and within the river channel of the Loxahatchee River and its major tributaries.

In summary, the riverine floodplain of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River can be enhanced by sufficient floodplain inundation to discourage the intrusion of transitional, upland, and exotics plant species and to increase utilization of the floodplain by aquatic organisms. Recent river restoration studies in regulated systems such as the Loxahatchee River (Poff et al. 1997; Toth et al. 1998; and Benke 2001) have emphasized the importance of establishing the needed flow regimens, rather than just providing minimum flows. Thus, providing additional freshwater flow over Lainhart Dam will improve seasonal hydroperiod and will subsequently improve plant community health and enhance the riverine floodplain ecosystem. Recommendations for hydroperiod requirements of hydric hammock and floodplain swamp communities are presented in **Chapter 4**.

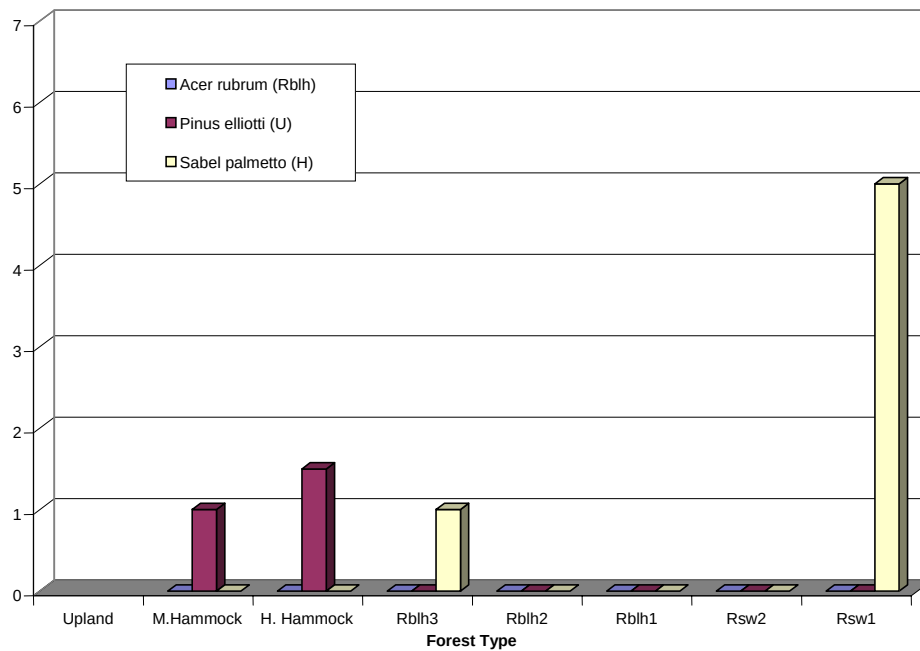


Figure 3-13. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species- Transect # 1

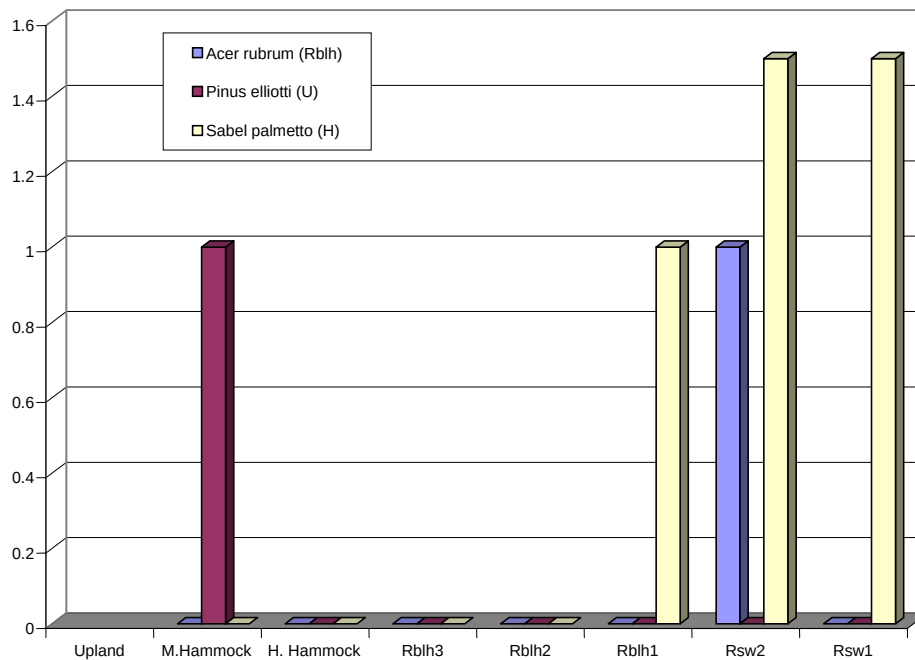


Figure 3-14. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #2.

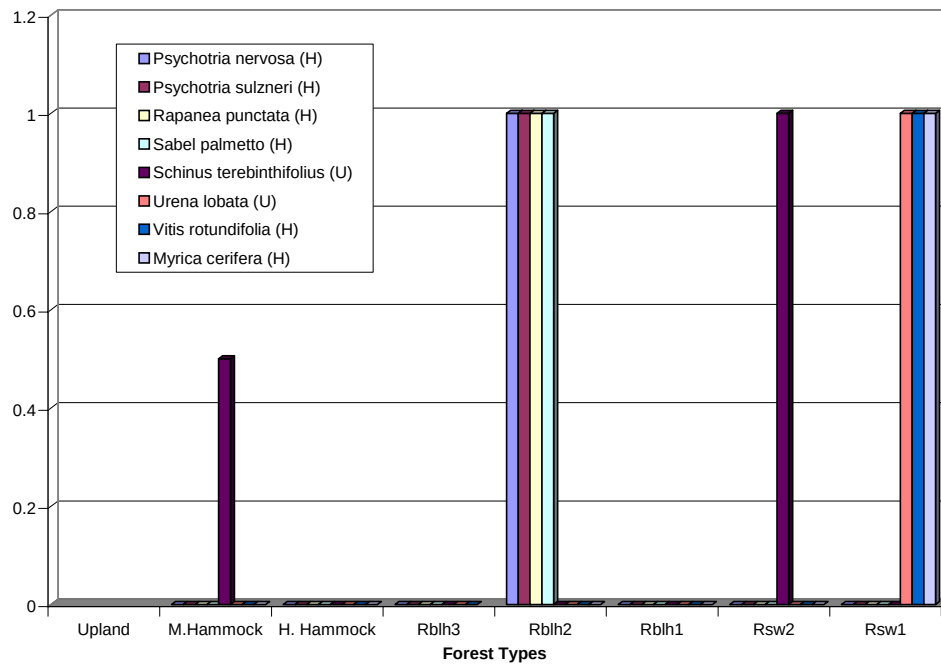


Figure 3-15. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #3.

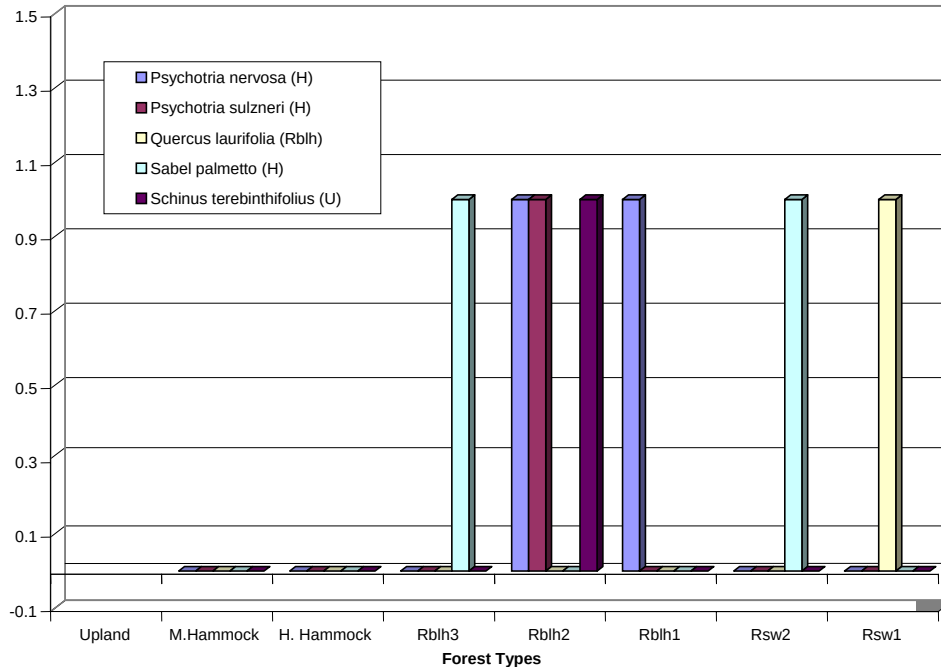


Figure 3-16. Frequency of Occurrence: Intrusive Canopy & Shrub Species-Transect #4.

Tidal Transects

Of the three tidal transects on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, two sites are upper tidal (Transects #7 at RM 9.1 and #6 at RM 8.4) and one site is lower tidal (Transect #9 at RM 6.46). The elevations of these transects are generally lower, more gently sloping towards the river, and have fewer braided streams than those transects in the riverine reach. There were no bottomland hardwood plots in the tidal reaches although indicator species for these forest types are present. In the tidal reaches, canopy diversity is increased by the presence of hummocks (i.e. elevated mounds), cypress stumps, and fallen logs. Hummocks allow canopy species that would not normally be present in swamp communities to successfully occupy areas of lower elevation (**Figure 3-17**). Forest types in the tidal reaches are generally mixtures of swamp species (fresh and brackish water species), and mixtures of swamp, hammock, and upland species. Based on historical records and aerial photography, the most abundant vegetative species in the tidal reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River were bald cypress and cabbage palm. Based on a 1860s military drawing of the Northwest Fork, the only passage upstream of the mouth of Kitching Creek was by canoe. Today the river is navigable by boat for an additional 2.2 miles upstream from Kitching Creek. Saltwater intrusion, rising sea levels, lowered groundwater levels, and decreasing freshwater flows have resulted in the increase in the distribution of red and white mangroves throughout the tidal reaches. In addition, historical logging, fire, freezes, exotic plants (Old World climbing fern, Brazilian pepper, java plum and strawberry guava), and erosion of the river channel have impacted sections of our tidal transects.



Figure 3-17. Cabbage Palm Utilizing a Hummock Among Red Mangroves and Pond Apples (UTsw1) on Transect #6.

Transect #6 is located at RM 8.4 on a peninsula just upstream of Kitching Creek and adjacent to the Ornamental Gardens. This peninsula has been selectively logged in the past and contains the remnants of many dead cypress snag, logs and stumps. Today, there are still live cypress trees growing among the pond apples and mangroves and a band of cypress trees still exist adjacent to the uplands. Elevations range from 6.82 feet NGVD in the uplands to an average elevation of 1.59 feet NGVD over the remaining length of the transect (**Appendix G**). Of the 16 plots on Transect #6, there are 2 Upland, 1 Rsw1, 6 UTsw1, 6 UTsw3, and 1 UTmix plots (**Appendix E, Table 1E**). The most prevalent species are red and white mangrove and pond apple with an average dbh of 8.3 cm (**Appendix F**). Red maple (dbh 17.5 cm) and pop ash (average dbh 5.7 cm) are present in much smaller numbers. The average dbh of the living bald cypress trees is 29.8 cm. Approximately 85 meters from the uplands on Transect #6, there is a large, healthy bald cypress tree totally surrounded by red mangroves. Red mangrove and pond apple are more prevalent in the plots beyond 110 meters from the uplands, which demonstrates the significance of floodplain topography in species distribution. Shrubs and groundcover consist primarily of very young red and white mangrove, leather fern, pond apple, buttonbush, maiden fern, swamp fern, and rubber vine (*Rhabdadenia biflora*).

Transect #7 is located at RM 9.1 on the south side of the mid Northwest Fork across from the eastern end of Hobe Grove Ditch. This transect has been impacted by saltwater intrusion, exotic vegetation (mostly Old World climbing fern, Brazilian pepper, and java plum) and logging. It is a very long transect with 15 plots that contain a mixture of 8 riverine and 7 upper tidal forest type plots (**Appendix E, Table 1F, and Appendix F**). Elevations change from 10.06 feet NGVD at the benchmark to an average of 1.58 feet NGVD across most of the floodplain (**Appendix G**). The riverine section of the transect consists of a mixed plot (Hammock/Rsw1) with live oak, wax myrtle, and a large cypress (50.1 cm dbh) followed by 2 plots of Rsw1, and 5 plots of Rmix (primarily bald cypress, cabbage palm and wax myrtle). Cabbage palm and wax myrtle coexist with the swamp species by living on small hummocks, old logged cypress stumps, and other fallen logs. The Upper Tidal segment of Transect #7 has 4 plots of UTsw1 and 3 plots of UTsw2. At a distance of 120 m from the upland, red mangroves begin to appear and become more abundant along with pond apples. White mangroves are present but were too small to be considered canopy (i.e. dbh <5 cm). Live bald cypress trees are present from the edge of the uplands out to 120 m of the 150-meter transect. The bald cypress trees have an average dbh of 28.3 cm and range from 7.2 cm to 50.1 cm dbh. Shrubs and ground cover consist primarily of leather fern, wax myrtle, buttonbush, salt bush, primrose willow, poison ivy, swamp fern, marsh fern, meniscium fern, royal fern, swamp lily, milk vine, and young mangroves, pond apples and pop ash. The riverine plots appear to have muck soils while the upper tidal plots appear to have sandy soils.

In the late fall of 2003, Transect #7 (RM 9.1) had an extremely large number of cypress seedlings ranging from 5 cm to 7.6 cm in height. Germination of new seedlings continued well into the late spring. The dry season (December 2003 to May 2004) was very dry. Tides did not reach the entire transect during this period and the rains did not come until mid-July 2004. This dry period may have been advantageous for germination and early bald cypress seedling growth. During a visit in 2003, U.S.G.S. botanists, Helen Light and Melanie Darst, suggested that perhaps the stress of the salt may have made the trees more reproductively active. They also noted that the bald cypress trees on this site were probably younger than their counterparts in the riverine reaches of the river. Also in the riverine portion of the river, the cypress tree canopy was much taller and thicker. Therefore, less light maybe available for the development of an extensive subcanopy in the riverine reach. Duever et al. (1983) suggest that a good recruitment season for bald cypress may take place every 30 to 40 years. During a visit to Transect #7 in August 2004,

many of the fall 2003 bald cypress seedlings were gone. Daily tides had returned to the interior of the transect. Seedling death may have occurred because the seedlings were too short to survive the periods of tidal flooding (twice a day) or because of increased salinity. Some of these questions will be answered by the ongoing bald cypress seedling study.

Transect #9 is located at RM 6.5 on a peninsula near the Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP; **Figure 3-18**). The hydrology of the floodplain in this area has been impacted by the placement of an elevated trail that circles the peninsula. During extreme high tides, the trail acts as a barrier and traps saltwater in the wetland system. Elevations across Transect #9 range from 9.48 feet NGVD at the benchmark to a very low area (1.31 feet NGVD) located adjacent to the river (**Appendix G**). Between 50 and 70 meters from the upland a quite pronounced hammock area exists. Elevations in the hammock range from 1.95 feet NGVD to 2.05 feet NGVD and along the trail are 2.01 feet NGVD; the remaining areas in the floodplain are approximately 1.63 feet NGVD. Of the 20 plots on this transect, 17 are lower tidal swamp (LTsw1 and LTsw2, **Appendix E, Table 1G**). The other 3 plots are upland, hammock, and LTmixed. The most prevalent species in the canopy, shrub and groundcover layers are red and white mangroves in the swamp areas and cabbage palm in the hammock areas (**Appendix F**). Pond apples in the canopy are rare; they are found predominately in the deeper swamp area at the back of the floodplains and had an average dbh of 7.2 cm. There is a noticeable difference between the distribution of red and white mangroves. White mangroves are dominant from the toe of the slope out to approximately 160 m. The remaining four plots (160 m to 200 m) are dominated by red mangrove. Leather fern dominates the shrub layer while water hyssop, leather fern and rubber vine dominate the groundcover. During a visit in August 2004, it was noted that the majority of the cabbage palms that had been recorded as alive in 2003 were now dead. The only cabbage palms remaining alive were associated with the trail and the hammock areas.

Historically, the canopy on Transect #9 was dominated by bald cypress trees; however, most of these trees are now dead. In his 1967 plant survey of this transect, Taylor Alexander reported live bald cypress at a frequency of 22.2 and a density of 0.39 (14 live and 28 dead). Red and white mangroves were at a frequency and density of 52.8/1.31 and 36.1/2.64 (47 red and 95 white). Alexander also reported the presence of several other freshwater species in small numbers including sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), swamp lily, red bay, pop ash, red maple, and buttonbush. In a 1975 JDSP survey of 100 bald cypress trees on the peninsula, 71 were dead, 21 were healthy and 8 were stressed. In our 2003 survey, there were no live cypress within Transect #9 and red and white mangroves were at a frequency and density of 47/5.79 and 100/12.32. In an April 2004 re-survey of bald cypress trees on the peninsula, 151 were dead, 7 were stressed and 3 were living. The three living bald cypress trees are directly adjacent to or on the trail.

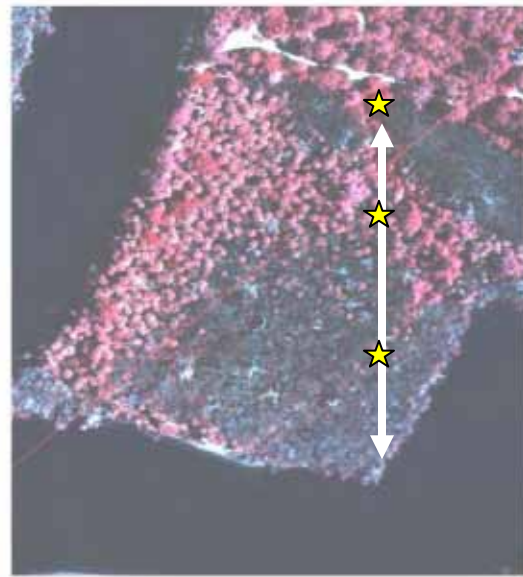


Figure 3-18. Location of Transect #9 on a Peninsula Near Jonathan Dickinson State Park (JDSP).

ANIMALS

The expansiveness and diversity of habitats occurring in or adjacent to the Loxahatchee River has attracted and continues to support many species of native animals. In 1965, 267 species of animals, consisting of 169 genera and 78 families, were observed in and along the Loxahatchee River and its estuary. The area surrounding the Northwest Fork is inhabited by numerous vertebrate species identified as endangered, threatened or of special concern by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, or listed as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. State and federally listed animals that occur in the watershed are shown in **Table 3-4**.

In addition, the entire Loxahatchee River has been designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a critical habitat for the West Indian manatee (1996). The manatee, an endangered aquatic mammal, frequents the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. Invertebrate and vertebrate aquatic animals are numerous in the marshes, lakes and streams in the river area. Freshwater fish include largemouth bass, speckled perch, bluegill, shellcracker, redbreast, warmouth, bowfin, gar, channel catfish and many species of minnows. Numerous turtles also live in and around the river. Saltwater fish include snook, tarpon, mullet, bluefish, jack, sheepshead, drum, sand perch, grouper, snapper and flounder. Mammals and birds are frequently encountered along the riverbank. Commonly seen species in the area include raccoon, opossum, whitetail deer, osprey, barred owl, egrets, herons and ibis.

Nuisance species include the Cuban treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*) and feral hog (*Sus scrofa*). The Cuban treefrog was limited to the Florida Keys and Miami-Dade County until the late 1960s. Since then, it has spread rapidly northward and has been reported north of St. Petersburg. Its continuous range is from Daytona Beach (east) to north of Tampa (west) (Meshaka 2001). The adult Cuban tree frog is larger than any other native tree frog in Florida and unfortunately readily eats the smaller native frogs. Feral hogs have spread widely across North America since their first introduction by DeSoto in 1539. They adversely impact the environment and agriculture through habitat degradation, predation competition on native species, and transmission of diseases to livestock and humans. In 2001, swine control assessments were conducted within JDSP to gather information on abundance and distribution (Engeman et al. 2001). Although the swine control program reduced fresh damage indices, re-invasion was evident. Both Cuban tree frogs and feral hogs were evident on most of the vegetative transects.

Additional species, although not identified on the official lists compiled by the State of Florida, may be identified as being either endangered, threatened or of special concern by the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals. The threatened osprey often nests in dead cypress trees in the lower Northwest Fork. The great egret, the black-crowned night heron and the yellow-crowned night heron, classified as Species of Special Concern, are also found in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

The federally designated National Wild and Scenic portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, a major part of which is located within Jonathan Dickinson State Park, contains 52 federal and state species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern (23 animals and 29 plants). Those species having a federal designation found within this area include the alligator, indigo snake, scrub jay, bald eagle, wood stork, snail kite, manatee, four-petal paw paw, perforate lichen and Small's milkwort (FDEP 1998).

Table 3-4. Threatened and Endangered Animals and Species of Special Concern in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

Scientific Name	Common Name	FCREP ^a	FGFWFC ^b	USFWS ^c
FISH				
<i>Centropomus undecimalis</i>	Common snook		SSC	
AMPHIBIANS				
<i>Rana capito aesopus</i>	Gopher frog	T	SSC	
REPTILES				
<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>	American alligator	SSC	SSC	T(S/A)
<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	Eastern indigo snake	SSC	T	T
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Gopher tortoise	T	SSC	
<i>Pituophis melanoleucus</i>	Florida pine snake		SSC	
BIRDS				
<i>Ajaia ajaja</i>	Roseate spoonbill	R	SSC	
<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	Florida scrub jay	T	T	T
<i>Aramus guarauna</i>	Limpkin	SSC	SSC	
<i>Dendroica kirtlandii</i>	Kirtland's warbler	E	E	E
<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	Little blue heron	SSC	SSC	
<i>Egretta thula</i>	Snowy egret	SSC	SSC	
<i>Egretta tricolor</i>	Tricolored heron	SSC	SSC	
<i>Eudocimus albus</i>	White ibis	SSC	SSC	
<i>Falco peregrinus tundrius</i>	Arctic peregrine falcon	E	E	
<i>Grus canadensis pratensis</i>	Florida sandhill crane	T	T	
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald eagle	T	T	T
<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Wood stork	E	E	E
<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Brown pelican		SSC	
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Red-cockaded woodpecker	E	T	E
<i>Polyborus plancus audubonii</i>	Crested caracara		T	T
<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>	Snail kite	E	E	E
<i>Speotyto cunicularia floridana</i>	Florida burrowing owl	SSC	SSC	
<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	Least tern	T	T	
MAMMALS				
<i>Peromyscus floridanus</i>	Florida mouse	T	SSC	
<i>Sciurus niger shermanii</i>	Sherman's fox squirrel	T	SSC	
<i>Trichechus manatus latirostris</i>	West Indian manatee	T	E	E

Data from Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (1999) and Jonathan Dickinson State Park Unit Management Plan, State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (February 2000).

^a Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals.

^b Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission.

^c United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

E=Endangered, R=Rare, T=Threatened, T(S/A)=Threatened/Similarity of Appearance, SSC=Species of Special Concern.

THE ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM

Biological resources of the Loxahatchee River Estuary are greatly affected by freshwater flows, tidal flows, and human activities. Many freshwater and marine organisms are dependent on certain ranges of salinity within the estuary in relation to habitat at different times of their life cycle. This dependence on salinity has led to many salinity classification systems based on species distribution. In general, however, oligohaline waters are low salinity (0.5-5 ppt), mesohaline waters are intermediate salinity (5-18 ppt) and polyhaline waters have high salinity (18-30 ppt). In many south Florida estuarine environments, mangroves, oysters and seagrasses form the bases of major biological communities that may be related to these salinity ranges where federally threatened species find refuge. Therefore, it is important that any proposed flow regime be sensitive to the salinity needs of flora and fauna that depend on the estuary.

OLIGOHALINE ECOZONE – FISH LARVAE

One of the important ecological functions of an estuary is the utilization of the low salinity zone (LSZ) at the head of the estuary. The LSZ serves as a nursery for larval and juvenile life stages of many important fish and shellfish (Pearse and Gunter 1957; Gunter 1961; Day et al. 1989). This critical habitat receives eggs, larvae and young from anadromous and catadromous fish and shellfish, estuarine spawners, and larvae spawned in the more saline lower estuary and ocean (Day et al. 1989). The relative magnitude of successful larval development and survival in the LSZ may be reflected in the magnitude of recruitment into the adult population (North and Houde 2001).

The LSZ salinity range is typically defined as 0.5 to 5.0 ppt (oligohaline). However, this Restoration Plan will extend the LSR to 10 ppt since it has been demonstrated that this range is appropriate for studying fish larvae in an estuarine system (Holmes et al. 2000; North and Houde 2001) and is often associated with the maximum turbidity known as the turbidity maximum (Jassby et al. 1995; North and Houde 2001). Although salinity is not the only important variable defining the spatial extent of the LSZ nursery, salinity may act as a proxy variable for habitat characteristics which co-vary with salinity. The spatial extent of the LSZ in the Loxahatchee Estuary will be defined as the area upstream of the 10 ppt isohaline.

In general, the open waterway within the LSZ nursery area is an essential habitat for fish and shellfish larvae while the shallow shoreline and tributaries provide essential habitat for the juvenile fish and shellfish. **Table 3-5** lists the surface area of the Loxahatchee Estuary (in acres) and the length of shoreline (in feet) by River Mile segment. As the base flow increases, the cumulative area of waterway and cumulative length of shoreline of the LSZ habitat also increases. More detailed information will define the affects of different low-flow scenarios on the location and quantity of maximum turbidity in relation to larval utilization. The quality of LSZ shoreline may provide a more detailed evaluation of this habitat than the amount of habitat alone. For example, a shoreline composed of red mangroves acts as an important ecotone between the waterway and the floodplain wetlands and may have more habitat value than a seawall shoreline. A red mangrove shoreline with a shallow tributary may have even more habitat value than the mangrove shoreline alone. **Figure 3-6** shows the distribution of red mangroves and tributaries.

Table 3-5. Surface Area and Length of the Loxahatchee Estuary Oligohaline (Low Salinity Zone) Ecozone from River Miles 4.0 to 10.5.

River Mile Segment	Area (Acres)	Cumulative Area (Acres)	Shoreline (ft)	Cumulative Shoreline (ft)
10.5 to 10	6.3	6.3	12,861	12,861
10 to 9	12.7	19.0	18,095	30,956
9 to 8	24.3	43.3	31,292	62,248
8 to 7	28.6	71.9	16,086	78,334
7 to 6	30.7	102.6	14,501	92,835
6 to 5	88.8	191.4	59,210	152,045
5 to 4	--	--	37,119	189,164

MESOHALINE ECOZONE - OYSTERS

Estuarine areas with salinities between 5 and 18 ppt are defined as mesohaline regions. Most of the oyster community is found in this salinity range and is sensitive to changes in flow regimes.

Oyster bars are important habitat providing extensive attachment areas for many organisms including oyster spat, mussels, tunicates, bryozoans, and barnacles (Woodward-Clyde International Americas 1998). Oysters also play an important role in the estuarine food chain. Free-swimming oyster larvae are heavily preyed upon by planktivores, such as ctenophores, anemones, and larval fishes; and oyster spat are eaten by carnivorous worms and small crabs such as mud and juvenile blue crabs (Woodward-Clyde International Americas 1998). Larger oyster spat and small adult oysters are consumed by blue crabs, stone crabs, whelks, conchs, oyster drills, boring clams, boring sponges, skates, rays and fishes such as black drum and redfish (Wells 1961).

Salinity affects oyster reproduction, growth and distribution. Oyster spawning depends on salinities greater than 7.5 ppt and spat grow best at salinities above 12.5 ppt; the optimum salinity range for adult oysters is from 10 ppt to 28 ppt. The lower salinities in this range exclude marine predators (Sellers and Stanley 1984). In 1990 the oyster reefs were present in the Southwest and Northwest Forks but were rare in the North Fork of the Loxahatchee Estuary. Oysters in the embayment area were small in the polyhaline region and limited to isolated shell clusters and accumulations on dock pilings. Numerous relict shells in the embayment were associated with shoals, point-bars and mangrove islands (Law Environmental, Inc. 1991a). Field observations revealed oysters were smallest at the upstream (RM 6) and downstream embayment locations and largest in the central part of their range near RM 4.2. The largest populations of oyster grow in intertidal and shallow sub tidal areas near shorelines upstream of the Northwest Fork River delta (RM 4.2) to about RM 6. The river delta ("S-Bar") provides a significant barrier to tidal flow and therefore tends to greatly influence salinity. Favorable salinities, which contribute to oyster health and which are close to this location and upstream of it, result in large oysters and increased oyster density in this area. The *Distribution of and Viability of Oyster Communities in the Loxahatchee River Estuary* (Bachman, Ridler and Dent 2004) addresses the health and location of oysters in the area. These waters are designated Class II; Shellfish Propagation and Harvesting by the FDEP.

POLYHALINE ECOZONE - SEAGRASSES

Estuarine areas with salinities between 18 ppt and 30 ppt are defined as polyhaline regions. For this Restoration Plan, the section of the Loxahatchee River Estuary from the Jupiter Inlet (RM 0.0), through the Central Embayment (RM 2.0), to RM 4.0 is considered to be within the polyhaline ecozone. Seagrass beds are key biological communities in the Loxahatchee Estuary and could potentially be impacted by upstream restoration activities.

Seagrass beds are one of the most productive and important estuarine communities. They provide food for bacteria and microscopic animals at the base of a complex food web, as well as, food for larger organisms such as green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and manatees (*Trichechus manatus*). Seagrass beds offer a refuge and nursery ground for numerous commercially and recreationally valuable shrimp, fishes and crabs and their prey (Zieman 1982; Phillips 1984; Thayer et al. 1984; Kenworthy et al. 1988; Zieman and Zieman 1989).

Wading birds frequent seagrass beds at low tides to feed on fish that use the seagrass canopy and root/rhizome mat for shelter (Sogard et al. 1989). Migratory waterfowl and diving birds also regularly feed in and over seagrass beds. Some of the invertebrate fauna associated with seagrass beds include gastropods, star fishes, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, pink shrimp, and spiny lobsters. Seagrass beds are visited or inhabited by numerous fish species. They provide nursery habitat for recreationally and commercially important drums (Sciaenidae), sea bass (Serranidae), porgies (Sparidae), grunts (Pomadasyidae), snappers (Lutjanidae), and mojarras (Gerridae) (Odum and McIvor 1991).

Seagrass beds are also known to enhance water quality. They bind shallow underwater sediments with their roots and rhizomes. The leafy canopy baffles waves and currents (Fonseca et al. 1983; Fonseca and Fisher 1986; Fonseca 1989; Fonseca and Cahalan 1992). The baffling inhibits resuspension of fine particles and traps sediments in the water column, providing water column cleansing (Ward et al. 1984). Additionally, seagrasses and associated epiphytes and macroalgae take up dissolved nutrients.

It is generally accepted that if healthy seagrass beds are present, then a diverse and productive faunal community will also be present. Biological productivity and diversity in many estuarine systems is dependent upon healthy seagrass beds. Numerous studies have shown high densities and diversities of animals occur in seagrass beds (Gilmore 1995; Lewis 1984; Thayer et al. 1984; Virnstein et al. 1983).

All seven seagrass species that occur in South Florida are found within the Loxahatchee Estuary. Six species of seagrasses are currently found in the polyhaline region of the estuary. The seventh species, widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*), is present upstream in the oligohaline region near RM 6.5 (Loxahatchee River District 2004). The six species of seagrass found within the polyhaline region are shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*), turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), paddle grass (*Halophila decipiens*), star grass (*Halophila engelmannii*), and Johnson's seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*). The dominant seagrass species present in the polyhaline region of the estuary is shoal grass.

Restoration efforts will change the freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and may potentially impact the salinity regime in the estuary. An understanding of the salinity tolerances of the seagrass species within the estuary is needed to help evaluate potential impacts of proposed upstream restoration efforts on the downstream resources.

A literature review was conducted for the SFWMD to evaluate salinity tolerances of seagrasses found in the St. Lucie Estuary (Woodward-Clyde International 1998). Although none of the published studies were conducted on plants from the Loxahatchee Estuary, the studies did include all of the species found in the Loxahatchee River. These species-specific tolerance values will provide the basis for the Loxahatchee seagrass/salinity evaluations presented in this plan.

The St. Lucie Estuary literature provides normal and optimal salinity tolerance ranges for all seven seagrass species. Widgeon grass and shoal grass have the widest salinity tolerance ranges: 0 ppt to 45 ppt and 5 ppt to 55 ppt, respectively. Optimal (no stress) conditions for growth and survival apparently occur between 5 ppt to 15 ppt for widgeon grass and between 24 ppt to 36 ppt for shoal grass. More narrow salinity tolerance ranges are reported for turtle grass (16 ppt-50 ppt) and manatee grass (17 ppt-44 ppt). The optimal ranges suggested for these two species are 25 ppt to 35 ppt for turtle grass and 24 ppt to 36 ppt for manatee grass.

The three *Halophila* species have the least well-documented salinity ranges of the seven seagrass species found in the Loxahatchee River, but based on information provided in the literature review, the following normal tolerance ranges are reported: paddle grass (22 ppt – 38 ppt), star grass (10 ppt - 40 ppt), and Johnson's seagrass (15 ppt - 43 ppt). The optimal salinity conditions reported for the species are paddle grass (27 ppt-34 ppt), star grass (25 ppt-35 ppt), and Johnson's seagrass (25 ppt-35 ppt).

Additional studies were reviewed that identified salinity ranges that may cause stress (reduced growth or increased mortality) to four of the seagrass species found in the Loxahatchee Estuary. For shoal grass, Doering et al. (2002) showed that very little growth occurred between 6 ppt and 12 ppt. Another study (McMahan 1968) indicated that blade mortality occurred in shoal grass below 6 ppt. Two other laboratory studies documented negative impacts to manatee grass at 15 ppt. In one experiment, blade densities decreased when plants were exposed to 15 ppt for 26 days (SFWMD 1999 unpublished). In another experiment leaf extension rates decreased in plants exposed to 15 ppt for 14 days (Lirman and Cropper 2003). Studies of turtle grass found limited growth between 16 ppt and 19 ppt and a decrease in photosynthesis at 18 ppt (Woodward-Clyde 1998). Doering and Chamberlain (2000) found growth parameters in turtle grass were negatively impacted between 6 ppt and 12 ppt. Finally, although very little salinity tolerance information is available for the *Halophila* species, Dawes et al. (1989) reported blade mortality when Johnson's seagrass was exposed to 5 ppt for 3 days.

Johnson's seagrass occurs throughout the polyhaline region of the Loxahatchee Estuary (Loxahatchee River District 2004). It is the only seagrass species listed as "threatened" by the Federal Government. Johnson's seagrass is listed as "threatened" because of its limited geographic distribution; it has only been found along the Florida east coast from Sebastian Inlet to northern Biscayne Bay. On April 5, 2000 (65 Federal Register 17786), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule designating critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass. One of 10 sites identified as critical habitat is located near the Jupiter Inlet in the Loxahatchee Estuary (**Figure 3-19**). The designation as "critical habitat" means that the Federal government has determined that the designated area is vital to the conservation of the listed species. Any proposals to alter flow conditions in the Northwest Fork to the extent that they may impact the local population of Johnson's seagrass will have to be reviewed and approved by the NMFS.

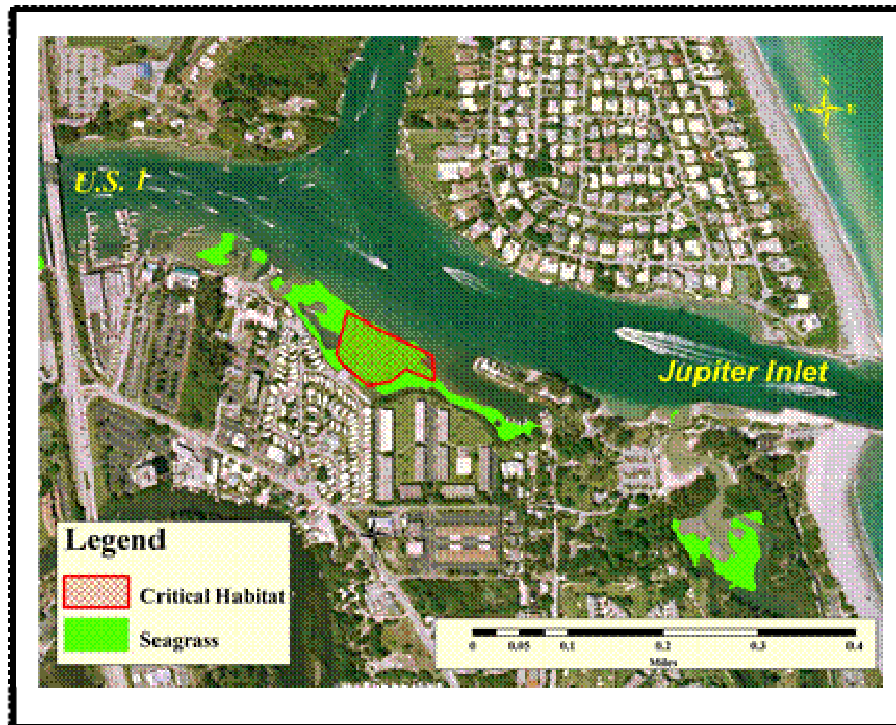


Figure 3-19. Critical Habitat for Johnson's Seagrass within the Loxahatchee Estuary.

Another Federally listed species that occurs within the Loxahatchee Estuary is the West Indian manatee, *Trichechus manatus*. This endangered species feeds on seagrasses and frequents the Loxahatchee Estuary. Changes in freshwater flow could potentially contribute to changes in distribution or abundance of seagrass which could impact this endangered species. As with Johnson's seagrass, any proposed flow modifications that could potentially impact endangered species will have to be reviewed and approved by the NMFS.

BENTHIC MACROFAUNA

Benthic organisms are important as consumers of plankton and detritus in filtering the water column, and as food for bottom-feeding fish. Benthic macroinvertebrates are sensitive to subtle changes in water quality. The diversity and abundance of these organisms in the ecosystem make them good biological markers for investigating long-term changes in this estuarine environment. Unlike plankton or fishes, their limited mobility makes them reliable indicators of the overall health of a system.

Various surveys of macrofauna have been conducted in the Loxahatchee Estuary (McPherson et al. 1984; Strom and Rudolph 1990; Law Environmental, Inc. 1991a; Dent et al. 1998). McPherson et al. (1984) studied fouling organisms in the Loxahatchee Estuary and noted that two of eight barnacle species occurred only in marine salinities, while other species occurred in lower salinities. Only one species occurred as far upstream as the JDSP. The overall diversity, density and growth of fouling communities are greater in high salinity areas, greater before the summer-wet season and higher after tropical storms. Strom and Rudolph (1990) observed that representatives of brackish water fauna occurred as far upstream as the Trapper Nelson site (RM 10.5), although most of the species at this location were typical of freshwater environments.

Samples collected by Law Environmental, Inc. (1991a) from oyster reef communities in the estuary contained representatives of 41 invertebrate taxa from seven phyla. Analyses of these data indicated that four taxa had broad distributions along the river and occurred upriver to the limit of their survey within JDSP. Almost a third of the taxa were marine species, requiring high salinities that occurred no farther upstream than the oyster reef at the mouth of the Southwest Fork.

The Wildpine Ecological Laboratory, which is operated by Loxahatchee River District, performed quantitative infaunal sampling at nine estuarine stations between 1992 and 1999. Sampling occurred twice a year, once during the dry season (February-March) and once during the wet season (September-November). The locations of five of the nine estuarine stations are presented in **Figure 3-20**. Preliminary results (Dent et al. 1998) found 410 invertebrate species in the estuary and adjacent waters. Overall, the five estuarine stations sampled contained fewer taxa than the four stations located in more marine waters. Estuarine stations contained a larger proportion of crustaceans (44%) than annelids (33%) or mollusks (11%), whereas stations in more marine waters contained a predominance of annelids (58%), about 30 percent crustaceans and 7 percent mollusks. Initial analyses of these data and comparisons with data from other studies suggest that this estuarine invertebrate community shows seasonal changes in species composition and short-term changes due to specific rainfall or discharge events. The major phyla collected at the five stations are shown in **Table 3-6**.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) also conducted routine benthic macroinvertebrate sampling between February 1985 and March 1988. Samples were collected every other month at five sites in the Loxahatchee River.

Currently, SFWMD staff are reviewing the available macroinvertebrate data and intend to add several marine clams and snails as additional indicators of a healthy polyhaline ecotone in the Loxahatchee Estuary.

Table 3-6. Summary of Benthic Taxa Present in the Loxahatchee Estuary.

Station	Abundance (total mean)	Annelids	Crustaceans	Mollusks	Other	Total # of Species
B41	2812	54	36	64	4	73
B60	1599	39	41	15	5	85
B70	2795	61	22	11	6	113
B62	1913	17	48	13	22	76
B54	1605	44	42	4	10	66

Data from Dent et al. 1998.

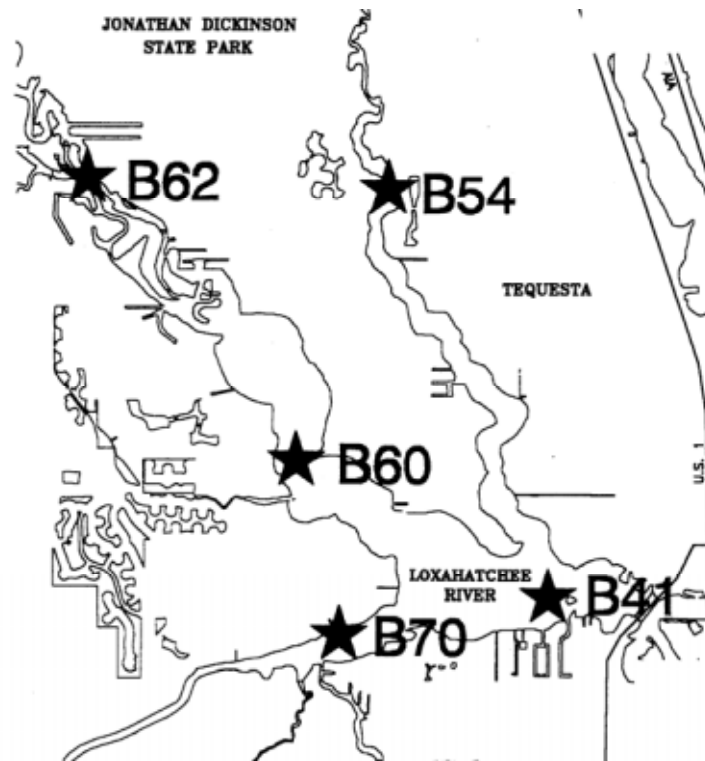


Figure 3-20. Location of Loxahatchee Estuary Macroinvertebrate Sampling Stations Used by Dent et al. 1998.

FISHES

Several studies have examined fish communities within the Loxahatchee River, including Christensen (1965), Snyder (1984) and Hedgepeth (2001). Salinity studies have been conducted by Birnhak (1974), Rodis (1973), Chiu (1975) and Russell and McPherson (1984). The Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District has ongoing studies of fishes and salinity as well as invertebrates and seagrasses. Studies of fishes indicate that a significant relationship exists between community composition and salinity in the Loxahatchee River. The upstream area of the river (above RM 9.0) is characterized by freshwater species; the lower portion (from the Jupiter Inlet to RM 5.0) is characterized by marine and estuarine species; and the remaining midstream section (between RM 5.0 and RM 9.0) is characterized by freshwater and estuarine species.

Data from a study of fishes collected from the Loxahatchee Estuary during 1982-1983 (Hedgepeth, personal communication; Hedgepeth et al. 2001) indicate that the season of the year, salinity and availability of habitat have an affect on abundance, distribution and diversity of fishes in the estuary. The dominant fishes in the Loxahatchee Estuary are listed in **Table 3-7**.

Table 3-7. Relative Abundance and Ranking of the Most Abundant Fishes in the Loxahatchee Estuary During 1982–1983 (Hedgepeth et al. 2001).

Species	Specimens Rank	Biomass Rank	Appearance Rank	Sum of Ranks	Overall Rank
<i>Dasyatis americana</i>	16	15	16	47	19.3
<i>Harengula humeralis</i>	8	14	16	38	12.5
<i>Harengula jaguana</i>	2	3	16	21	7
<i>Jenkinsia lamprotaenia</i>	15	16	16	47	19.3
<i>Sardinella aurita</i>	9	12	16	37	11
<i>Anchoa hepsetus</i>	1	2	13	16	3
<i>Anchoa lyolepis</i>	6	16	16	38	12.5
<i>Anchoa mitchilli</i>	3	8	7	18	5
<i>Synodus foetens</i>	16	16	15	47	19.3
<i>Strongylura notata</i>	16	9	6	31	10.5
<i>Strongylura timucu</i>	16	16	11	43	15
<i>Trachinotus falcatus</i>	16	16	12	44	16
<i>Diapterus auratus</i>	16	13	9.5	38.5	13
<i>Eucinostomus argenteus</i>	4	4	1	9	1
<i>Eucinostomus gula</i>	10	5	2	17	4
<i>Eucinostomus jonesi</i>	13	16	16	45	17
<i>Gerres cinereus</i>	14	16	16	46	18.5
<i>Archosargus probatocephalus</i>	16	16	14	46	18.5
<i>Lagodon rhomboides</i>	12	10	5	27	9
<i>Leiostomus xanthurus</i>	5	1	9.5	15.5	2
<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	7	7	8	22	8
<i>Mugil curema</i>	11	6	3	20	6
<i>Sphyraena barracuda</i>	16	11	4	31	10.5
<i>Spheroides testudineus</i>	16	16	10	42	14

Bold text indicates the most abundant species.

The numbers of anchovies (*Anchoa* spp.) and herrings (*Harengula* spp.) peaked during the month of February, while the numbers of sciaenids (*Leiostomus xanthurus*), anchovies, herrings and mojarras (*Eucinostomus* spp.) peaked in July. These peaks reflected spawning periods for these groups. The seagrass beds of the Central Embayment, the lower North Fork and the lower Southwest Fork tend to support the highest number of species and individuals (**Table 3-8**). Abundance and diversity also were higher at sites where average salinities were above 25 ppt. At sites where salinities averaged 5 ppt or lower, the number of species decreased markedly. The most abundant species were anchovies (*Anchoa* spp.), mojarras (*Eucinostomus* spp.) and spot (*Leiostomus xanthurus*).

Table 3-8. Numbers of Fish Collected in Loxahatchee Estuary as a Function of Salinity (1982–1983).

Station Location	# of Individuals	# of Species	Salinity (ppt)		
			Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Central Embayment Area	185,936	102	24.6	3.0	35.0
Lower North Fork	20,405	62	21.3	6.0	35.0
Upper North Fork	945	30	3.7	0.0	22.0
Mid-Northwest Fork	911	30	4.6	0.0	19.0
Upper Northwest Fork	869	40	0.4	0.0	4.0
Lower Southwest Fork	49,416	68	9.8	0.0	27.0
Total for all Stations	258,482	144	15.6	0.0	35.0

Source: Hedgepeth et al. 2001

THREATENED OR SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Manatees (*Trichechus manatus*)

The Florida manatee (West Indian manatee) is an important marine mammal that lives in or seasonally visits the Loxahatchee River system (Packard 1981). Manatees are federally protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. They are also protected by the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act of 1978, which establishes the entire state as a refuge and sanctuary for manatees.

The Loxahatchee River (Northwest and Southwest Forks) is considered a high priority water body because this area has a well documented history of manatee use. Manatees are found primarily in the Southwest Fork near S-46, the lower North Fork, Jupiter Inlet (river mouth) and residential canals. Nearby Jupiter Sound also has been identified as a seasonally important manatee feeding ground. The largest concentrations of manatees occur in October, January, and December (Law 1991b). Manatees and their calves have been observed apparently drinking fresh water at the S-46 Structure. This area also may be an important nursery area and mating behavior has been observed in this vicinity (Law 1991b). Although manatees can often be seen skimming fresh water off the surface and congregating at spillways and other freshwater sites, ingestion of fresh water in this manner is not a requirement (USFWS 1996). In general, manatees avoid areas with high boat traffic and tend to migrate upstream into Jonathan Dickinson State Park during rough weather. Concerns have been raised that hydrologic alteration of freshwater flows delivered to the estuary could potentially contribute to changes in the distribution or abundance of submerged aquatic plant communities, a reduction in water quality and/or a reduction in adequate levels of warm water that manatees require.

Opossum Pipefish (*Microphis brachyurus lineatus*)

The opossum pipefish was added to the candidate species list in 1997 (USDC 1998). The predominant areas in which there is concern for this pipefish is in the Indian River Lagoon of Florida. NMFS initiated a status review of this species in 1998 to determine if listing under the ESA is warranted.

The opossum pipefish is a circumtropical species; breeding adults are only found in freshwater associated with certain vegetation such as panic grass (*Panicum* spp.) and smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.). Brooding male opossum pipefish have been captured in tributaries to the

Indian River Lagoon, Florida, during all months except January and February. Predictable breeding adult populations are limited to tributaries of the Indian River Lagoon, the Sebastian, St. Lucie, and Loxahatchee rivers, thus the adult populations are restricted to the east coast of Florida adjacent to the warm Florida Current. These areas receive freshwater from inland and upland sources as part of an extensive coastal flood control system.

The main reason that the opossum pipefish is becoming very rare is that its habitat is disappearing as a result of several factors. First, continuous human settlement limits the areas in which these pipefish live. The rapid and continual growth of the coastal human population displaces pipefish habitat. Because these pipefish need access to very specific vegetation types and to freshwater, there are few places they can migrate. Furthermore, migration is limited because of flood control structures which block rivers and canals that could provide pipefish habitat. Lastly, herbicide treatment, which also destroys vegetated pipefish habitat, provides a potential threat for this limited Florida population.

Johnson's Seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*)

Johnson's seagrass was listed as a federally threatened species in September 1998 (USDC 2000). It has a very limited distribution and it is one of the least abundant seagrasses within its range. It plays a major role in the viability of benthic resources and has been documented as a food source for the endangered manatees. The species is only known to reproduce asexually and may be limited in distribution because of this characteristic.

Johnson's seagrass has a disjunctive and patchy distribution along the east coast of Florida from central Biscayne Bay to Sebastian Inlet. The largest patches have been documented inside Lake Worth Inlet. The southernmost distribution is reported to be in the vicinity of Virginia Key in Biscayne Bay. The species has been found in coarse sand and muddy substrates and in areas of turbid waters and high tidal currents.

CHAPTER 4**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

THE FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM	5
RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN VEC: SWAMP AND HYDRIC HAMMOCK FOREST COMMUNITIES	7
Justification	7
Distribution	7
Performance Measures.....	7
TIDAL FLOODPLAIN VECs: SWAMP COMMUNITIES	9
Justification	9
Distribution	9
Performance Measures.....	10
Characteristic Salinity Regime	14
Bald Cypress Salinity Tolerance and Threshold Salinity.....	14
THE ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM.....	16
LOW SALINITY ZONE VEC: FISH LARVAE AND JUVENILE FISH.....	16
Justification	16
Distribution	17
Performance Measures.....	22
MESOHALINE ZONE VEC: OYSTERS.....	25
Justification	25
Distribution	25
Performance Measures.....	29
POLYHALINE ZONE VEC: SEAGRASSES.....	31
Justification	31
Distribution	31
Performance Measures.....	39

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4-1.	Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #6 (RM 8.43): Upper Tidal Reach.	11
Figure 4-2.	Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #7 (RM 9.10): Upper Tidal Reach.	12
Figure 4-3.	Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #9 (RM 6.46): Lower Tidal Reach.	13
Figure 4-4.	Correlation Between Salinity Event Ratio Ds/Db (> 1 ppt) and River Mile.	14
Figure 4-5.	Location of 2004 Dry Season Fish Larvae Sample Stations Indicated by Red Rectangles. Station Numbers are Represented by White Numbers on a Blue Background; Light Blue Numbers Indicate River Mile.	18
Figure 4-6.	Relative Composition of All Fish Larvae by Family Collected in 1986-1988 at Station 28 (RM 7.0). Source: Chamberlain unpublished.	19
Figure 4-7.	Relative Composition of All Fish Larvae by Family Collected During the 2004 Dry Season for All Stations.....	19
Figure 4-8.	1986 and 1987 Seasonal Changes in Relative Abundance of Fish Larvae During the Transition from the Spring (Dry Season) to the Summer (Wet Season) at Station 28 (RM 7.0).	20
Figure 4-9.	1986-1988 Fish Larvae Densities from Station 25 (RM 5.8) (Blue Bars) and Station 28 (RM 7) (Black Bars).....	21
Figure 4-10.	1986-1989 Fish Larvae Densities at Station 28: Relationship between Salinity and Water Level.	21
Figure 4-11.	2004 Dry Season Fish Larvae Density Relative to Salinity (ppt).	22
Figure 4-12.	2003 Distribution of Oyster Reefs (yellow areas) in the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River. Oyster Monitoring Stations are Indicated with Red Dots (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).	27
Figure 4-13.	Oyster Acreage in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Estuary in October 2003 (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).	28
Figure 4-14.	Oyster Distribution in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Estuary in October 2003 (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).	28
Figure 4-15.	1980/1981 Map of Seagrass Distribution (Source: McPherson et al. 1982).....	34
Figure 4-16.	1985 Map of Seagrass Distribution (Source: Klemm and Vare 1985). ..	34

Figure 4-17.	2003 Seagrass Map Prepared from Aerial Photographs	37
Figure 4-18.	2003/2004 Map of Seagrass Species in the Loxahatchee Estuary. Widgeon Grass was found near River Mile 6.5 and is not shown on this map. (Source: Loxahatchee River District 2004)	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1. Summary of Hydrological Conditions, Soil Textures, and Dominant Canopy Species for the Floodplain Forest Communities in the Loxahatchee River and Its Major Tributaries.	6
Table 4-2. Hydroperiods of Major Plant Community Types.	8
Table 4-3. Salinity Tolerances During Life Stages of the American Oyster.	30
Table 4-4. Summary of Seagrass Mapping Studies of the Loxahatchee Estuary.	32
Table 4-5. Salinity Performance Measures for Four Species of Seagrasses.	40
Table 4-6. Salinity/Duration Performance Measures for Four Species of Seagrasses.....	41

Chapter 4

Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) and Performance Measures (PMs)

The SFWMD supports the application of a resource-based management strategy similar to the Valued Ecosystem Component (VEC) approach developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 1987). VECs are species or communities that relay a complex message of ecological community composition and health in a simplified and useful manner (USEPA 2000). Management objectives are attained by providing a suitable hydrological and water quality environment for the VECs. In turn, VECs sustain an important ecological or water resource function by providing food, living space, refugia and foraging sites for other desirable species in the ecosystem. This approach assumes that environmental conditions suitable for VECs also will be suitable for other desirable species and that the enhancement of VECs will lead to enhancement of other species.

Formulation of the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River ecosystem restoration plan is based on the VEC approach. The objective of this chapter is to identify VECs for each of the ecological reaches in the Northwest Fork, which are the freshwater floodplain, tidal floodplain and estuarine. Performance Measures (PMs) representing characteristic regimes of hydrology or salinity in the ecosystems are also identified for each of the VECs to evaluate restoration alternatives. These PMs are measurable and can be quantitatively or qualitatively related to the health of VECs.

THE FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM

In this section the proposed Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) and performance measures (PMs) for the riverine and tidal floodplain ecosystems are discussed. Rather than identifying individual species as VECs for the floodplain ecosystems, forest community types were used. Abundance and frequency of the primary canopy tree species within a forest community type were used to identify appropriate community-based VECs for the floodplain ecosystems. Three distinct reaches (riverine, upper tidal and lower tidal) and four major forest community types (swamp, bottomland hardwood, hydric hammock and upland) were identified on the floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The dominant canopy species listed in **Table 4-1** best reflect the native plant species that should be present for each forest community type. Appropriate water levels and hydroperiods for the community-based VECs provide performance measures for evaluating restoration alternatives.

Table 4-1. Summary of Hydrological Conditions, Soil Textures, and Dominant Canopy Species for the Floodplain Forest Communities in the Loxahatchee River and Its Major Tributaries.

Forest Type	Typical Hydrological Conditions	Primary Soil Texture	Dominant Canopy Species
Oak/pine	Flooded an average of once every 10 years; soils dry quickly after floods recede	Sand	<i>Pinus elliotii</i> <i>Quercus myrtifolia</i>
Hydric Hammock	Flooded average of 2 months (30-60 days) every year	Sand	<i>Sabal palmetto</i>
Mesic Hammock	Rarely inundated; soils elevated and dry quickly after floods recede	Sand	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>
Rblh3 Rblh2	Flooded an average of once every 3 years, sometimes for durations of 1-2 months or more; soils dry quickly after floods recede	Sand	<i>Quercus laurifolia</i> <i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> <i>Ilex cassine</i> <i>Carya aquatica</i> <i>Persea borbonia</i>
Rblh1	Flooded average of 1 month every year; soils remain saturated another month	Sand, loam, clay	<i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> <i>Persea palustris</i> <i>Salix caroliniana</i>
Rsw1 Rsw2	Flooded average 4-7 months every year; soils remain saturated another 5 months	Clay, muck	<i>Taxodium distichum</i> <i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i>
Rmix	Flooded 2 to 3 months every year	Sand	<i>Taxodium distichum</i> <i>Sabal palmetto</i>
UTmix	Flooded 2 to 3 months every year; soils dry quickly in some areas and remain continuously saturated in others	Loam, muck, sand	<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> <i>Annona glabra</i> <i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Salix caroliniana</i> <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> <i>Taxodium distichum</i>
UTsw3	Flooded monthly by high tides or high river flows	Muck	<i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i> <i>Rhizophora mangle</i>
UTsw2 UTsw1	Flooded daily by high tides from 9-11 months of the year; most soils continuously saturated		<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> <i>Annona glabra</i>
Hydric Hammock	Flooded every 1-2 years by either storm surge or high river flows, high water table, surface soils on higher elevations dry quickly and soils continuously saturated in lower areas	Muck, sand	<i>Sabal palmetto</i> <i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> <i>Persea borbonia</i> <i>Quercus virginiana</i> <i>Myrica cerifera</i>
LTmix	Flooded daily or several times a month by high tides except in isolated areas; soils continuously saturated except for the interior of hammocks	Muck	<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> <i>Sabal palmetto</i> <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> <i>Annona glabra</i>
LTsw2	Flooded daily for 9 months every year	Muck	<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i> <i>Rhizophora mangle</i> <i>Annona glabra</i>
LTsw1	Flooded daily every year	Muck	<i>Rhizophora mangle</i> <i>Laguncularia racemosa</i>
Data obtained from USGS 2002. Green-shaded rows indicate riverine floodplain forest communities; yellow-shaded rows indicate upper tidal floodplain forest communities; and tan-shaded rows indicate lower tidal floodplain forest communities.			

RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN VEC: SWAMP AND HYDRIC HAMMOCK FOREST COMMUNITIES

Justification

Cypress swamps and hydric hammocks are unique wetland forest types that are native and found in the riverine floodplain. Riverine swamp communities along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee are dominated by bald cypress. In some areas, pop ash is abundant but in the long run will not out-compete longer lived bald cypress. Hydric hammock communities are dominated by cabbage palm with some live oak, wax myrtle, and red bay (**Table 4-1**). Swamp and hydric hammock forest communities are the selected VECs for the riverine floodplain. These community types are largely shaped by hydroperiod and water level. If appropriate hydroperiods and water levels are established for the target vegetation, then conditions should also be appropriate for healthy faunal communities.

In the dry season, hydroperiod and water level in the swamp communities should be geared toward keeping root systems moist and providing for germination of deciduous trees. In the wet season, hydroperiods and water levels in the hydric hammock communities should be sufficient to provide water and nutrients to that community and the needed inundation of swamp and bottomland hardwood ecosystems. This also provides increased habitat for aquatic organisms in the floodplain.

Distribution

Bald cypress swamps are typically found in the lowest elevation of the floodplain immediately adjacent to the river. Hydric hammocks are generally found on higher elevations (about 1.5–3 feet higher than swamps) and do not receive regular tidal inundation or frequent river flooding. **Chapters 3** and **5** provide detailed descriptions of the distribution of these communities in each of the vegetation transects in the riverine floodplain.

Performance Measures

Wetland hydroperiods and water levels in the riverine floodplain, which are closely related to flows over the Lainhart Dam, are used as PMs for the riverine floodplain. **Table 4-2** provides a summary of suggested or observed hydroperiods and water levels for major wetland plant community types reported in the literature.

Table 4-2. Hydroperiods of Major Plant Community Types.

Plant Community Type	Wet Season Water Depth (inches above ground level)	Hydroperiod (days/year)
Mesic Flatwood	0-2	≤30
Scrubby Flatwood	Below ground	0
Dry Prairie	0-2	0-30
Sandhill	Below ground	0
Scrub	Below ground	0
Mesic Hammock	0-2	0-60
Wet Flatwood	2-6	30-60
Hydric Hammock	2-6	30-60
Depression Marsh	12-24	180-300
Slough	>36	230-360
Wet Prairie	6-16	60-180
Strand Swamp	18-36	210-300
Dome Swamp	12-24	210-300
Cypress Forest	12-18	180-240
Cypress with hardwoods	18-24	240-300
Mangroves	—	Daily tidal
Maritime Hammock	—	10-45

Sources: Drew and Schomer (1984); Duever, Meeder and Duever (1984); Vince et al. (1989); Abrahamson and Hartnett (1990); Myers (1990); Mitsch and Gosselink (1993); David (1996); FDEP (2003a); SFWMD & USDA 2003

Based on literature values, cypress forest communities require about 180-300 days (6-10 months) of inundation per year and hydric hammock communities require about 30-60 days (1-2 months) of inundation per year (**Table 4-2**). However, the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is characterized by short periods of flooding followed by extensive periods of low flow. Therefore, hydroperiods for the floodplain cypress swamps under such an environment should be shorter than what is shown in **Table 4-2**.

Based on available data and observations of the riverine floodplain ecosystem, it appears that wet season water levels in the Northwest Fork will allow for brief inundation of hydric hammocks in the range from 2 inches to 6 inches above the ground surface elevation. These inundations do not have to be continuous. The total number of days of such inundations during a year can range from less than 30 days to about 60 days, depending on elevation of the community and the hydrologic condition. The water levels in the floodplain will also provide a hydroperiod of 4 to 8 months inundation in a year to support a healthy swamp community in the riverine floodplain. During the dry season, the water level will range from about 0 to 1.5 feet below the ground elevation in the freshwater floodplain.

These proposed hydroperiods and water levels for swamp and hydric hammock areas are supported by other studies in rivers similar to the Northwest Fork. Light et al. (2002) have suggested 4-7 months per year for riverine freshwater floodplain in northern Florida. Darst et al. (2003) indicates that hydric hammocks in a riverine floodplain do not receive regular tidal inundation or frequent river flooding, but have a high water table and are briefly inundated by

severe storms several times a decade in northern Florida. More detailed analysis of flow over the Lainhart Dam and floodplain inundation in the riverine floodplain are presented in **Chapter 5**.

TIDAL FLOODPLAIN VECs: SWAMP COMMUNITIES

Justification

Floodplain vegetation along the tidal reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River has changed during the last 100 years from a freshwater bald cypress dominated floodplain to a mixture of fresh and saltwater species. The upper tidal reach is now characterized by freshwater riverine communities at higher elevations (dominated by bald cypress) and mixed swamps at lower elevations (fresh and saltwater species dominated by pond apple). At the higher elevations away from the river channel, freshwater plant communities are able to survive and reproduce due to groundwater flow from the uplands, rainfall, and increased distance from the river channel. Greater tidal amplitude and higher salinities have resulted in the dominance of red and white mangrove swamp in the lower tidal reach.

The restoration and enhancement goals for the upper tidal reach are to promote the increase in abundance and distribution of freshwater forest species in the canopy, shrub and groundcover components of the floodplain community and reduce the spread of mangroves and exotic plant species. As these freshwater species slowly return to the canopy, mangroves would become restricted to the shrub layer as currently is exhibited in the floodplains of lower Kitching Creek. Restoration and enhancement goals for the lower tidal reach will focus on reducing salt concentrations and increasing freshwater inundation to promote healthier sustainable habitats within the swamp and hydric hammock areas. Accordingly, freshwater swamp communities (**Table 4-1**) are the VECs for the tidal floodplain. Hydroperiod, tidal amplitude, and salinity are the criteria that will be examined for the tidal floodplain swamp VEC.

In addition to vegetative changes due to future reductions in salinity, improvements in the quality of the tidal soils are expected with regard to sulfide levels. Sulfide levels along Transect #9 (RM 6.46 - lower tidal), ranged from 2-179 µg/L during the wet season and <1-3007 µg/L during the dry season (USGS 2005). Areas in Transects #6 (RM 8.43) and #7 (RM 9.10 - upper tidal) also exhibited higher sulfide levels than in the less impacted riverine reach. These high sulfide areas can be easily identified because they are very difficult to walk through and generally will not support a person's weight. As fresh water and salt water mix in the tidal reaches, organic material is broken down forming hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) with its characteristic rotten egg odor and the organic sediment remains suspended in the water column. By moving the saltwater mixing area farther downstream, sediment particles in the upper tidal reach should coalesce and settle to the bottom, creating a more solid muck with reduced H₂S production.

Distribution

Upper tidal floodplain communities are dominated by mixed swamps and hydric hammocks (**Table 4-1**). Bald cypress and pond apple seedlings and saplings are present in the shrub and ground cover vegetation of the upper tidal reach. In the lower tidal floodplain communities, the canopy is comprised of mostly red or white mangroves depending on elevation. There is no evidence of freshwater seedling/sapling production in the lower tidal areas with the exception of pond apple, which appears to be somewhat salt tolerant.

Of particular concern in the tidal reaches is the distribution of white mangrove. This species appears to overlap the preferred elevations of pond apple communities. Most white mangroves are single trunk trees with limited branches while most pond apples are multi-trunk trees. These differences in growth habits appear to be directed at maximizing light availability for white mangrove and freeze damage for pond apple. On several transects, white mangroves appear to be shading out the older pond apple communities, although the stunted growth of pond apples may also be due to increases in the salinity of water and soil. However, reductions in mangroves have occurred as a result of freezes and hurricanes.

The 2003 Vegetative Transect Study provides a baseline evaluation of the target canopy, shrub, and groundcover species present in the upper and lower tidal reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. **Figures 4-1, 4-2 and 4-3** provide a summary of the abundance of target canopy, shrub and groundcover species as they occur across the three transects from uplands to the riverbed. Note that bald cypress only appears in the canopy of Transects #6 (RM 8.43) and #7 (RM 9.10) whereas pop ash appears in both the canopy and shrub layers of Transects #6 and #7. Pond apple appears in all three vegetative layers of all three tidal transects. Red and white mangroves are present in all three tidal transects. Mangroves can survive in freshwater environments (Odum et al. 1982). Therefore, no decline in the number of mangroves would be expected if salinities were lowered and freshwater flows were increased across the floodplain.

Performance Measures

One of the major concerns regarding restoration in the tidal floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is the effect of saltwater intrusion and tidal amplitude on seed production, germination and seedling/sapling/adult growth and survival of bald cypress, other freshwater deciduous trees, and shrub and groundcover species. The performance measure for the tidal floodplain is a characteristic salinity regime in the Northwest Fork that is closely associated with the recruitment and health of these swamp species in the floodplain. The characteristic salinity regime and the justification for the bald cypress salinity threshold used for the evaluation are provided in the next sections.

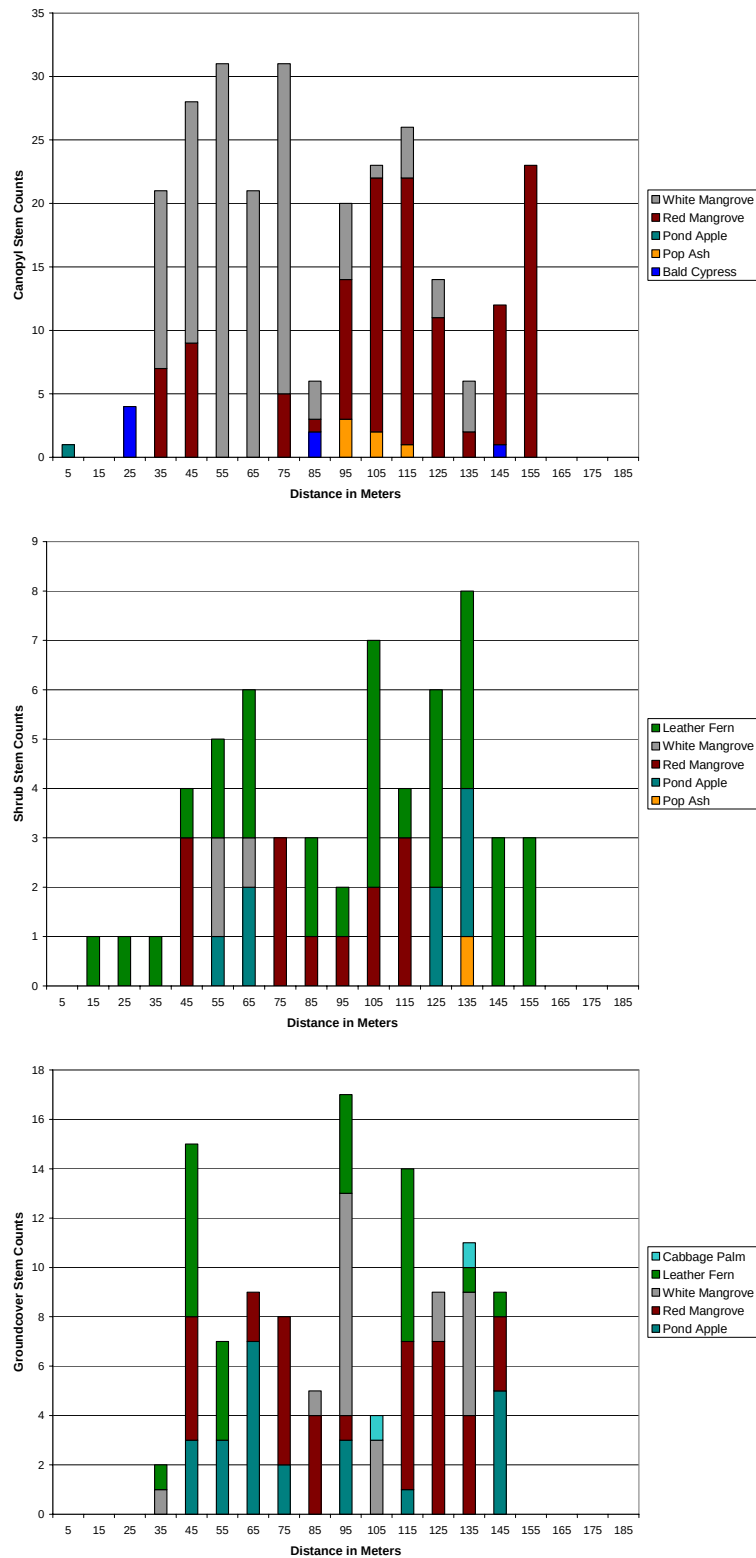


Figure 4-1. Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #6 (RM 8.43): Upper Tidal Reach.

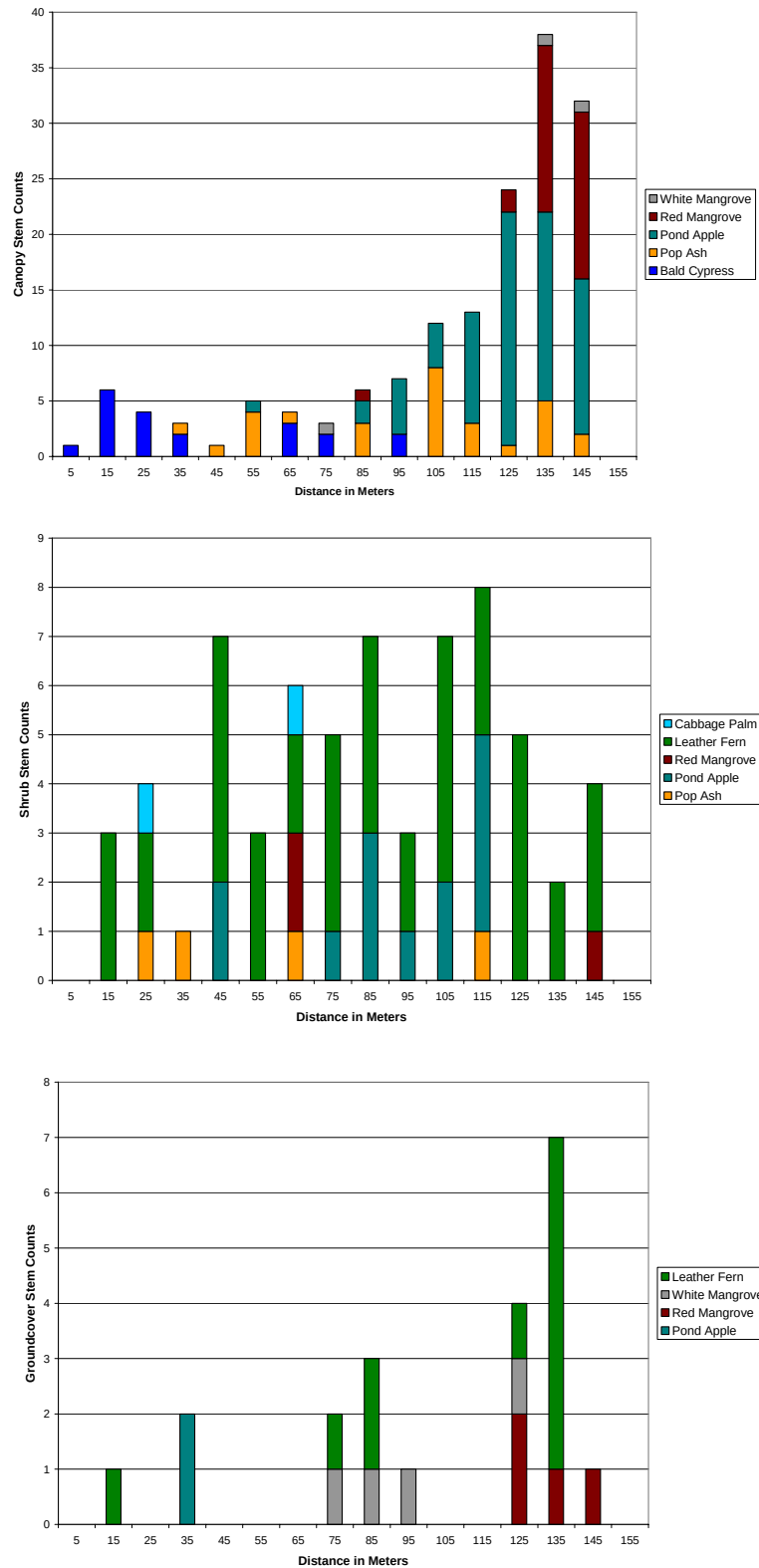


Figure 4-2. Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #7 (RM 9.10): Upper Tidal Reach.

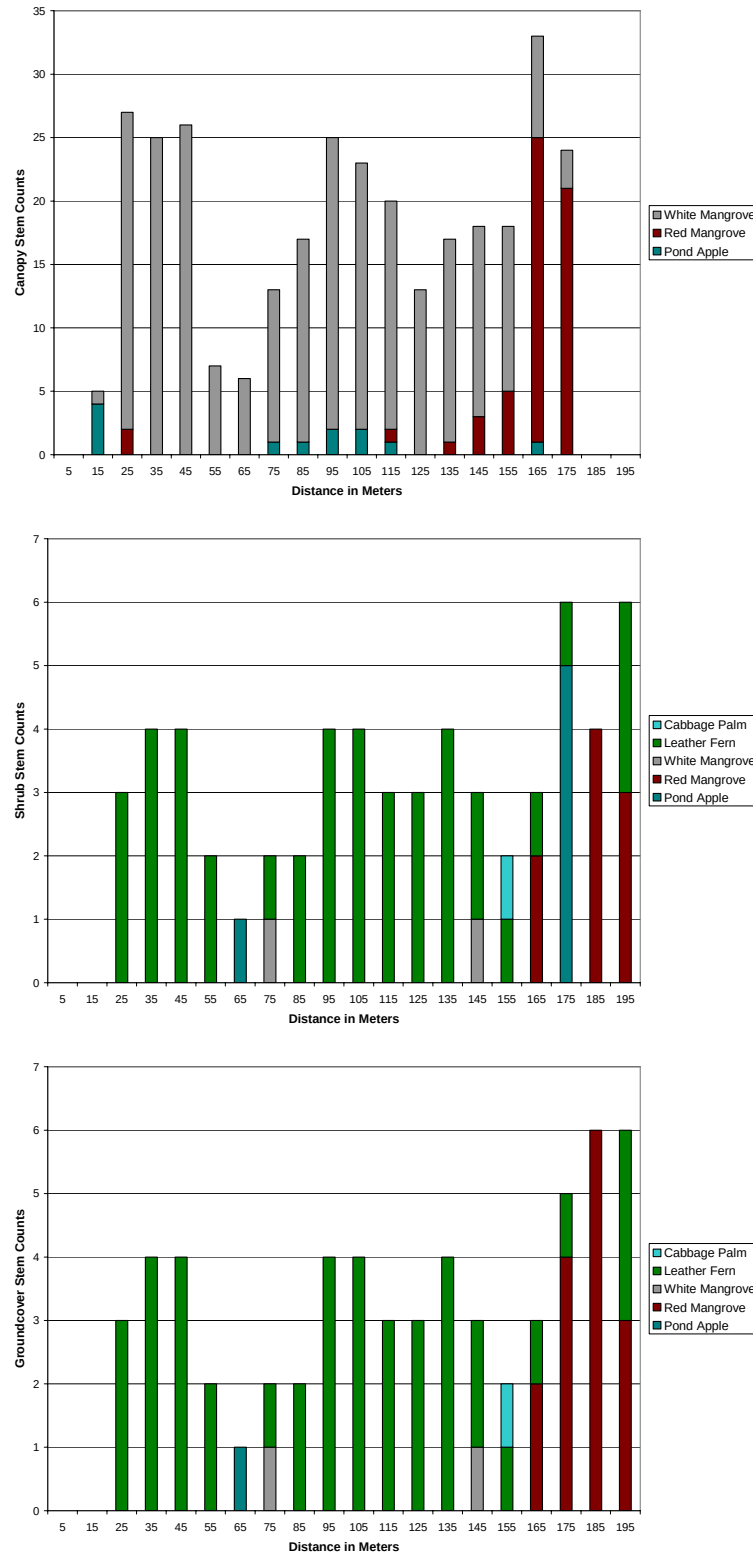


Figure 4-3. Select Canopy, Shrub, and Groundcover Species by Distance (in m) from the Uplands for Transect #9 (RM 6.46): Lower Tidal Reach.

CHARACTERISTIC SALINITY REGIME

The characteristic salinity regime at a site in the Northwest Fork is defined by a ratio of the duration of all salinity events (D_s) to the duration between these salinity events (D_b) over a long period of time such as over 30 years. The D_s/D_b ratio integrates salinity exposure duration, magnitude and recovery time between salinity events into a single numerical factor. In **Chapter 6**, the long-term salinity data predicted by the salinity management model are presented. SFWMD staff concluded that the salinity regime ratio D_s/D_b (using 1 ppt threshold; see bald cypress salinity tolerance discussion section) showed a highly significant ($p < 0.0001$) negative correlation ($r^2 = 0.997$) with distance from the Jupiter Inlet (**Figure 4-4**). As the site moves upstream, the D_s/D_b ratio approaches zero since fewer salinity events occur. In contrast, the D_s/D_b ratio exceeds one and rapidly increases as the site moves downstream, the magnitude and duration of each salinity event increases, and the time between salinity events decreases.

Use of the D_s/D_b ratio affords a closer “fit” to salinity conditions than would have been provided by the use of standard descriptive statistics. SFWMD staff further found that the abundance and diversity of vegetation along the river corridor of the Northwest Fork is closely correlated to the salinity ratio, which provides a reasonable estimate of the status of the vegetation community at a site (Zahina 2004). **Chapters 7 and 8** demonstrate how increasing freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork during the dry season would change this salinity characteristic regime, and ultimately change the tidal floodplain vegetation.

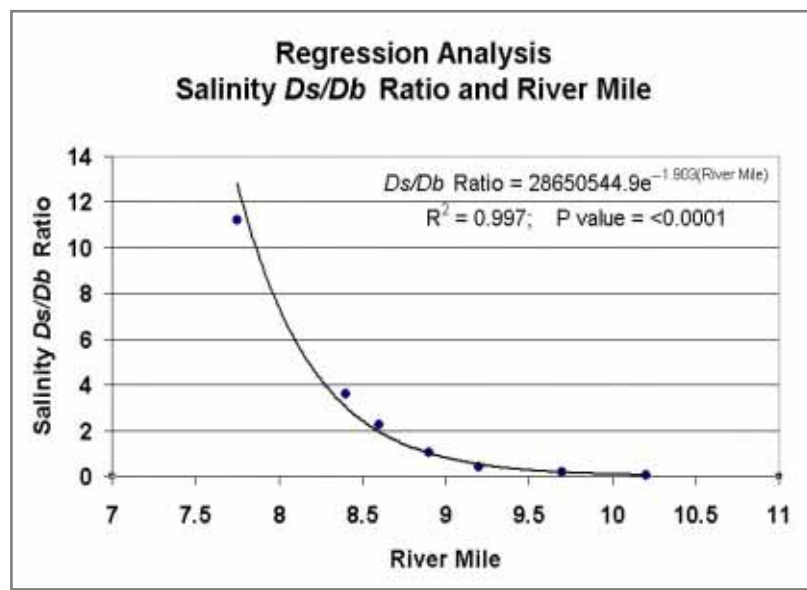


Figure 4-4. Correlation Between Salinity Event Ratio D_s/D_b (> 1 ppt) and River Mile.

BALD CYPRESS SALINITY TOLERANCE AND THRESHOLD SALINITY

Bald cypress is the dominant canopy species in this floodplain swamp community; therefore, intra-seasonal biological and inter-seasonal hydrological needs to support seed production, germination and growth of bald cypress should be considered. From a reproductive standpoint, bald cypress is monoecious: both male and female strobili are produced on the same tree from buds formed during the previous year. Pollen from the male cones is generally shed in the spring and the seeds mature in the female cone scales between fall and early winter. Seeds are spread primarily by small animals and floodwaters. Germination takes place on the surface of the soil or

moss. Seeds will not germinate under water but may remain viable for 30 months under water. A 1- to 3-month period of saturated soil conditions (but not flooded) is required for germination. Complete submergence of seedlings tends to hinder growth and prolonged submergence kills seedlings. Bald cypress can also reproduce vegetatively by producing sprouts (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1974).

In general, the literature suggests that bald cypress seedlings and adult trees are moderately salt tolerant. The growth of bald cypress seedlings is affected by a number of factors including soil type, soil moisture, nutrients present in flood waters, percent shading, crowding by competing vegetation, salt water, and duration and frequency of inundation. The combination of flooding and salinity is more detrimental to survival of bald cypress seedlings than the effect of either stress alone. Wicker et al. (1981) concluded that bald cypress wetlands are limited to areas where salinity does not exceed 2 ppt for more than 50% of the time that the trees are exposed to inundation or soil saturation. Allen et al. (1994) and Pezeshki et al. (1995) found that bald cypress seedlings exhibited intraspecific variation in tolerance to a combination of flooding and salinity stress. Allen et al. (1994) noted that 3 months of combined flood and salinity stress led to considerable decreases in leaf, stem and root biomass at 4 ppt and a notable decrease in root density index between the 4 ppt and 6 ppt treatments. Myers et al. (1995) found that 1- to 4-year-old seedlings planted in a frequently flooded marsh thrived despite a nearly constant groundwater salinity of 2.8 ppt. Conner and Askew (1992) observed that 6-month old seedlings were extremely susceptible to short-term (0-5 days) saltwater inundation (30 ppt) and survival percentages declined with more than one day of saltwater inundation. They also noted that at salinity levels above 4 ppt, the proportion of biomass partitioned to roots decreased. This was attributed to an ion imbalance causing severe disruption of root metabolic functions. Krauss et al. (1998) examined the effect of salinity levels on bald cypress germination. The germination percentages at salinity levels of 0 ppt, 2 ppt, 4 ppt and 6 ppt were 26.3%, 22.9%, 15.4% and 10.2%, respectively.

In conclusion, the available information in the literature does not suggest a single threshold salinity value for bald cypress. However, it is evident that as salinity levels approach 2 ppt and as the length of exposure increases bald cypress seed germination and seedling growth is reduced. Because of the tidal influence on salinity concentrations throughout a day, a conservative salinity threshold of 1 ppt is used to calculate the *Ds/Db* ratio in **Chapters 7 and 8**.

THE ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM

Restoration scenarios being evaluated in this plan include increasing freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. These additional flows may alter the salinity regime in the estuary, potentially impacting estuarine communities. Oysters and seagrasses have been selected as the VECs for evaluating potential changes in the mesohaline and polyhaline zones because, they

- are widely accepted as indicators of healthy estuarine systems;
- are currently present in the estuary;
- were present historically (post inlet construction) in the estuary;
- are sessile organisms that can not migrate away from unacceptable salinities; and,
- have fairly well-documented salinity ranges.

In addition, fish larvae in the low salinity zone are also proposed as a VEC for evaluation in the plan. These VECs and associated PMs are discussed in this section.

LOW SALINITY ZONE VEC: FISH LARVAE AND JUVENILE FISH

Justification

The Loxahatchee River and Estuary contain one of the more unique tropical peripheral ichthyofaunas within the United States. Jupiter Inlet lies only 7 km (4.6 mi) from the western edge of the Florida Current making the Loxahatchee River the only river on the east coast of the United States so close to a major tropical oceanic current. Thus, its biota is greatly influenced by adjacent tropical marine ecosystems, including those in the Antilles and Central America (Christensen 1965; Gilmore 1977, 1995). As a result, the most species rich estuarine communities within the continental United States are found in the Loxahatchee River and Indian River Lagoon (Swain 1995).

Major recruitment of larvae into the Loxahatchee River occurs from riverine, estuarine or ocean spawning grounds during different estuarine flows and times of the year. Most temperate and warm temperate estuaries have major freshwater flows during the winter and spring (Peterson and VanderKooy 1995; Blaber 2000). Tropical systems differ significantly, however, since most flows occur during the summer and fall, typically peaking in the fall (Yanez-Arancibia 1985; Lowe-McConnell 1985; Blaber 2000). Many tropical estuarine and euryhaline freshwater species recruit during the winter and spring dry season when freshwater flow rates are minimal (Gilbert and Kelso 1971; Nordlie 1979, 1981) which is the time period of interest for this evaluation. Since the Loxahatchee River Estuary contains a major tropical biota component it is likely that a high proportion of the biota have a life history strategy requiring tropical flow regime. A major, well-documented zooplankton event that predictably occurs throughout the world tropics during the dry season is an invasion of coastal tributaries to the lower salinity zone (LSZ) by large numbers of fish and invertebrate larvae (Gilbert and Kelso 1971; Nordlie 1979, 1981).

Several factors appear to make the low salinity zone (LSZ) a viable nursery. The LSZ may provide optimal salinity and temperature conditions for growth and development of larvae and juveniles (Pearce and Gunter 1957; Gunter 1961; North and Houde 2001). Low salinity itself and/or the high turbidity often characteristic of this zone may provide a refuge from predation (Turner and Chadwick 1972; Chesney 1989) and the dissolved nutrients and detritus associated with freshwater input make the LSZ highly productive. Freshwater flows enhance detrital and phytoplankton/periphyton based food chains in the LSZ which benefits larval and juvenile fish (Holmes et al. 2000; North and Houde 2001; Turner and Chadwick 1972). The presence of an adequate food supply, favorable environmental conditions, and/or a refuge from predation ensures successful development and survival (North and Houde 2001). For example, in the stratified upper Chesapeake Bay, high flows may create a well-defined low salinity entrapment zone with an organic rich turbidity maximum that supports an abundance of zooplankton prey (North and Houde 2001). Fish larvae are retained in an optimal salinity environment that provides a rich food supply, and a refuge from predation through high turbidity (North and Houde 2001). During low flow, the entrapment zone is weaker and more diffuse. The turbidity maximum is less well defined and relatively depleted in organic matter. Production of zooplankton prey is limited and larvae may experience suboptimal salinities owing to reduced retention capacity (North and Houde 2001). In contrast, in the well-mixed estuary of the Parker River, a phytoplankton bloom in the oligohaline zone (0.5 ppt to 5.0 ppt) during low flow conditions supports a productive pelagic food chain. A long hydraulic residence time allows phytoplankton and zooplankton to accumulate in the upper estuarine LSZ. During higher flow conditions, the bloom and accompanying larvae are flushed down the estuary (Holmes et al. 2000). It is believed that the Loxahatchee Estuary experiences these same types of relationships that influence the survival of year class larvae and therefore need to be evaluated as various levels of dry season flows are considered.

Distribution

To determine the distribution and abundance of fish and shellfish larvae in the waterway of the LSZ, a sampling program was conducted in 2004. The 2004 study was undertaken during the dry season to determine the influence the LSZ in the Northwest Fork has on larvae recruitment and abundance as well as species composition (Shenker 1983; Houde 1994; Blaber 2000; Dege and Brown 2004). Four regions between River Miles 6 and 10 were chosen for the initial collections in this portion of the Northwest Fork (**Figure 4-5**). Each region centered on/around RM 7, RM 8, RM 9, and RM 10 with a single replicate tandem plankton tow within 20-50 m of the previous tow. This allowed eight paired stations: Stations 1 and 2 (RM 10), Stations 3 and 4 (RM 9), Stations 5 and 6 (RM 8) and Stations 7 and 8 (RM 7). During late June (25th) and early July (6th) Stations 1 and 2 had to be abandoned due to extremely low water levels.

Zooplankton collections were also conducted within the Loxahatchee River and Estuary from January 1986 to January 1988 by Robert Chamberlain of SFWMD. Two of the sample sites were located within the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River at Station 25 (RM 5.8) and Station 28 (RM 7.0). This study allowed a qualitative and quantitative comparison to be made with 2004 zooplankton collections.

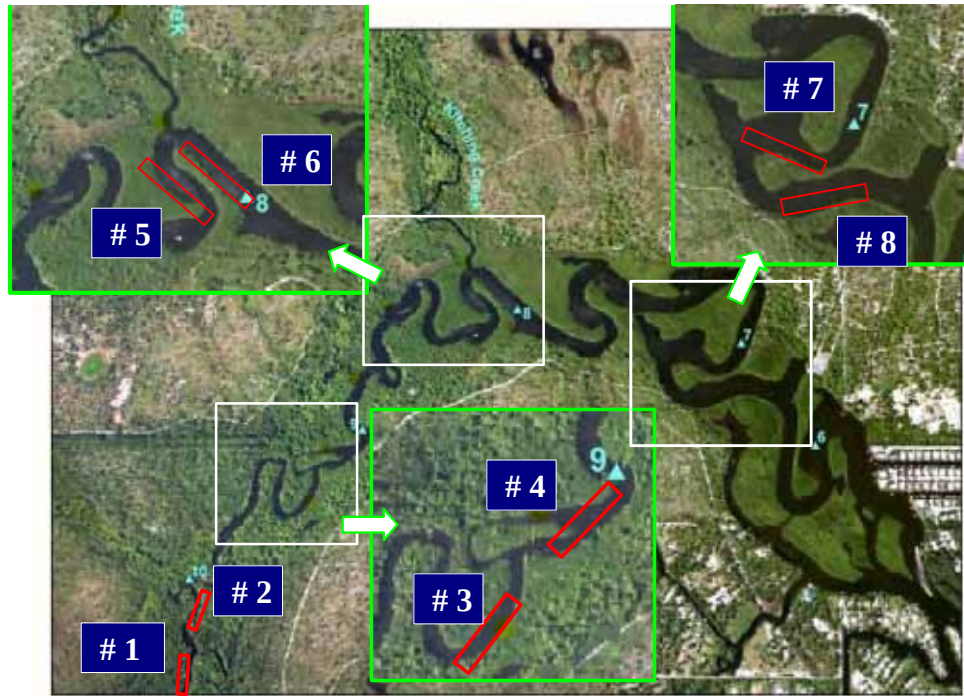


Figure 4-5. Location of 2004 Dry Season Fish Larvae Sample Stations Indicated by Red Rectangles. Station Numbers are Represented by White Numbers on a Blue Background; Light Blue Numbers Indicate River Mile.

During the 1986-1988 study (Chamberlain unpublished), fish families with the largest total number of larval individuals collected at Station 28 (RM 7) were the gobioids (64%), engraulids (anchovies, 28%) and syngnathids (pipefishes, 2%; **Figure 4-6**). During the 2004 dry season, the largest total number of larval individuals collected from all stations were the gobioids (87%), engraulids (11%) and syngnathids (1%; **Figure 4-7**)

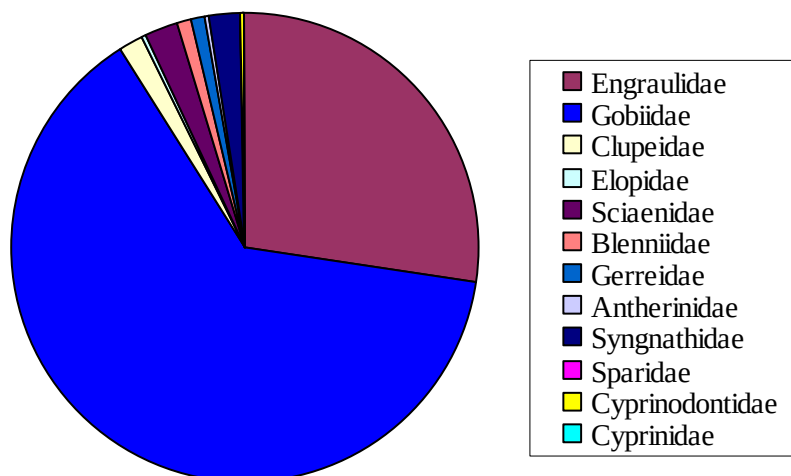
1986-1988 Total Fish Larvae Collected from Station 28

Figure 4-6. Relative Composition of All Fish Larvae by Family Collected in 1986-1988 at Station 28 (RM 7.0). Source: Chamberlain unpublished.

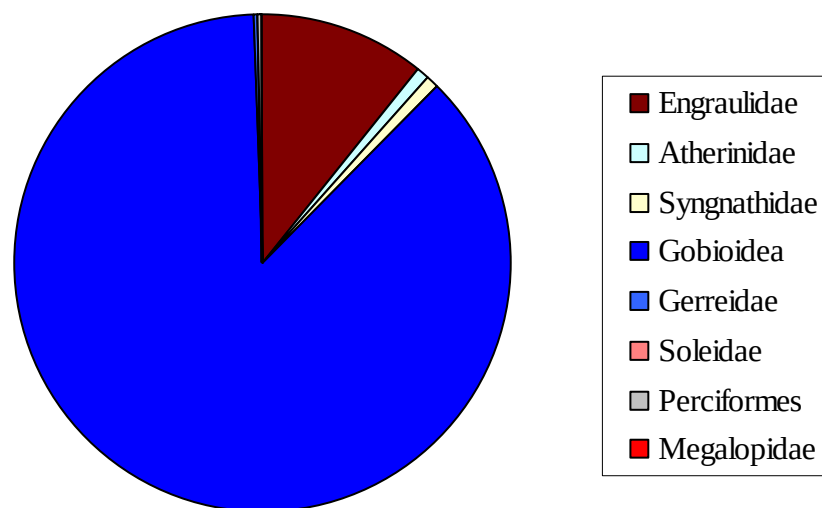
2004 Dry Season Total Fish Larvae Collected from All Stations

Figure 4-7. Relative Composition of All Fish Larvae by Family Collected During the 2004 Dry Season for All Stations.

Larval fish species composition varied seasonally at Station 28 (RM 7) in 1986 and 1987. There was a dominance of gobioid species at the end of the dry season followed by a dominance of engraulid species at the beginning of the wet season (**Figure 4-8**). The seasonal variation relative to fish larval abundance can be attributed to salinity and water level changes in the Northwest Fork.

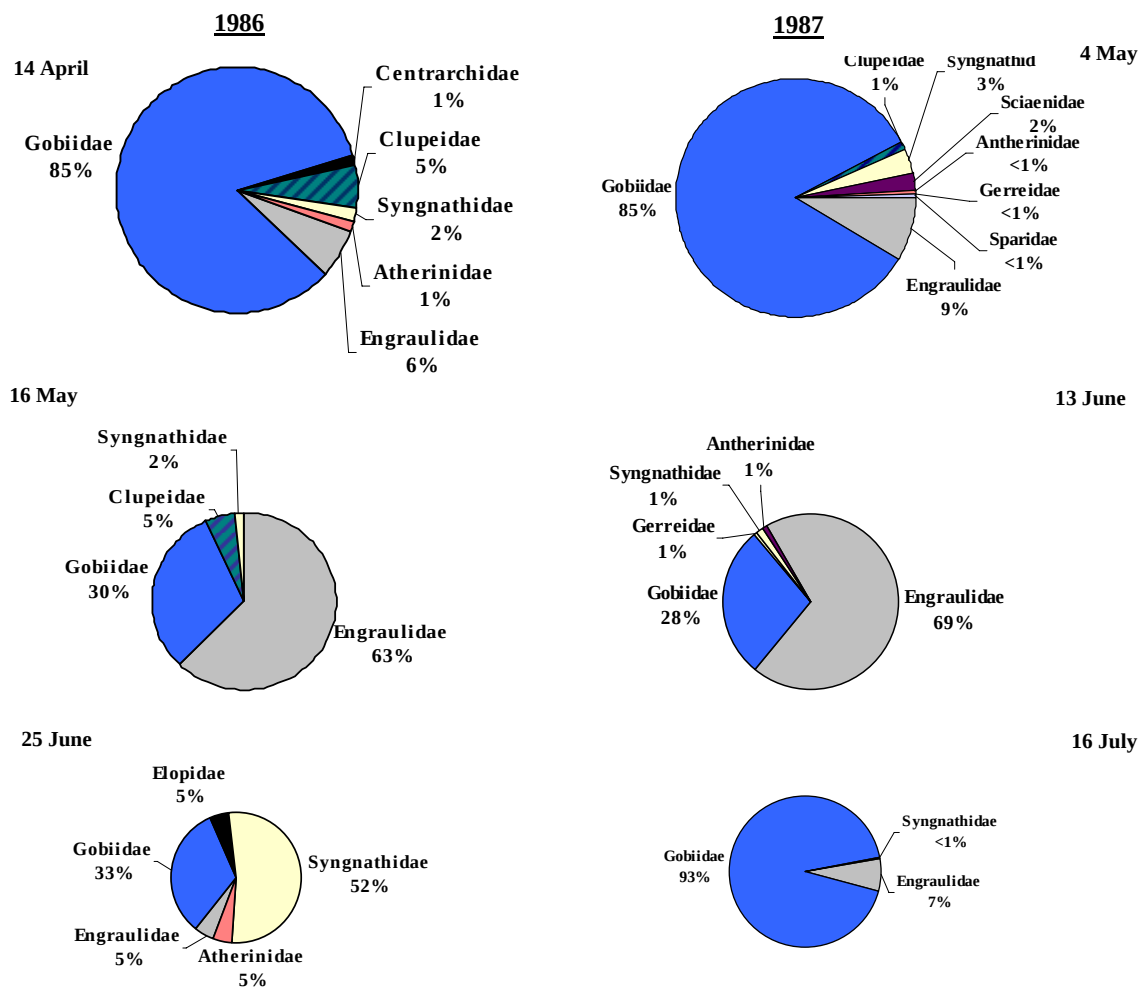


Figure 4-8. 1986 and 1987 Seasonal Changes in Relative Abundance of Fish Larvae During the Transition from the Spring (Dry Season) to the Summer (Wet Season) at Station 28 (RM 7.0).

Changing water levels and salinities appear to have the greatest influence on the density and species composition of fish larvae within the LSZ. The 1986-1988 data were used to compare the density of fish larvae collected from Station 28 (RM 7) with larvae collected downstream at Station 25 (RM 5.8). Higher densities of fish larvae were present at Station 28 than at Station 25 (**Figure 4-9**). Because the water level fluctuations at these two sites were similar, it appears that salinity has a greater influence on fish larvae distribution than water level.

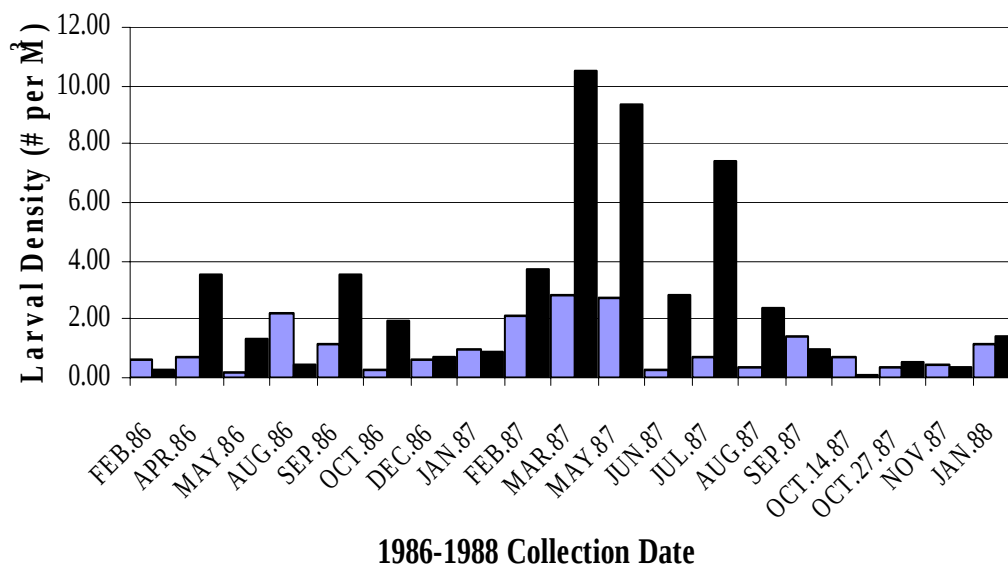


Figure 4-9. 1986-1988 Fish Larvae Densities from Station 25 (RM 5.8) (Blue Bars) and Station 28 (RM 7) (Black Bars).

The highest densities of fish larvae at Station 28 typically occurred during the dry season (February – April 1986; February – March 1987) when the salinities were between 2 ppt and 8 ppt (**Figure 4-10**). The lowest densities of fish larvae occurred during the wet season (December 1986; October – November 1987) when the salinities were below 2 ppt.

Relationship Among Salinity, Water Level and Fish Larvae Densities Station 28 - 1986-1988

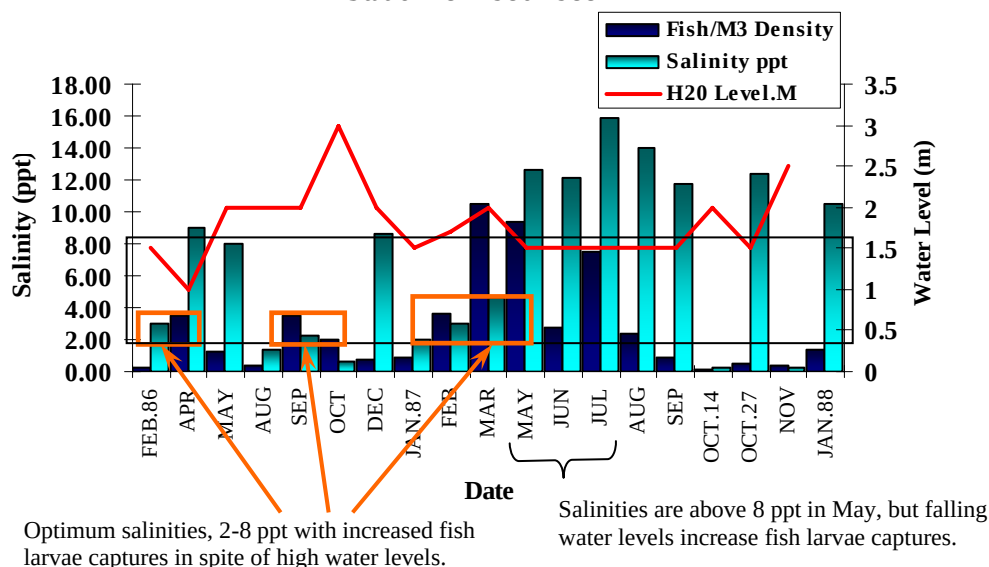


Figure 4-10. 1986-1989 Fish Larvae Densities at Station 28: Relationship between Salinity and Water Level.

The relationship between salinity and water level on fish densities during the 2004 dry season study (**Figure 4-11**) is similar to the 1986-1988 data. The highest fish larvae densities were found at the RM 9 and RM 8 locations where salinities were between 2 ppt and 8 ppt. A more detailed discussion of the 1986-1988 and the 2004 sampling programs is provided in **Appendix H**.

2004 SALINITY VS. FISH DENSITIES

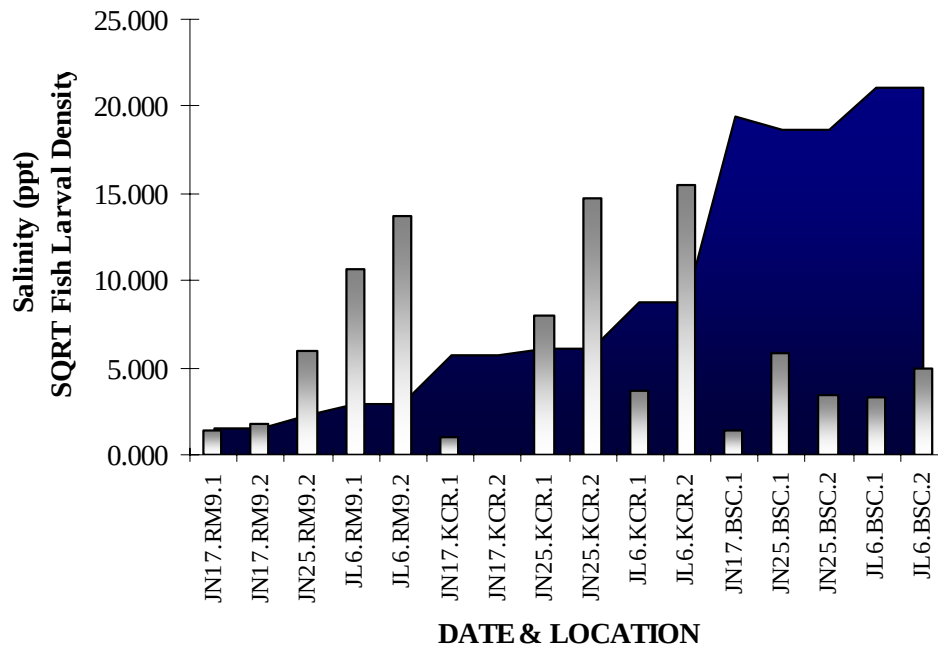


Figure 4-11. 2004 Dry Season Fish Larvae Density Relative to Salinity (ppt).

Performance Measures

The results from the 1986-1988 and 2004 dry season sampling programs indicate that the highest densities of fish larvae were found within the LSZ where salinity levels ranged from 2 ppt to 8 ppt. The dominant fish species present in the LSZ are gobies (gobioids), anchovies (engraulids) and pipefishes (syngnathids). During the dry season the density of silversides (antherinids) also increases. Because of the relatively small volume of water in the LSZ of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, even small increases of flows to the Northwest Fork will increase the size of the LSZ area, affect the salinity and may influence the distribution and abundance of larval and juvenile life stages of fish. Based on the SFWMD investigations, a dry season salinity of 2 ppt to 8 ppt between RM 5.5 and RM 10.0 is suggested as the Performance Measure for larval and juvenile fishes in the LSZ. Detailed discussions of this conclusion are given below.

The optimum natural condition in which to examine the influence of freshwater flow on a riverine fauna is to examine the fauna at the lowest possible flow condition over a broad enough range of salinity within the shortest spatial and temporal (diel) range practical. We tested two null hypotheses: 1) “H₀ 1 No particular taxon consistently numerically dominates the larval fish communities indigenous to the Loxahatchee River”; and 2) “H₀ 2 Fish larval abundance is evenly distributed between RM 5.5 and RM 10 in the main course of the river during the “dry season” low rainfall, low flow periods, winter to late spring/early summer (December to July).”

“H₁” Loxahatchee River Larval Fish Community Defined: Our results demonstrated that a diverse yet predictable larval fish community occurs within the Loxahatchee River and is consistently numerically dominated by three to four fish families. This fauna consists primarily of gobies (gobioids), anchovies (engraulids), pipefishes (syngnathids) and silversides (atherinids) during the dry season. These same taxa numerically dominated samples taken at Station 28 in 1986 to 1988 and in 2004 revealing a long term consistency in fish larval community structure within the Loxahatchee River.

The warm Florida Current along the lower east coast of the Florida produces a subtropical-tropical coastal oceanographic and climatic/hydrological setting for the Loxahatchee River (Christensen 1965; Gilmore 1977, 1985; Gilmore and Hastings 1983). There is a distinct wet season with natural high riverine flows and low salinity occurring during the summer and fall, followed by a dry season with low flows and high salinity starting in the late fall extending through the winter and spring (Gilmore 1977; Gilmore and Hastings 1983). These seasonal flow patterns influence fish spawning periodicity and larval recruitment as well as levels of primary and secondary productivity. The Jupiter Inlet, Hobe Sound and the Loxahatchee River region is largely dominated by tropical and warm temperate fish species (Christensen 1965; Gilmore 1977, 1995). Recent studies of the neighboring the St. Sebastian River documented a similar pattern of fish species (Paperno and Brodie 2004). These regions often contain large numbers of marine and estuarine diadromous species that enter the freshwater for extended periods of time to complete vital developmental or reproductive phases (McDowall 1988). The numerical dominance of tropical marine and estuarine species in freshwater habitats is typical of many coastal settings in the tropical Americas and Caribbean islands (Blaber 2000). In the Loxahatchee River, the marine fish families, gobioids, engraulids and syngnathids are the top diadromous euryhaline spawners.

The dominance of gobioid larvae is typical of tropical estuaries throughout the world. Where gobies have adapted to temperate estuaries they numerically dominate the ichthyoplankton (Shenker et al. 1983). The gobioid fishes can also numerically dominate open ocean ichthyoplankton (Richards 1984; Ahlstrom 1971, 1972; Nellen 1973). This family represents the richest fish faunal element in the Loxahatchee River with at least 16 species occurring in this small coastal stream system. The anchovies, engraulidae, are next in abundance possibly including both tropical and temperate species. They are typically the most numerically abundant marine and coastal estuarine fish as adults. Other marine and estuarine species that were common or occurred in the 1986-1988 and in the 2004 samples were larval mojarras (gerreidae), drums and croaker (sciaenidae), herrings/sardines/menhaden (clupeidae), silversides (atherinidae) and pipefishes (syngnathidae). The 1986-1988 collections also included some larval blennies (blennidae), and various flatfishes (soleidae, bothidae and cynoglossidae). These fish families also are commonly represented in tropical freshwater tributaries elsewhere in the world (Blaber 2000).

Although five species of snook are found in the Loxahatchee River, the common snook, *Centropomus undecimalis*, largescale fat snook, *C. parallelus*, smallscale fat snook, *C. mexicanus*, tarpon snook, *C. pectinatus* and the swordspine snook, *C. ensiferus*, no larval snook (centropomids) were collected in the 1986-1988 or 2004 samples. All five snook species have been captured as juveniles and adults in the Loxahatchee, St. Lucie and St. Sebastian Rivers. No other stream or river system in Florida has all of these species. Even though no centropomid larvae were present in the 1986-1988 and 2004 samples, snook eggs and larvae were abundant in a sample made within Jupiter Inlet on 2 July 2004 indicating that snook were spawning at that time.

Larvae of primary freshwater fishes, centrarchids, cyprinids, percids and catostomids, were also absent from in the 2004 samples. Centrarchids and cyprinids were listed as having been

collected in the 1986-1988 samples at Station 28, but these groups did not form a large portion of the larval collections. The freshwater fish fauna of the southern Florida peninsula is numerically dominated by euryhaline secondary freshwater families, anguillidae, cyprinodonts, poeciliids and atherinids and many marine invaders particularly in coastal streams. Euryhaline marine/estuarine invaders are present either as juveniles and adults, but not necessarily as larvae. These include bull sharks, ladyfish, tarpon, ariid catfishes, and mullets, snooks, centropomidae, mangrove snapper, burro grunt, sheepshead porgy, sciaenids, cichlids and various flatfishes, bothids, cynoglossids and soleids. Soleid larvae were present in the 2004 samples. These families and the general invasion of freshwater by adults and juveniles of marine and estuarine phyla is a worldwide tropical phenomenon (Blaber 2000). Very few marine fishes in these families actually spawn in low salinity waters. Nearly all spawn in the ocean and their larvae require higher salinities to survive.

"H₂" Fish Larval Dynamics Relative to Salinity and Water Depth: The dynamics of the Loxahatchee river ichthyoplankton community was examined relative to collection sites, salinity, and water level using the 2004 and in the historical 1986-1988 collections. Additional parameters evaluated for the 2004 collections included temperature, dissolved oxygen and water flow rates but since these parameters did not vary significantly between stations during the recent ichthyoplankton survey it appears that salinity is the major factor responsible in influencing densities. However, the major portion of the ichthyofauna was captured at the confluence of the Kitching Creek and the main course of the Loxahatchee River. This could also be a site of nutrient flow, organic materials and consequently, primary productivity which would then produce a microzooplankton bloom of copepods and ostracods that were not captured with the net we used. This microzooplankton bloom would then feed larger invertebrate plankton and fish larvae. Nutrients and organic material concentrations were not examined so the influence of these parameters on fish larval distribution could not be determined. It is also possible that the large low tide captures on an ebbing tide, 25 June and 6 July 2004 could be due to the fact that even though the fish and invertebrate larvae typically migrate to the surface at night, they might not do so on an ebbing tide as they may be carried out into the adjacent estuary. In order to maintain an upstream position they would migrate to the river bottom. The 0.5-m plankton net may have sampled this bottom habitat in upstream waters between RM 8 and RM 9 while the water depth was too great to sample the bottom habitat at Stations 7 and 8 at RM 7. This would produce higher larval densities upstream simply as a sampling artifact. However, the high tide collection made on 17 June also captured more invertebrates between RM 8 and RM 9 than at RM 7, indicating the 2-8 ppt salinity region and its high ichthyoplankton density was likely not a sampling artifact.

The 1986-1988 collections were always made on a flood or high tide yet revealed the same fish larvae species ranking based on numerical abundance with most larvae captured when salinities were between 2 and 8 ppt for both Stations 28 and 25 (see **Chapter 7, Figure 7-11**) with the greatest abundance at Station 28 at RM 7. Where this salinity range (2 to 8 ppt) occurred, the greatest concentration of fish larvae also occurred in 2004 between RM 8 and RM 9, with most larvae being captured in the vicinity of the mouth of Kitching Creek at RM 8. The highest density of fish larvae captured in the Pautuxent River (Shenker et al. 1984) were captured between salinities of 2-3 ppt. Similar salinity association patterns were observed in the San Francisco Estuary (Dege and Brown 2004). Apparently, fish larvae concentrate in the Low Salinity Zone of estuarine systems; however, since each system has unique characteristics, field investigations need to document this important low salinity range for each estuary. Thus, the 2 ppt to 8 ppt range supporting the highest density of fish larvae, under low flow conditions in the Loxahatchee River, is unique to this estuary.

MESOHALINE ZONE VEC: OYSTERS

Justification

Estuaries are transitional environments in which salinity varies between freshwater and seawater (Moyle and Cech 1982) and the amounts of freshwater runoff and tidal flushing largely determine the biological character of an estuary (McPherson et al. 1984). One important biological component of the Florida estuaries is the distribution and health of the eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*). This species of oyster thrives best in estuarine waters with a yearly average salinity between 10 ppt and 20 ppt (Woodward-Clyde 1998). Therefore, since adult oysters are sessile, estuarine locations that experience these favorable salinities may accommodate oyster health. Changes in freshwater runoff characteristics from the watershed could alter the salinity gradient in the estuary; thus the location of healthy oyster populations will reflect the 10 ppt to 20 ppt salinity levels.

Oyster reefs provide significant habitat structure and value within the benthic environment in the Loxahatchee Estuary; those areas of the estuary without oyster reefs have limited structure. Oyster reefs provide extensive attachment area for numerous organisms including oyster spat, mussels, tunicates, bryozoans, and barnacles (Woodward-Clyde 1998). Several studies have demonstrated the high species richness of oyster reefs (Pearse and Wharton 1938; Frey 1946; Wells 1961; Bahr and Lanier 1981).

Oysters play an important role in the estuarine food chain and filtering the water. Free-swimming oyster larvae are frequently preyed upon by planktivores, such as ctenophores, anemones, and larval fishes; and spat are eaten by carnivorous worms and small crabs (Woodward-Clyde 1998). Larger spat and small adult oysters are often consumed by blue crabs, stone crabs, whelks, skates, rays and fishes such as black drum and redfish (Wells 1961). Loosanoff (1946) indicated that oysters filter water at a rate of about 1500 times its body volume per hour. Maintaining a healthy, sustainable oyster population would help water quality and provide important habitat within the system. In order to maintain a healthy population of oysters in the middle Loxahatchee Estuary, the average annual salinity should be near 15 ppt; exposure to salinities below 10 ppt can be stressful to oysters. The specific salinity tolerances of oysters related to stress, harm, and death are presented as a Performance Measure.

Distribution

Early European settlers called the receiving water body of the Loxahatchee Watershed “Jupiter River” which was frequently a freshwater river that did not support oyster populations. Periodically, however, the Jupiter Barrier Island was breached as a result of storm events, creating passes that allowed seawater to intrude into the river and create an estuarine environment. During these times, the Central Embayment supported a large oyster population. These passes would naturally fill in, returning the river to a freshwater environment uninhabitable by oysters. In the late 1940s, the Jupiter Inlet and the Intracoastal Waterway, which connected the Loxahatchee River with the Indian River and Lake Worth Lagoons, were dredged and stabilized. This dramatic alteration enabled estuarine conditions to occur on a regular basis in the Loxahatchee River Estuary. Salinity conditions at that time favored the development of oyster reefs near the mouth of the estuary at the FECRR trestle. As these reefs developed through the years they reduced navigation, tidal communication and modified salinity profiles within the estuary. Several studies in the mid-1970s were conducted to address the potential increase in saltwater intrusion and tidal currents into the Northwest Fork if the oyster reefs were removed

from the trestle area (Christensen 1973; Chiu 1975; Hill 1977). A mathematical salinity model predicted that with the removal of the oyster reefs, the slack high tide salinity would move 260 feet to 600 feet further upstream in the Northwest Fork; however, the oyster reefs were removed by 1978.

After the removal of the oyster reefs, the U.S. Geological Survey conducted field investigations in 1980-1981 that provided information on bathymetry, hydrology, and benthic sediment and biota. A map resulting from this effort revealed nine small, live oyster reefs in the Central Embayment (McPherson et al 1982) with a total area less than 1.5 acres. Another survey in 1985 mapped oysters in the Central Embayment and suggested a decrease in area of live oyster reefs from 1981 observations (Klemm and Vare 1985). No effort was made in either of these studies to determine the presence of adult oysters in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. In 1990 there was an investigation of oyster distribution and size throughout the Loxahatchee River which included the Northwest Fork (Law Environmental, Inc. 1990). In 1990, the Central Embayment was regularly experiencing salinities greater than 25 ppt. The oyster reefs present were small and mostly dead due to decreases in food supplies and increases in predation and disease. Based on field observations (Law Environmental, Inc. 1990), the oysters were smallest at their upstream and downstream locations and largest (80–90 mm) in the central part of their range in the Northwest Fork, which extended from the trestle bridge to about RM 6.5. The largest living oysters occurred between RM 4.0 and RM 6.0 which indicated that this area experienced the most favorable conditions for oysters in 1990. In contrast, large dead oyster shells were found in the Central Embayment, remnants from the former lower salinity environment.

In October 2003, under a contract with the SFWMD, the LRD conducted an oyster survey in Loxahatchee River and Estuary (Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004). The live oyster reefs surveyed were defined as areas having at least five live oysters per square meter. The area of concern for this document, however, is in the Northwest Fork as shown in **Figure 4-12**, where 9.6 acres of oysters were mapped between RM 4.0 to RM 6.0 (**Figure 4-13**). The density of live and recently perished oysters as well as their total length (grouped into three classes: < 5 cm, 5-10 cm, and > 10 cm) were collected at four locations in the Northwest Fork (**Figure 4-14**). The majority of the oysters (76%) were < 5 cm in length, 23% were between 5 and 10 cm long, and only 0.2% greater than 10 cm long. The highest density of oysters and largest area of reefs occurred at RM 4.5 (900 oysters/square meter). Density decreased upstream to about 690 oysters/square meter at RM 5.5 and to 410 oysters/square meter at RM 6.0, (Bachman, Ridler and Dent 2004).



Figure 4-12. 2003 Distribution of Oyster Reefs (yellow areas) in the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River. Oyster Monitoring Stations are Indicated with Red Dots (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).

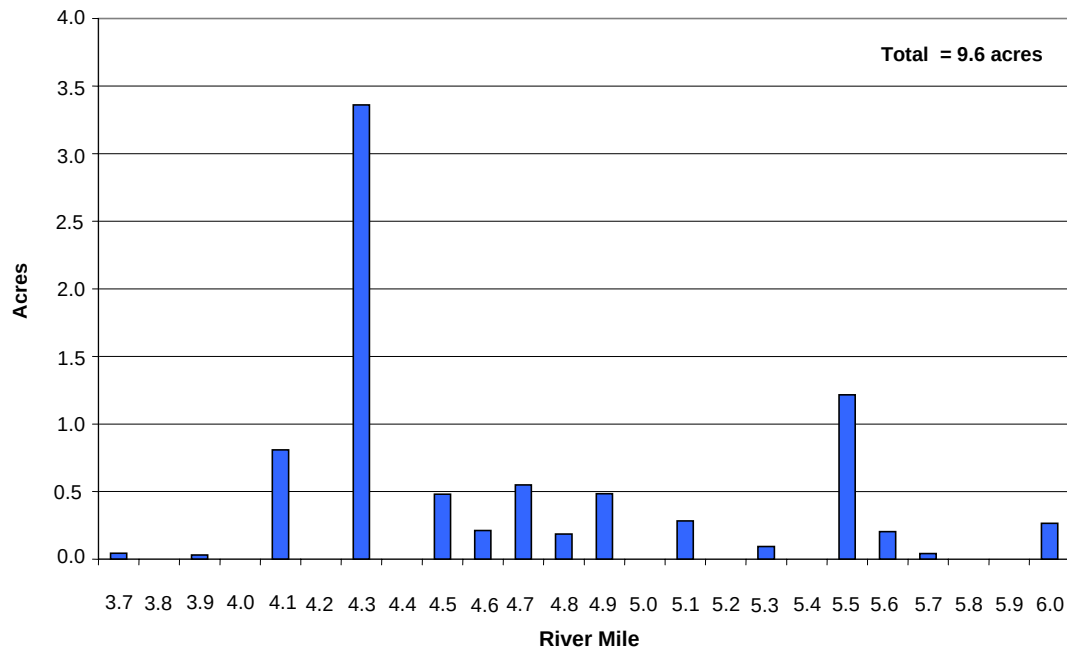


Figure 4-13. Oyster Acreage in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Estuary in October 2003 (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).

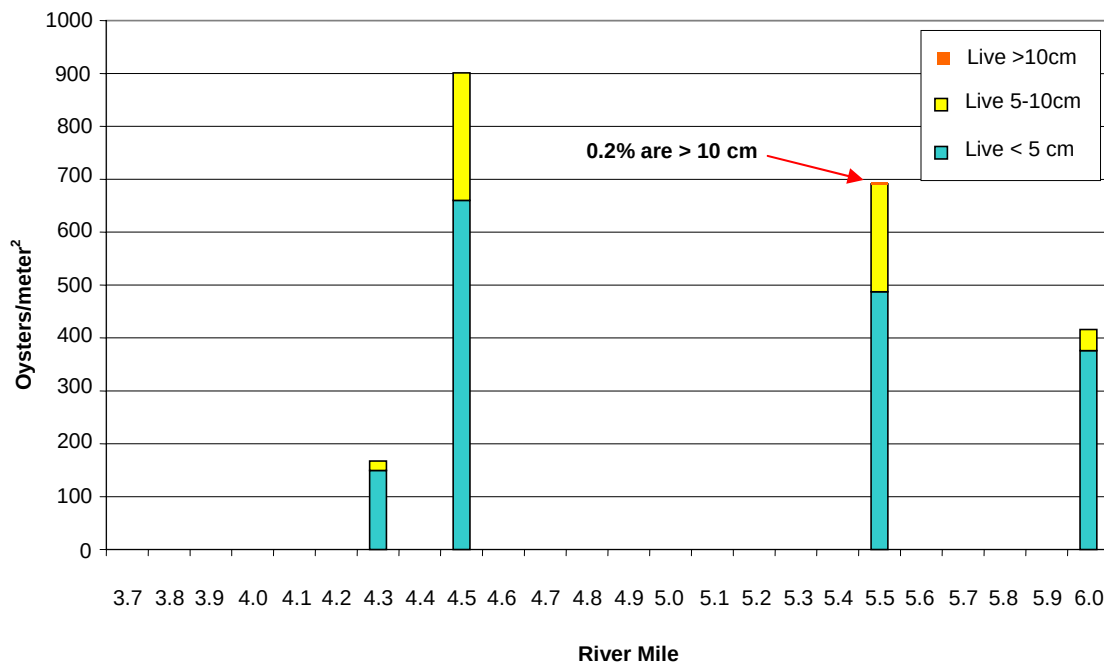


Figure 4-14. Oyster Distribution in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Estuary in October 2003 (Source: Wild Pine Ecological Laboratory 2004).

Performance Measures

The salinity tolerance of oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) between RM 4.1 and RM 5.9 is identified as a PM for the Plan. **Table 4-3** defines the stress level of the life history of oysters (eggs, larvae, spat, and adults) in relation to salinity and the duration of exposure. The evaluation methods used for the performance measures are described in **Chapter 7**.

Suitable habitat for the eastern oyster within an estuarine salinity gradient from freshwater to seawater is predominately influenced by salinity, food supply, availability of appropriate substrate (cultch), disease and predation. A combination of these factors results in sparse densities or absence of oysters in the upper and lower portions of the estuary, and high densities (near 1000 oysters/m²) in the middle portion of the estuary. Low oyster densities in the upper estuary occur due to frequent exposure to harmful or lethal low salinities while low oyster densities in the lower estuary result from limited food supply, high predation and disease (*Perkinsus marinus*). The most suitable habitat with the highest densities of oysters is in the middle portion of the estuary where the salinity ranges from 10 ppt to 20 ppt. This salinity range is favorable for reproduction, growth, and food supply and the reduced presence of disease and predators is well documented at these salinities. The major focus of this evaluation for the Loxahatchee Estuary is on the region from the upper estuary, where oyster density is lowest (near RM 6.0), to the middle estuary (near RM 4.0) where oyster density is highest. Limiting the evaluation to this region minimizes the need to quantitatively describe the affects of predation and disease on oyster density in the lower estuary which is not included in this evaluation. Of all the factors influencing oyster density, salinity or salinity as a surrogate is used to explain a major portion of the effects freshwater flows have on the oyster population. In order to describe these effects, an understanding of salinity tolerances of oysters at each life stage is necessary.

Table 4-3 shows salinity values and exposure durations for four oyster life stages (eggs, larvae, spat, and adult) that cause oyster stress, harm, and mortality. Most of these salinity values and durations were obtained from the literature for oyster populations for areas other than Florida, however, recent reports on salinity affects on juvenile and adult oysters from the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, Florida (Volety et al. 2003; Roesijadi 2004) were also included. A recent study of oyster life history in the St. Lucie Estuary, immediately north of the Loxahatchee Estuary (Wilson et al. 2004), was used to time oyster life stages in the Loxahatchee Estuary. A major spawn occurred in the spring of the year (March and April) with no documented spawning in the fall. Therefore, a distinctive year class of oysters is revealed in **Table 4-3** where larval presence from March to May follows egg development and spawning, and spat and juvenile oysters are present from April to August. Because oysters in south Florida usually live 2 to 3 years, adults are present throughout the year. Oysters are known to spawn in south Florida from March to September, however, Wilson's work shows that if protracted spawning occurs, the sampling device (oyster shell hanger) does not document significant spat recruitment beyond the spring.

Information compiled in **Table 4-3** was used to develop a model of salinity tolerances for each oyster life stage during their presence in the estuary. To reduce the variability of salinity, a daily mean salinity value is used as input. Salinities were calculated at locations where oysters were known to occur for the base case study and alternative flows using salinity models described in **Chapter 6**. Initial model runs were made using daily salinities that occurred two years prior to the field survey of Loxahatchee oysters in November 2003 which documented the horizontal distribution of oyster reefs and the size class and density of oysters. Based on the sizes and the approximate growth rates of local oysters, all live oysters were assumed to be less than two years old. The purpose of these model runs was to ascertain the frequency and magnitude of stress,

harm, and mortality for each life stage throughout the oyster's upper and middle estuary distribution (RM 4 to RM 6) during the last two years. The frequency and magnitude of stressful conditions at each location was paired with the density of oysters at that location to determine the quantitative relationship between these factors. Once this relationship was documented, it was added to the model to allow long term (35 years) simulations of oyster distribution and densities for the base case and alternative flow scenarios. This method would therefore permit a comparison with the base case that quantitatively reveals if the suitability of the oyster habitat increased or decreased with the flow alternatives.

Table 4-3. Salinity Tolerances During Life Stages of the American Oyster.

Life Stage	Salinity (ppt)	Duration (days)	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Reference
Eggs			X	X	X	X									Wilson et al. 2004
Harm	7.5 - 10.0	1													Burrell 1986
Mortality	0.0 - 7.5	1													Burrell 1986
Larvae					X	X	X								Wilson et al. 2004
Stress	10.0 - 12.0	1													Loosanoff 1965; Davis 1958
Harm	0.0 - 10.0	1													Davis 1958
Mortality	0.0 - 10.0	14													Davis 1958
Spat & Juveniles						X	X	X	X						Wilson et al. 2004
Stress	5.0 - 10.0	1													Ray and Benefield 1997
Harm	0.0 - 5.0	1													Loosanoff 1953
Mortality	0.0 - 5.0	7													Volety et al. 2003
Adults			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Stress	7.5 - 10.0														Woodward-Clyde 1998
Harm	5.0 - 7.5	1													Loosanoff 1953, 1965
Mortality	2.0 - 5.0	28													Loosanoff 1953; Volety et al 2003
Mortality	0.0 - 2.0	14													Roesijadi 2004

POLYHALINE ZONE VEC: SEAGRASSES

Justification

Biological productivity and diversity in many estuarine systems is dependent upon healthy seagrass populations. The presence of healthy seagrass beds results in a diverse, dense and productive faunal community (Gilmore 1995; Lewis 1984; Thayer et al. 1984; Virnstein et al. 1983). Seagrass beds provide food for bacteria and microscopic animals at the base of a complex food web, as well as, food for larger organisms such as green turtles and manatees. Seagrasses offer a refuge and nursery for numerous commercially and recreationally important species including shrimp, fishes and crabs and their prey (Zieman 1982; Phillips 1984; Thayer et al. 1984; Kenworthy et al. 1988; Zieman and Zieman 1989; Sogard et al. 1989). The majority of landed commercial and recreational fish spend at least some portion of their life history using seagrass beds. Seagrass beds enhance water quality (Fonseca et al. 1983; Fonseca and Fisher 1986; Fonseca 1989; Fonseca and Cahalan 1992) by providing an ideal substrate for periphyton that assimilate dissolved nutrients while the leafy seagrass canopy baffles waves and currents thus inhibiting resuspension of fine particles and trapping sediments (Ward et al. 1984).

Salinity thresholds documented in literature or observed in unpublished studies are presented as Performance Measures for shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*), and turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*). There are limited data available on salinity thresholds for Johnson's seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*), a threatened species currently abundant in the Loxahatchee Estuary. Accordingly, the best available salinity data will be used to help assess potential impacts to this threatened species. Available salinity tolerance information was used to infer levels of stress to the seagrass communities for comparison of alternative flow scenarios. The levels of stress used for the seagrass evaluation are no stress, potential stress, and stress (see **Chapter 5** for discussion of evaluation methodology).

Distribution

Several seagrass mapping efforts have been conducted in the Loxahatchee Estuary (**Table 4-4**). Mapping techniques have ranged from outlining seagrass signatures on Mylar over photographs and matching (best fit) this linework to base maps to the more precise technique of simultaneously interpreting/rectifying the habitat polygons using an analytical stereoplotter. Because of inconsistencies in mapping methods, all seagrass mapping data do not exhibit the same positional accuracy; therefore, caution should be used in comparing exact positions and acreages. However, general comparisons of the various maps provide a good indication of where persistent seagrass beds exist and areas of greatest change over time. Available seagrass maps were reviewed along with associated reports and are summarized below.

Table 4-4. Summary of Seagrass Mapping Studies of the Loxahatchee Estuary.

Year	Map Area	Mapping Methods	Lead Agency	Apparent Seagrass Gains/Losses	Reference
1980-1981	Embayment to Inlet	Seagrass signatures outlined on photo overlay based on limited groundtruthing then "best fit" to base map.	USGS		McPherson et al. 1982
1985	River forks and Embayment to inlet and south end of Indian River Lagoon	Detailed groundtruthing, linework "best fit" to 1970 property appraisal composite photograph.	Palm Beach County Health Department	Gain	Klemm and Vare 1985
1990	River forks and Embayment	Groundtruthing results mapped onto aerial photos using bearings to local landmarks.	Jupiter Inlet District (JID)	Loss	Law Environmental Inc. 1990
1994	River forks and Embayment	Groundtruthing with GPS to confirm signatures on aerial photo signatures.	JID	No change	Applied Technology and Management, Inc. 1994
1996	River forks and Embayment	Groundtruthing with GPS to confirm aerial photo signature; edges of grass beds were surveyed using GPS.	JID	Significant loss	Cutcher 1999
1998	River forks and Embayment	Groundtruthing with GPS to confirm aerial photo signature; edges of grass beds were surveyed using GPS.	JID	Slight gain	Cutcher 1999
2000	Embayment and entrances to 3 tributary forks	Groundtruthing with GPS to confirm aerial photo signature; edges of grass beds were surveyed using GPS.	JID	Gain	Cutcher 2000
2003	Embayment and entrances to 3 tributary forks	Groundtruthing with GPS to confirm aerial photo signatures; analytical stereoplotter.	LRD/ SFWMD	Gain	Avineon, Inc. 2003
2003-2004	Upstream of the A1A bridge to RM 6.5	Species-specific map based on detailed groundtruthing with GPS.	LRD/ SFWMD	Gain in manatee grass since 1985	Loxahatchee River District 2004

For this plan, the SFWMD had 1980-81, 1985, and 2003 seagrass data prepared in Geographic Information System (GIS) format for general comparison. Maps from these data are presented below. The other maps referenced in **Table 4-4** were reviewed along with associated reports but were not available in GIS format; consequently, they are summarized below but not presented in graphic format.

Early 1900s - 1969

Prior to stabilization in 1947, the Jupiter Inlet periodically opened and closed. Anecdotal information indicates that seagrasses were present in the estuary at times when the inlet was open but specific locations and species composition are not known (Cary Publishing, Inc. 1973). After the inlet was stabilized in the 1940s and salinity and water clarity became favorable, it is likely that seagrasses were persistent in the estuary. Additional anecdotal information indicates that seagrass beds “thrived” from 1957 to 1969 along the west shore of the Northwest Fork approximately 0.5 mile upstream of Pennock Point (McPherson et al. 1982; see note on **Figure 4-15**). If seagrasses thrived in this reach of the Northwest Fork, it is likely that they also thrived downstream in the Central Embayment during that time period.

1980 – 1985

The first known seagrass map of the Loxahatchee Estuary was prepared in 1980/81 by the United States Geological Survey (USGS; McPherson et al. 1982). A hard copy of this map was digitized and is shown in **Figure 4-15**. The 1980/81 map shows seagrass coverage within and downstream of the Central Embayment, but not within the river forks. It is unclear whether this survey included the forks or if the forks were inspected and no seagrasses were present.

Although the 1980/81 map does not depict species distribution, detailed text published with the map indicates that shoal grass was the dominant species and manatee and turtle grass were rare. The map text also indicates that *Halophila* was sometimes found growing with shoal grass, but the species of *Halophila* was not noted.

In 1985, the Palm Beach County Heath Department mapped Loxahatchee seagrasses (Klemm and Vare 1985). This effort included species mapping. A hard copy of the 1985 map was digitized and is presented in **Figure 4-16**. The same species observed in 1980/81 were documented in 1985. As with the 1980/81 mapping effort, shoal grass was the dominant species with manatee and turtle grass being relatively rare in the Central Embayment. The 1985 map showed seagrasses farther up the Northwest Fork than the anecdotal note mentioned above for the 1957-1969 time period. Additionally, there was apparently significant seagrass loss in the middle of the Central Embayment (south side of the sand bar) from 1980/81 to 1985.

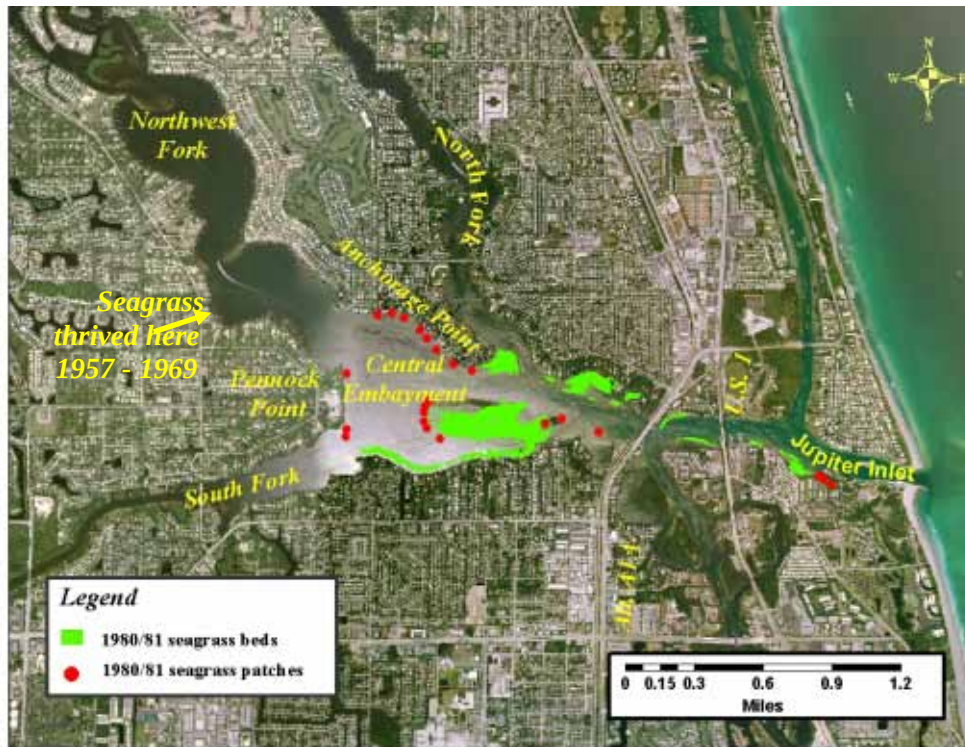


Figure 4-15. 1980/1981 Map of Seagrass Distribution (Source: McPherson et al. 1982).

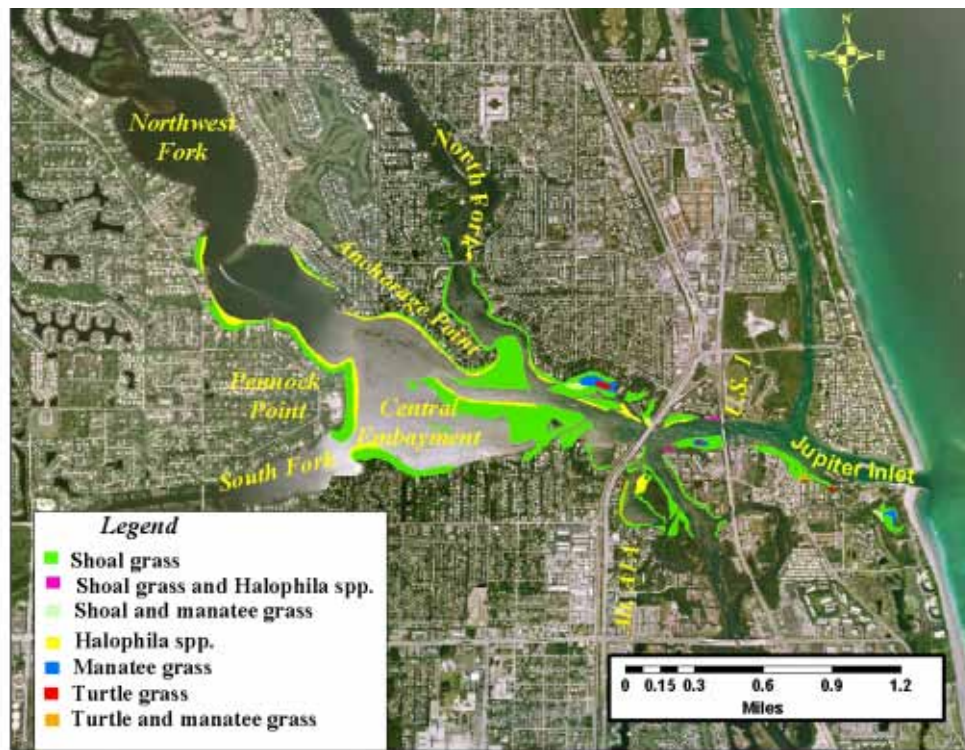


Figure 4-16. 1985 Map of Seagrass Distribution (Source: Klemm and Vare 1985).

The 1980/81 map included bathymetric contours. A visual comparison of the bathymetric contours with the deep edges of the seagrass beds revealed that Loxahatchee Estuary seagrass beds were quite shallow in the early 1980s. Seagrasses rarely extended deeper than the 4 foot (mean sea level) contour line. Klemm and Vare (1985) noted that seagrass growth in 1985 was also restricted to only the shallower areas of the estuary. They indicated that freshwater flows from the Northwest and South Forks were observed to be “turbid and stained with tannin resulting in significantly reduced light penetration restricting the growth of submerged grasses to only the shallower areas.” They noted visibility of 20–30 feet near the inlet but only 3–4 inches in the western reaches of the Central Embayment and in the forks. As would be expected, they found the densest seagrass beds closest to the Jupiter Inlet with the best water clarity and tidal flushing and the sparsest beds in areas of poor water quality and decreased light penetration.

1985 – 1990

The Jupiter Inlet District (JID) began mapping seagrasses in 1990. To date, they have mapped Loxahatchee Estuary seagrasses in 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000. In 1990, four species of seagrass were found: shoal grass, manatee grass, turtle grass, and *Halophila* sp. (Law Environmental, Inc. 1990). As with previous mapping efforts, shoal grass was the dominant species in the embayment, all seagrasses occurred in shallow areas, and the densest seagrass beds occurred near the inlet. Moving upstream from the railroad bridge, *Halophila* ended first and then turtle and manatee grass. Trace amounts of manatee grass were found along the west bank of the Northwest Fork.

Significant changes in seagrass distribution and acreage occurred from 1985 to 1990 (Law Environmental, Inc. 1990). Seagrass losses exceeded gains. Losses were attributed to reduction in acreage within the North and Northwest Forks (beds receded downstream) and Central Embayment (beds became dissected into isolated patches). The only important gain noted was in the vicinity of the railroad bridge; an area strongly influenced by oceanic water entering through the inlet. Species composition changes were also noted. The deep edge *Halophila* fringes observed in 1985 were no longer present in 1990. Manatee grass apparently moved up river to Anchorage Point and expanded into former shoal grass areas.

1990 – 1994

Seagrass coverage in most areas of the estuary did not change much between 1990 and 1994. However, there was a distribution change in the sand bar area. The sand bar seagrass bed observed in 1990 was still present in 1994, however it apparently shifted slightly to the south and west. Accretion on the sand bar may be partly responsible for the shift (Applied Technology and Management, Inc. 1994). Four seagrass species were observed: shoal grass, manatee grass, turtle grass, and Johnson’s seagrass. The 1994 map was the first report to document the presence of Johnson’s seagrass in the Loxahatchee Estuary. This threatened species was observed throughout the Central Embayment in 1994 (Applied Technology and Management, Inc. 1994).

1994-1998

A large loss of seagrass occurred from 1994 to 1996 (51%) with an apparent slight recovery (10%) from 1996 to 1998 (Cutcher 1999). The high rainfall in 1994/1995 may have increased freshwater flows and reduced water clarity, contributing to the apparent seagrass decline. The increases in acreage observed from 1996 to 1998 were largely in the eastern section of the embayment. Shoal grass continued to be the dominant species from 1994 to 1998. Cutcher (1999) was the first report that specifically mentioned the presence of paddle grass (*Halophila decipiens*). Both paddle grass and Johnson's seagrass were considerably less abundant than shoal grass.

1998 - 2000

Cutcher (2000) reported a 22% increase in seagrass coverage between 1998 and 2000. The increase in seagrass coverage occurred in both the eastern and western portions of the embayment. Shoal grass continued to be the dominant seagrass species. Cutcher (2000) suggested that the general drought conditions in the spring and summer of 2000 may have contributed to overall improvement in water quality and subsequent increases in seagrass coverage.

1998 – 2002 (Lower Embayment)

The Loxahatchee River District (LRD) conducted detailed mapping and monitoring in the south end of the Indian River Lagoon in 1998, 2000, and 2002 (Riddler et al. 1999, 2000, 2003). These studies included the most downstream portion of the Loxahatchee Estuary from the inlet to one and a half miles west of the inlet. Based on the LRD reports, seagrasses in this area continue to increase in density and composition. The density of Johnson's seagrass substantially increased over time. The LRD concluded environmental conditions in the section of the Loxahatchee Estuary closest to the inlet were favorable for multiple seagrass species to exist.

2003/2004

In 2003, the South Florida Water Management District issued a contract to map Loxahatchee Estuary seagrasses using the same mapping method used for mapping the adjacent Indian River and Lake Worth Lagoons (**Figure 4-17**). This method uses true color aerial photography, groundtruthing with GPS, and mapping using an analytical stereoplotter. The goal of the 2003 mapping effort was to map Central Embayment seagrasses and the lower portions of the river forks (photo boundaries are shown on **Figure 4-17**).

A visual comparison of the 2000 and 2003 maps revealed a slight increase in seagrass coverage throughout the estuary. A comparison of the 2003 seagrass coverage with current bathymetric data was consistent with conclusions from the earlier mapping efforts; the average deep edge of the seagrass beds is shallow (approximately 3 feet below mean sea level).

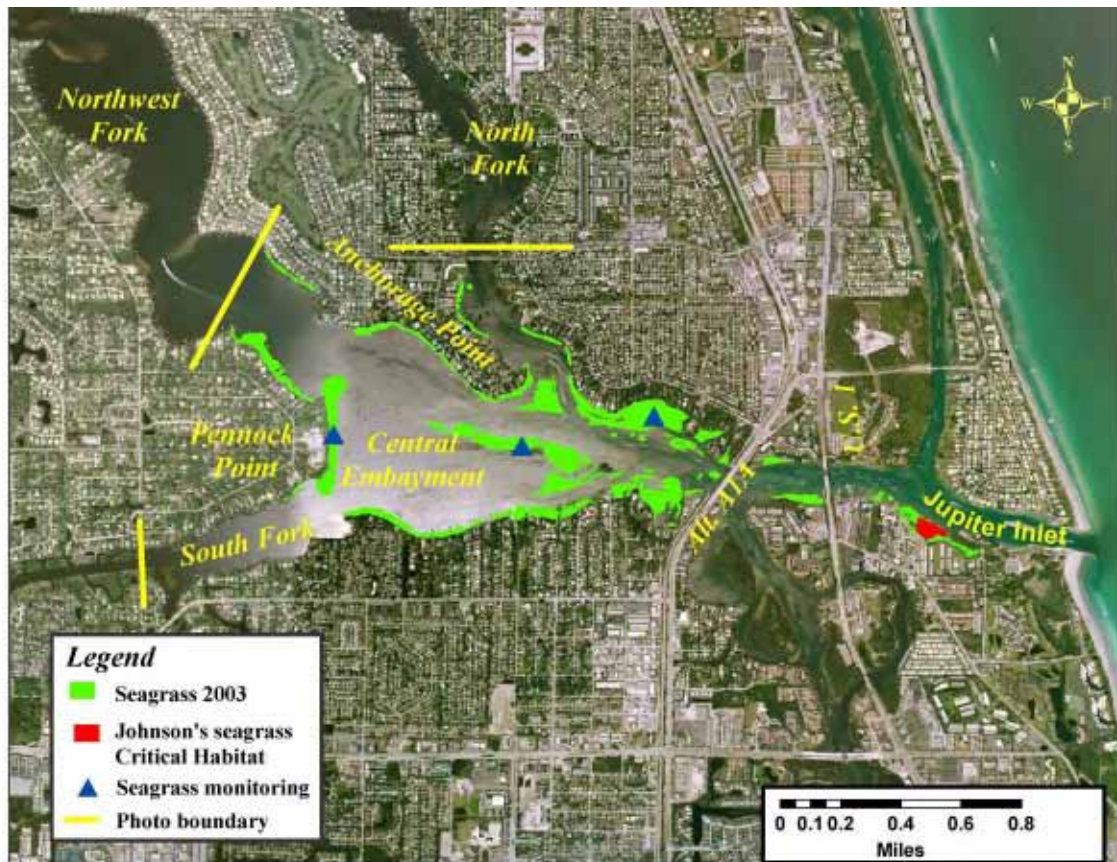


Figure 4-17. 2003 Seagrass Map Prepared from Aerial Photographs (Source: Avineon, Inc. 2003).

To supplement the 2003 mapping from aerial photography, the SFWMD partnered with the LRD to prepare a species-specific seagrass map (**Figure 4-18**; LRD 2004). The species-specific map was prepared in 2003/2004 using detailed groundtruthing with sub-meter accuracy, differentially corrected, GPS to document seagrass bed locations.

The groundtruthing effort for the species specific mapping effort revealed that seagrass beds existed upstream of the photography boundaries used for the 2003 mapping effort. Seagrass beds were found up river to approximately RM 3.4 and occasional patches of seagrasses were found near RM 4.0. The seagrass species found within the Northwest Fork included shoal grass and Johnson's seagrass.

Through the mapping effort of the LRD, all seven species of seagrasses found in South Florida were documented in the Loxahatchee Estuary: shoal grass, manatee grass, turtle grass, paddle grass, Johnson's seagrass, star grass, and widgeon grass. The LRD's survey is the first to document the presence of star grass and widgeon grass in the Loxahatchee Estuary. This survey agreed with previous studies which indicated that shoal grass is the dominant seagrass species in the Loxahatchee Estuary. Detailed maps prepared for each species can be found in the map report prepared by the LRD (Loxahatchee River District 2004).

The only other known species-specific seagrass map of the Loxahatchee Estuary is the 1985 map (Klemm and Vare 1985). A comparison of the 1985 and 2003/2004 maps revealed that shoal grass was the dominant species and occurred throughout the estuary on both maps. Turtle grass

was present in the same location on both maps; the cove on the north side of the estuary approximately 0.3 miles upstream of Alternate A1A (North Bay site). *Halophila* was documented throughout the estuary in both efforts, but species of *Halophila* were only differentiated in the 2003/2004 map. The biggest difference in species distribution was the presence of manatee grass farther upstream in 2003/2004. In 1985, the upstream limit was the North Bay site. In 2003/2004 manatee grass occurred upstream to Anchorage Point and was found in the middle of the embayment across from Anchorage Point.

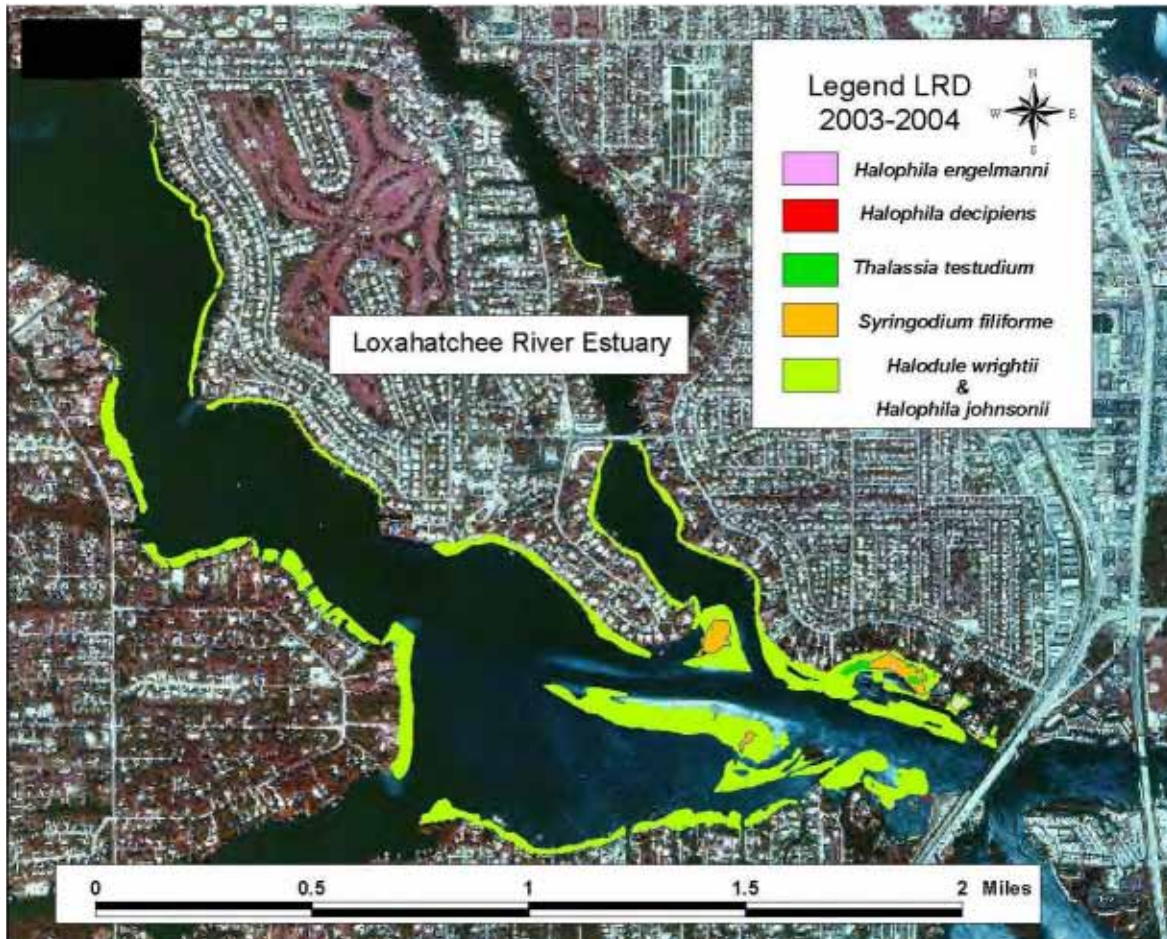


Figure 4-18. 2003/2004 Map of Seagrass Species in the Loxahatchee Estuary. Widgeon Grass was found near River Mile 6.5 and is not shown on this map. (Source: Loxahatchee River District 2004)

Seagrass Monitoring

In the summer of 2003, the SFWMD and the LRD partnered to conduct detailed monitoring of seagrasses within the embayment of the Loxahatchee River. The monitoring sites are shown on **Figure 4-17**. The purpose of this study is to document seasonal changes in seagrass and associated macroalgae (epiphytes, attached algae, and drift algae) over a 3-year period. Data collected will be used to better understand: (1) the natural seasonal variability of seagrass and macroalgae in the study area; and (2) the response of the seagrass community to freshwater flows. Water quality data also will be collected to evaluate potential links between water quality

(particularly salinity, light, and chlorophyll) and trends in seagrass and algae. Preliminary results of the first year of monitoring are under review.

Summary/Discussion

It is likely that seagrass beds have been persistent features in the Loxahatchee Estuary since the late 1940s when the Jupiter Inlet was stabilized. Seagrass beds have been mapped numerous times from the late 1980s to present. Expansions and contractions of the beds have occurred over time but the core seagrass beds have persisted. Seagrass beds in the Loxahatchee Estuary tend to be most dense and diverse near the inlet and become less diverse and less dense at upstream locations. The upstream limit of seagrass beds appears to be near RM 3.0, with occasional patches of shoal and Johnson's seagrasses upstream to near RM 4.0.

Shoal grass has been the dominant seagrass species in the estuary since at least the early 1980s. All species of seagrasses typically grow only in very shallow waters of the Loxahatchee Estuary. It is likely that the dark waters flowing from the river forks reduce light penetration through the water and limit the deep edge of the seagrass beds.

Profile of Surface Water Quality, Dent 2000, states that salinity in the Loxahatchee “experiences significant shifts” due to freshwater flow from the watershed, flows through control structures, and tidal influence of ocean waters entering the estuary through the Jupiter Inlet. These dynamic salinity conditions may help explain the dominance of shoal grass in the estuary since this species tends to exhibit a broader salinity tolerance and ability to tolerate broad salinity fluctuations better than manatee grass, turtle grass, and the *Halophila* species (McMillan 1974). These salinity fluctuations are less extreme at sites closest to the inlet where seagrass species diversity and density is the greatest.

Due to the dynamic nature of the Loxahatchee Estuary, we can expect seagrass distributions to continue to expand and contract with changes in salinity. Continued periodic mapping of the seagrass beds using accurate and consistent methodology, in conjunction with the site specific monitoring being conducted by the LRD, will provide data which will help evaluate natural variability and assess impacts to seagrasses from freshwater flows.

Seagrasses are an important and persistent feature of the Loxahatchee River. However, the seagrasses in the Central Embayment already “exist near the edge of their tolerance” (Cutcher 1999). Consequently, it is important that careful consideration be given to any potential impacts that upstream restoration efforts may have on the seagrass resources in the Loxahatchee Estuary

Performance Measures

Salinity thresholds for seagrasses are used as polyhaline PMs. The salinity thresholds used in this plan were obtained from the literature or unpublished studies. Documented salinity thresholds were grouped into three performance measure categories: 1) no stress, 2) potential stress, and 3) stress. Salinities within the “no stress” category are expected to provide optimal conditions for the seagrasses; no adverse impacts are expected to occur when salinities occur within this category. Salinities at which impacts to seagrasses have been documented in either laboratory or field studies fall within the “stress” category. All other salinities were placed in a “potential stress” category for the performance measure evaluation. **Table 4-5** summarizes the salinity tolerances and identifies the salinity ranges within each stress category for each key seagrass species.

Table 4-5. Salinity Performance Measures for Four Species of Seagrasses^a.

Seagrass Species	Level of Salinity Stress	Salinity Threshold (ppt)	Justification for stress level	Reference
Shoal grass (<i>Halodule wrightii</i>)	No Stress	≥ 24	A literature review indicated that ≥ 24 ppt provided optimal conditions for shoal grass.	Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998
	Potential Stress	13 - 23	This represents the range between optimal conditions and documented stress.	
	Stress	≤ 12	Very little growth occurred between 6 and 12 ppt in a laboratory experiment; blade mortality occurred below 6 ppt.	Doering et al. 2002; McMahan 1968
Manatee grass (<i>Syringodium filiforme</i>)	No Stress	≥ 23	A literature review indicated that ≥ 23 ppt provided optimal conditions for manatee grass.	Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998
	Potential Stress	16 to 22	This represents the range between optimal conditions and documented stress.	
	Stress	≤ 15	Two separate laboratory studies showed impacts at this threshold (in one experiment blade densities declined rapidly in another study leaf extension rates declined rapidly).	Unpublished SFWMD 1999; Lirman and Cropper 2003
Turtle grass (<i>Thalassia testudinum</i>)	No Stress	≥ 25	This value is based on optimal conditions stated in a literature review.	Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998
	Potential Stress	20-24	This represents the range between optimal conditions and documented stress.	
	Stress	≤ 19	In one study, limited growth was observed between 16-19 ppt and in another study photosynthesis decreased by one third at 18 ppt. Growth parameters were negatively impacted in a laboratory experiment at salinities between 6 and 12 ppt.	Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998; Doering and Chamberlain 2000
Johnson's seagrass (<i>Halophila johnsonii</i>)	No Stress	≥ 25	This value is based on optimal conditions stated in a literature review.	Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998
	Potential Stress	15-24	The documented range stated in the Final Recovery Plan for this threatened species is 15–43 ppt so this evaluation assumes that below optimal conditions and within the documented range there is potential for stress.	National Marine Fisheries Service 2002
	Stress	≤ 14	The documented range stated in the Final Recovery Plan for this threatened species is 15–43 ppt so this evaluation assumes that salinities below 15 ppt would be stressful for this threatened species.	National Marine Fisheries Service 2002

^a Because this study evaluated impacts from reductions in salinities, only the lower limit of the "no stress" zone is included in this table.

In a few cases, the available literature and unpublished studies documented a duration associated with a salinity threshold that resulted in severe stress such as blade mortality. **Table 4-6** summarizes this information for each of the four key species. These salinity/duration data provide additional performance measures for each species.

Table 4-6. Salinity/Duration Performance Measures for Four Species of Seagrasses.

Seagrass Species	Salinity Threshold (ppt)	Justification for “severe stress”	Reference
Shoal grass (<i>Halodule wrightii</i>)	< 6 ppt for 30 days; 3.5 ppt for 21 days	Blade mortality occurred at these salinities in laboratory experiments.	Doering et al. 2002; McMahan 1968
Manatee grass (<i>Syringodium filiforme</i>)	≤ 15 ppt for 26 days	In a lab experiment, blade densities declined rapidly after 26 days. Additionally, field observations revealed that after six weeks of salinities < 15 ppt blade mortality occurred.	Unpublished SFWMD 1999; Dan Haunert, personal observation.
Turtle grass (<i>Thalassia testudinum</i>)	≤ 4 ppt for 7 days	Based on one laboratory experiment no green material was left after a few days at 5 ppt, however, a more recent study showed survival at 5 ppt after 2 weeks (although leaf elongation was reduced). A literature review indicated a short-term (up to about 7 days) limit of 4 ppt; this limit is used for this evaluation.	McMillan 1974; Lirman and Cropper 2003; Woodward Clyde International Americas 1998
Johnson's seagrass (<i>Halophila johnsonii</i>)	5 ppt for 3 days	Blade mortality occurred at this salinity in a laboratory study.	Dawes et al. 1989

Although none of the available studies used to develop the above stress categories were conducted in the Loxahatchee Estuary, data from these studies provide the best available information for this preliminary evaluation. These performance measures will allow a consistent comparison of model runs to assess potential impacts of proposed upstream restoration efforts on the seagrass resources.

CHAPTER 5**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Habitat Quality Evaluation	5
Hydrologic Evaluation of the Riverine Floodplain	10
Controlled Release Study	12
Measurement Procedures	13
Steady Flows.....	14
Time-Varying Flows	14
Results and Observations.....	14
Episodic Field Study.....	15
Results and Observations.....	15
Transect 1 (RM 14.5)	16
Transect 2 (RM 13.57)	20
Transect 3 (RM 12.07)	24
Transect 4 (RM 11.18)	26
General Observations and Conclusions	28

List of Figures

Figure 5-1. Riverine Reach of Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River.	6
Figure 5-2. Riverine Floodplain Evaluation Methodology with Logic Train I and II.	11
Figure 5-3. Northwest Fork River Stages (ft) and Flows (cfs) at Lainhart Dam from January to December 2004.....	13
Figure 5-4. StreamPro 2400-KHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP).	13
Figure 5-5. A Schematic of the Operation of a Broadband Boat-mounted, Four-transducer Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP).	14
Figure 5-6. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 8/13/04 with 88 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	16
Figure 5-7. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 8/12/04 with 114 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	17
Figure 5-8. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/10/04 with 241 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	17
Figure 5-9. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/23/04 with 288 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	18
Figure 5-10. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/29/04 with 476 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	18
Figure 5-11. Cross Section near Transect 1-1 (RM 14.5) and Observed Surface Water Stage and Inundation Depth and Extent.....	19
Figure 5-12. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 8/13/04 with 89 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	20
Figure 5-13. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 8/12/04 with 121 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	20
Figure 5-14. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/10/04 with 236 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	21
Figure 5-15. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/23/04 with 325 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	21
Figure 5-16. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/29/04 with 470 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.	22
Figure 5-17. Transect 2-1 (RM 13.57) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.	23
Figure 5-18. Transect 2-2 (RM 13.43) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.	23
Figure 5-19. River Stage Conditions of Transect 3 on 8/13/04 and 8/17/04 with 83 cfs and 91 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.....	24
Figure 5-20. River Stage Conditions at Transect 3 on 9/14/04 and 9/10/04 with 182 cfs and 229 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.....	24
Figure 5-21. Transect 3-1 (RM 12.07) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.	25
Figure 5-22. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 8/13/04 and 8/17/04 with 83 cfs and 93 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.....	26

Figure 5-23. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 9/14/04 with 186 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam. 26

Figure 5-24. River Stage Conditions of Transect 4 at 9/23/04 with 309 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam. 27

Figure 5-25. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 9/29/04 with 461 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam. 27

Figure 5-26. Transect 4 (RM 11.18) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent. 28

Figure 5-27. Observed Surface Water Stages at Various Flow Rates Over Lainhart Dam. 29

Figure 5-28. Schematic Annual Hydroperiod Diagram for Cypress Swamps and Hydric Hammocks in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. 30

List of Tables

Table 5-1. Wetlands Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River Upstream of Masten Dam at Transect 1 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).....	7
Table 5-2. Wetland Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Upstream of Masten Dam at Transect 2-1 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).....	8
Table 5-3. Wetland Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Downstream of Masten Dam for Transects 2-2, 3, and 4 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).	9
Table 5-4. Stages (ft) at Each Transect and Corresponding Flow (cfs) over Lainhart Dam for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.	15

Chapter 5

Determining Hydroperiods and Flow Requirements in the Riverine Floodplain

The riverine floodplain from Riverbend Park (RM 15.5) to Trapper Nelson's (RM 10.5) is mostly populated by a desirable mix of canopy and understory vegetative species. This reach of the river is generally considered a good quality functional ecosystem typical of riverine floodplains although a recent vegetation survey did document the migration of hammock and upland plant species into swamp areas (**Chapter 3**). Since one of the guiding principles of the restoration plan is that no element of the ecosystem will be enhanced at the expense of another, it is critical that any adjustments in water management and delivery for restoration of the tidal floodplain must cause no harm to the riverine floodplain. Where possible, it is desirable to incorporate the hydrologic requirements for riverine swamps and hydric hammocks to enhance the ecological function of the riverine system.

The ecological health of the riverine floodplain is largely determined by regional hydrologic conditions and how much flow is delivered from the Lainhart Dam. There are four critical hydrologic factors that heavily influence the integrity of the vegetative community types that exist in the riverine floodplain of the Northwest Fork. These are the maximum dry season water elevations in the river channel, the minimum wet season water elevations in the floodplain, the durations of each, and the water stages over the floodplain during the transitional periods. An effective restoration strategy must provide a mechanism and a management plan for each of these factors. Management of flows from the upstream areas is the primary mechanism by which the critical hydrologic factors can be manipulated to achieve restoration goals. However, the relationship between river stage/floodplain inundation and volume of water being delivered to the system from upstream areas is not yet known. The objective of this chapter is to determine the hydroperiod and flow requirements of the riverine floodplain plant species through a series of measurements and field observations of river and floodplain stages and flows over Lainhart Dam. Based on this information, it is anticipated that hydrologic regimens developed for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River will support the riverine floodplain species and may enhance the overall health of the ecosystem.

HABITAT QUALITY EVALUATION

The quality of the riverine floodplain community was documented on August 19, 2004 by a team of wetland scientists, biologists and engineers as a part of the ecological benefit/impact analyses of the North Palm Beach County CERP Project-Part I. Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedures (WRAP; Miller and Gunsalus 1997) were utilized in the functional assessment of the proposed ecosystems. WRAP is an established methodology for assessing a wetland/ecological community that takes into account the overall quality of an ecosystem through a process of rating a number of predefined variables. WRAP has been statistically validated with respect to repeatability and the measurement of independent variables. It is currently used by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the State of Florida as part of the 404 Regulatory

Permitting process. It was also used locally in the “Loxahatchee River Basin Wetland Planning Projects for Martin and Palm Beach Counties” (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1999; Martin County Growth Management Department 2000). The final WRAP score for a given area is a numerical value between 0 and 1, with 0 representing no functional value and 1 representing a system functioning at a very high level.

The habitat quality of the Northwest Fork riverine floodplain communities was assessed using WRAP for four transects established perpendicular to the river channel across the floodplain (**Figure 5-1**). These transects are located in the upstream portions of the riverine reach of the Northwest Fork and are not influenced by saltwater intrusion from intertidal mixing as are transects located further downstream. The assessment team’s field observations of the different community types as well as the assigned WRAP score and justifications are described in the following discussion. More descriptive information can be found in “Procedural Approach for Ecological Benefit and Impact Analyses of Alternative Plans: North Palm Beach County Part I Watershed Wetlands” (Draft Final Report, in prep).

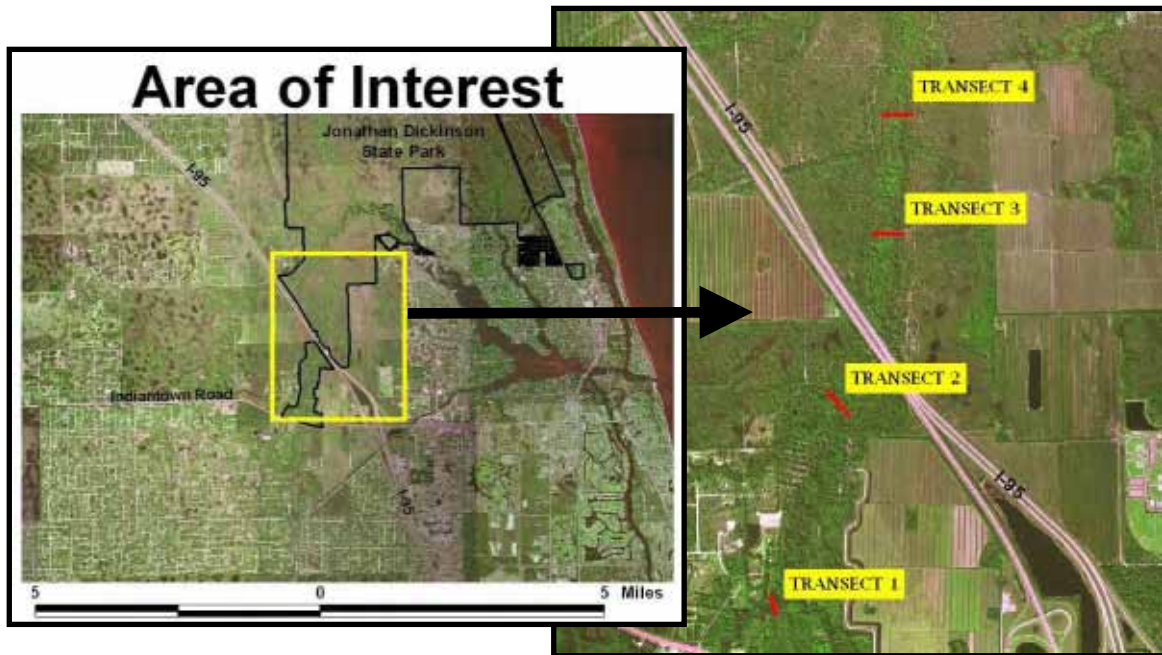


Figure 5-1. Riverine Reach of Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River.

Evaluation Polygon #1 (NWF-1) represents the communities located upstream from Masten Dam and contains Transect 1 and Transect 2-1 (**Tables 5-1** and **5-2**). Transect 1 is located just downstream of Lainhart Dam (RM 14.5) whereas Transect 2-1 is located upstream of the western side of Masten Dam (RM 13.57). The vegetative communities within this polygon are intact, and are dominated by hydric hammocks and floodplain swamps. The floodplain forest canopy is well established and provides good habitat support for wildlife. When compared to historic conditions, the duration and frequency of inundation in the floodplain has decreased due to reduced freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork and low groundwater tables. Evidence of these hydrologic changes is present in the floodplain vegetation. Specifically, young age class cabbage palms have migrated into the lower elevations of the floodplain (approximately 0.3 ft) whereas the mature cabbage palms historically are associated with the higher elevations of the hydric hammocks. On-going vegetation monitoring will provide further information to use in the adaptive management

process. This polygon received a WRAP score of 0.81. **Tables 5-1 and 5-2** are presented to show the similarities between the two transect within the Polygon.

Table 5-1. Wetlands Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River Upstream of Masten Dam at Transect 1 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).

Natural Area:	Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
Site:	Transect 1
Polygon Number:	NWF-1
Date of Visit:	08/19/04
Assessment Team Members Present:	B. Gunsalus (SFWMD); D. Roberts (FPS); J. Fisher (FPS); E. Cowan (FPS); P. Balci (E&E)
Dominant FNAI Community Type(s):	Floodplain Swamp; Hydric Hammock
Wildlife Utilization:	Score = 2.5; impacts on hydrologic deliveries; also slight impacts to the adjacent buffers providing habitat support for wildlife.
Wetland Overstory/Shrub Canopy:	Score = 3.0; dominated by desirable and appropriate plant species.
Vegetative Ground Cover:	Score = 2.5; mostly desirable species but exotic elephant ear (<i>Xanthosoma sagittifolium</i>) also present.
Adjacent Upland/Wetland Buffer:	Avg. Score = 2.56 External buffer score = 2.5 (Major roadway [Indian Town Road] 25%; Natural areas-75%) Internal buffer score = 2.62 (Jupiter Farms-25%; Natural areas-75%)
Field Indicators of Wetland Hydrology:	Score = 2.0; Hydroperiod duration is shortened and water delivery is controlled.
Water Quality Inputs and Treatment:	Score = 2.5; close to Jupiter Farms (~25%impacts)
Overall WRAP Score:	0.81
Other Comments	Ground level elevation data are available for Transects 1 and 2-1.

Table 5-2. Wetland Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Upstream of Masten Dam at Transect 2-1 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).

Natural Area:	Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
Site:	Transect 2-1; Canal 3
Polygon Number:	NWF-1
Date of Visit:	08/19/04
Assessment Team Members Present:	B. Gunsalus (SFWMD); D. Roberts (FPS); J. Fisher (FPS); E. Cowan (FPS); P. Balci (E&E)
Dominant FNAI Community Type(s):	Floodplain Swamp; Hydric Hammock
Wildlife Utilization:	Score = 2.5; hydrologic deliveries are shortened; also slight impacts to the adjacent buffers providing habitat support for wildlife.
Wetland Overstory/Shrub Canopy:	Score = 3.0; Hydric hammock is dominated by cabbage palm whereas pop ash and bald cypress are the dominant species in the floodplain swamp.
Vegetative Ground Cover:	Score = 2.0; some exotics <10% (i.e. <i>Syngonium podophyllum</i>) but dominated by native species (i.e. <i>Thelypteris interrupta</i> ; <i>T. dentata</i> , <i>Acrostichum danaeifolium</i>)
Adjacent Upland/Wetland Buffer:	Avg. Score = 2.3 External buffer score = 1.8 (Old agricultural site-75%; Major roadway-Indian Town Road-25%) Internal buffer score = 2.8 (Indian Town Road-10%; Natural areas-90%)
Field Indicators of Wetland Hydrology:	Score = 2.0; Hydroperiod duration is shortened and water delivery is controlled
Water Quality Inputs and Treatment:	Score = 2.7 (LU=2.6; PT=2.8)
Overall WRAP Score:	0.81
Other Comments	Elevation data are available for Transect 2-1.

The second evaluation polygon (NWF-2) represents the communities located downstream from Masten Dam and includes Transect 2-2, Transect 3, and Transect 4 (**Table 5-3**). Transect 2-2 is located downstream of Masten Dam on the west side of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (RM 13.43); Transect 3 is located approximately 0.7 miles downstream of I-95 and the Florida Turnpike on the east side of the river (RM 12.07); Transect 4 is located on the west side of the river at RM 11.18 approximately 0.7 miles upstream of Trapper Nelson's Interpretive Site. Similar to the first polygon, hydric hammock and floodplain swamp are the dominant community types observed within this polygon. Canopy is impacted by the presence of Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) especially at Transect 3. Hydrologic impacts are similar to those observed in other floodplain transects and are caused by decreased freshwater flows and low groundwater tables at the regional scale when compared with historic conditions. The WRAP score for this polygon was 0.83.

Table 5-3. Wetland Evaluation Summary of the Riverine Reach of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Downstream of Masten Dam for Transects 2-2, 3, and 4 Using the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP).

Natural Area:	Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
Site:	Transect 2-2, Transect 3 and Transect 4
Polygon Number:	NWF-2
Date of Visit:	08/19/04
Assessment Team Members Present:	B. Gunsalus (SFWMD); D. Roberts (FPS); J. Fisher (FPS); P. Balci (E&E)
Dominant FNAI Community Type(s):	Floodplain Swamp; Hydric Hammock
Wildlife Utilization:	Score = 2.5; habitat support (buffer) and water deliveries slightly impacted
Wetland Overstory/ Shrub Canopy:	Score = 3.0; Hydric hammock is dominated by cabbage palm whereas pop ash and bald cypress are the dominant species in the floodplain swamp.
Vegetative Ground Cover:	Score = 2.5; some feral hog impacts on ground cover within the hydric hammock
Adjacent Upland/ Wetland Buffer:	Avg. Score = 2.2 External buffer score = 1.8 (Old agricultural site-50%; Major roadway (I-95)-33%; Natural areas-17%) Internal buffer score = 2.5 (Natural areas-100%)
Field Indicators of Wetland Hydrology:	Score = 2.0; Hydroperiod duration is shortened; delivery of water controlled for anthropogenic activities.
Water Quality Inputs and Treatment:	Score = 2.7 (LU=2.6; PT=2.8)
Overall WRAP Score:	0.83
Other Comments	Elevation data are available for Transects 2-1, 3 and 4.

HYDROLOGIC EVALUATION OF THE RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN

Development of the evaluation methodology for riverine floodplain hydrology began with a list of assumptions that are put forth and universally agreed to as the fundamental common basis of an evaluation strategy. The fundamental driving assumption for the rest of the restoration effort is that the portion of the Northwest Fork from Riverbend Park to Trapper Nelson's currently has a healthy vegetative community typical of a riverine floodplain system (confirmed during WRAP evaluation) and that any restoration option considered for the lower reaches of the Northwest Fork and the rest of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary will in no way adversely impact, harm, or compromise the biological health and integrity of the riverine floodplain ecosystem.

Other assumptions are as follows:

- For this analysis, the riverine reach of the Northwest Fork floodplain extends from Riverbend Park (RM 15.5) to Trapper Nelson's (RM 10.5).
- Normally, there are no salinity issues that need to be addressed in this portion of the watershed. However, at sites below Masten Dam tides may cause fluctuations in water depth.
- The current stage/flow rating curve for Lainhart Dam is accurate and seepage around the structure is negligible (see Gonzalez, June 2004, Rating Improvements for Lainhart Dam, SCADA & Hydro Data Management, Technical Publication SHDM #1). This assumption needs to be reaffirmed following the major 2004 and 2005 hurricanes and severe storm events.
- Existing (pre-Hurricane Frances) canopy vegetation represents desirable climax species; hydrologic conditions need to continue supporting the necessary recruitment and growth of these canopy species.
- Existing shrub and groundcover vegetation may not be appropriate and suitable adjustments in floodplain hydroperiod could be considered and implemented to create conditions favorable to maintain a more "typical" lower tier vegetative community.
- The predominant vegetative communities are the "Floodplain Swamps" and "Hydric Hammocks" as described in **Chapters 3 and 4**. Achieving hydrologic performance measures for "Floodplain Swamps" and "Hydric Hammocks" will concurrently meet the hydrologic performance measures for the entire floodplain community.

The evaluation methodology strategy depicted in **Figure 5-2** is based on the foregoing assumptions. It depicts the drivers that result in given river stages and the hydrologic constraints that, if exceeded, will result in adverse impacts to the existing system.

Ultimately, the hydrologic input and the resulting river/floodplain surface water stages must be consistent with the hydrologic needs of floodplain vegetative communities for the timing and duration of stage in the river and floodplain. To determine the hydrologic flow/stage response in the riverine floodplain, actual stage measurements in the river and floodplain under known flow conditions at Lainhart Dam were conducted. These measurements were taken at the vegetative Transects 1 through 4 which were established and surveyed in June and July 2003. Two types of field studies were conducted. The first was a controlled release study involving concurrent flow and stage measurement at the four transects for an entire tidal cycle with a nearly constant flow

controlled at Lainhart Dam. The other type was an episodic field study with stage measurements at the four transects under varying flow conditions.

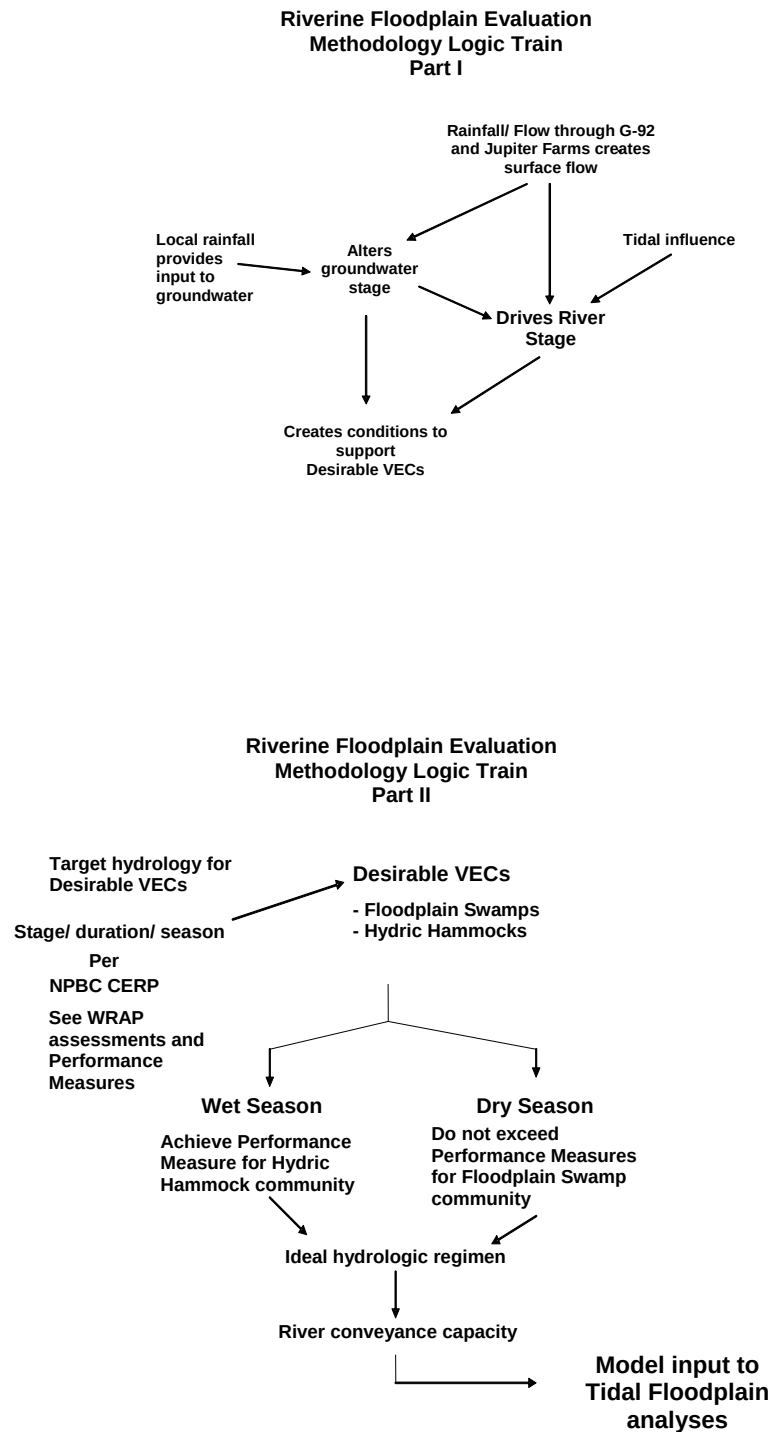


Figure 5-2. Riverine Floodplain Evaluation Methodology with Logic Train I and II.

CONTROLLED RELEASE STUDY

A controlled release study was performed on August 17, 2004 with water stage observations made at each transect during a continuous 12-hour period. The goal was to develop the stage/flow relationship in the river downstream of Lainhart Dam and make direct observations of water stages in the river channel and floodplain that would lead to identifying the maximum channel flow capacity during the dry season that would not adversely affect the floodplain vegetative community. The 12-hour duration of the measurements at Transects 2 and 4 allowed the direct observation of tidal influence on stages and flows at the most downstream portion of the protected riverine floodplain (Transect 4 at RM 11.18) and the most upstream portion of the riverine floodplain that would possibly be affected (Transect 2 at RM 13.43).

The controlled releases created a relatively constant flow over Lainhart Dam of 82 cfs to 84 cfs. Simultaneous real time flow measurements were obtained in the river channel at Transects 1 through 4. The measurements were made by technicians from the SFWMD SCADA (Supervisor Control and Data Acquisition) & Hydro Data Management Division. They were accompanied by wetland experts and staff members from the SFWMD, Florida Park Service (FPS) District 5 office, and other agencies. Gonzalez (2005) provides a full description of the study results and conclusions in SFWMD Technical Publication SHDM Report #2005-01.

For this evaluation a high degree of confidence was required to confirm that the antecedent hydrologic conditions were representative of typical dry season patterns. Flow rate and river stage for the 4-month period (April 2004 –July 2004) prior to the controlled release study are depicted in **Figure 5-3**. During that 4-month period, flow over Lainhart Dam was typically less than 35 cfs and the river stage was lower than 11 feet NGVD. This pattern confirms that the stage and flow data collected during the controlled release study are indicative of normal dry season riverine floodplain responses to changing flows. The degree that tidal activity influenced water stages in this portion of the river also was evaluated. At Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.9) on August 17, 2004, low tides were at 5:45 am and 6:00 pm while high tides were at 11:12 am and 11:36 pm. Tidal range for the 12-hour period was from 0.1 feet to 2.4 feet NGVD.

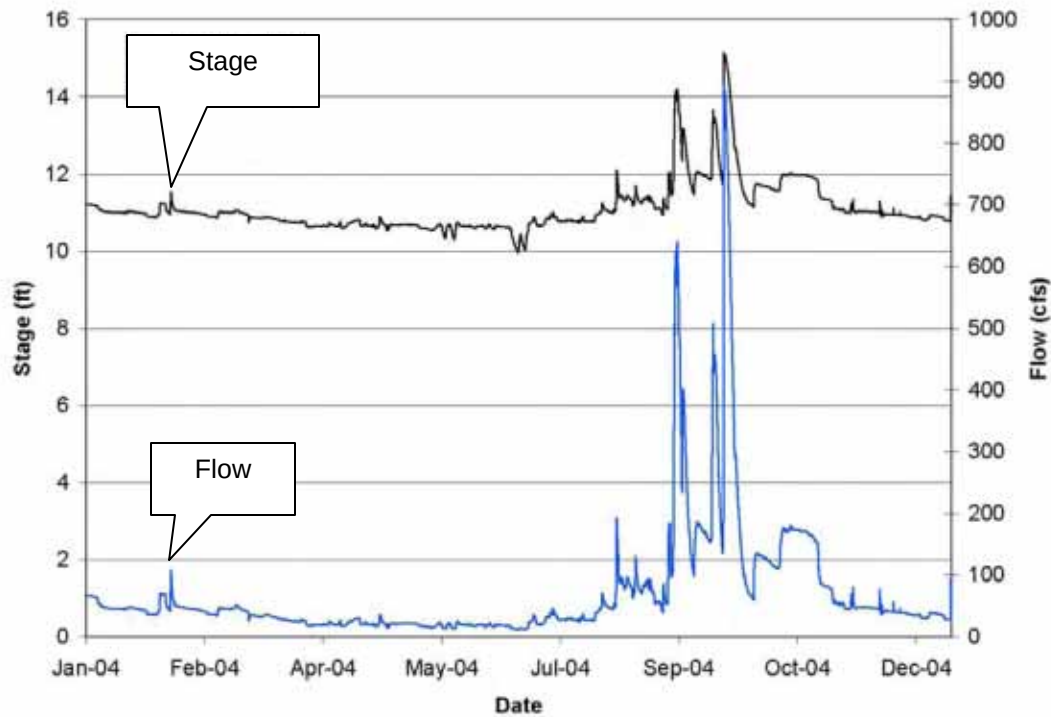


Figure 5-3. Northwest Fork River Stages (ft) and Flows (cfs) at Lainhart Dam from January to December 2004.

Measurement Procedures

Flow data were collected with a StreamPro acoustic profiler manufactured by RD Instruments (see **Figure 5-4**). StreamPro is a small monostatic, four-transducer, 2400-KHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) mounted on a tethered platform. Stage measurements were made manually with conventional survey methods. Surveyed benchmarks were placed adjacent to the river channel at each transect. These benchmarks are identified by numbered metal tags. Transect 1 includes Tags 601, 602 and 609. Transect 2 includes Tags 603 and 606. Tag 607 is located at Transect 3; Tag 608 is located at Transect 4.



Figure 5-4. StreamPro 2400-KHz Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP).

ADCPs measure the velocity of water, track water flow path, and measure channel depth as they move across the stream. ADCPs operate based on Doppler-shift principles using a proprietary broad-band acoustic signal processing algorithm for estimating the water velocity,

flow depth, and bottom tracking. In an ADCP transect measurement the ADCP collects data at a frequency of about 1 Hz (one cycle per second) as it transects the river from one bank to the other, while operated via radio modem from a hand-held computer (**Figure 5-5**). The velocity, transect, and depth data are combined according to the velocity-area method, in a fashion similar to the traditional flow measurements by mechanical current meters described in the ISO Standard 748 (1997). ADCPs use “instantaneous” velocity profiles for computing flow instead of using one, two, or three point-velocity measurements as traditionally done in mechanical current-meter measurements. ADCPs are not able to measure water velocities near solid boundaries, near the free surface, nor very close to the instrument because of acoustic signal contamination. To estimate the unmeasured flow, the flow computation algorithm makes use of extrapolation routines. The total flow is computed as the summation of the measured flow and estimated flow.

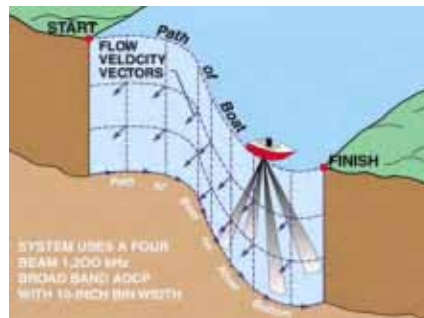


Figure 5-5. A Schematic of the Operation of a Broadband Boat-mounted, Four-transducer Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP).

STEADY FLOWS

Stream flow measurements with the StreamPro under steady flow conditions were made following the guidelines developed by the USGS (2002a, 2002b) for estimating open-channel flows under steady flow conditions with a boat-mounted ADCP. These guidelines recommend estimating the streamflow as the average of four reciprocal transects (transects made on alternate directions) within 5% of each other; if this condition is not met, flow is estimated as the average of eight reciprocal transects.

TIME-VARYING FLOWS

Stream flow measurements of varying flows, such as tidally affected flows, are typically single transect estimates. Multiple samples can only be made by concurrently collecting transect data with several StreamPro ADCPs. Because four transects were being measured on August 17, 2004, multiple sample measurements could not be collected. Therefore, the USGS guidelines for operating ADCPs under steady flow conditions were observed during the four transect measurements.

Results and Observations

Data analyses and results of the controlled release study are discussed in detail in **Appendix D**. In summary, tidal range at RM 5.9 (Boy Scout Dock) during the controlled release study on August 17, 2004 was approximately 2.4 feet. The amplitude of the stage at Transect 4 (RM 11.8) was about 0.7 feet while at Transect 3 (RM 12.07), the stage varied only by about 0.1 foot. The bankfull capacity (when the river channel is full to top of bank) at Transects 3 and 4 were estimated by considering the flow-at-Lainhart Dam against stage-at-transect curves, the

stage-flow data collected at the transects with the flow-at-Lainhart of about 83 cfs, and a tidal amplitude of 2.5 feet at RM 9.1. No observable tidal effects were found for river stages at Transects 1 and 2. Thus stage and flow are uniquely related at Transect 1 and 2, and the bankfull capacity of these sites can be estimated from the flow-at-Lainhart Dam against stage-at-transect curves. Flow at Lainhart Dam is the controlling factor of stage at Transects 1 and 2. Tidal influence and flow at Lainhart Dam are cofactors in stage at Transect 4, and to a much less extent at Transect 3. The bankfull capacities derived from these data under the studied tidal conditions were 98 cfs at Transect 1, 144 cfs at Transect 2, 110 cfs at Transect 3, and 100 cfs at Transect 4.

EPISODIC FIELD STUDY

During the period from July 27 through December 1, 2004, FPS and SFWMD staff recorded river surface stages at the four transects on several occasions. In each case, river stage was measured and the recorded flow at Lainhart Dam was noted. In some cases, rough measurements of submerged channel cross sections and flow velocities provided a rough estimate of actual flow volumes at the transect location itself. These flows were compared to the actual flow volume recorded at Lainhart Dam for the same period to confirm accuracy. Observations of the extent and depth of floodplain inundation were noted at the same time that these river stage observations and flow measurements were made.

Results and Observations

Table 5-4 lists the dates and transect locations where visual observations and measurements of water surface elevations were made, and the measured flow volumes (if any) when observations and measurements were made.

Table 5-4. Stages at Each Transect and Corresponding Flow over Lainhart Dam for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Date	Lainhart Flow (cfs)	T 1 (ft)	T 2-1 (ft)	T 2-2 (ft)	T 3 (ft)	T 4 (ft)
7/27/04	30	8.35				
8/3/04	38		7.71	4.73	2.48	0.89
8/12/04	114-139	10.46	8.56	7.20		2.53
8/13/04	88 - 95	9.79	8.19	6.31	3.83	1.42
8/17/04 ^a	82 - 84	9.61 - 9.66	8.14 - 8.16	6.12 - 6.16	3.63 - 3.73	1.12 - 1.83
9/9/04	339		9.22			
9/10/04	236 - 241	11.54	8.78			
9/14/04	182 - 185				5.09	2.93
9/16/04	176	11.12			5.11	
9/23/04	288 - 325	11.88	9.25			4.04
9/29/04	461 - 476	12.69	9.82			5.08
10/1/04	258				5.94	

^a This is the date of the Controlled Release Study; the data are provided as ranges.

The degree of floodplain inundation at different water stage levels is depicted in the following photographs and cross-sectional diagrams for each of the four riverine transects.

TRANSECT 1 (RM 14.5)

Figures 5-6 through 5-10 are photographs of the river and floodplain at Transect 1 taken during the observation period (July 27 - December 1, 2004) with flows ranging from 88 cfs to 476 cfs.

Transect 1

88 cfs 8/13/04 9:30

- No Flow Outside of Channel
- Standing Water In Floodplain
- Remnants of Release From G-92 Max.
Flow = 192 cfs



Downstream of Stage Measurement site 9:05



Tag #601 and #602 9:15



Standing Water at 75m West 9:30

Figure 5-6. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 8/13/04 with 88 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 1

114 cfs 8/12/04 12:10 PM

- Water Level at Top of Bank
- Standing Water in Floodplain
- Debris Piled On Banks
- Ebbing Side of Controlled Release From G-92



Downstream of Stage Measurement Site and Tag #602 12:00



Tag #601 and #602 12:00



Standing Water at 75m West 12:15

Figure 5-7. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 8/12/04 with 114 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 1

241 cfs 9/10/04 10:40 AM

- Water Over Top of Bank
- No Visible Flow in Floodplain
- A Lot of Debris
- Floodplain Inundated Knee Deep



Edge of Floodplain 10:30



Floodplain Inundated at 75m West 10:50



Measuring Tag #601 10:45

Figure 5-8. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/10/04 with 241 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 1

288 cfs 9/23/04 2:52 PM

- Water Over Top of Bank
- Visual Flow in Floodplain
- Thigh Deep in Floodplain



Edge of Floodplain at 45m West 2:45



Looking West at 55m East Pole 3:06



Looking Downstream at Tag #601 2:52

Figure 5-9. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/23/04 with 288 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 1

476 cfs 9/29/04 10:18 AM

- Water Level at Top of Floodplain
- Waist Deep In Floodplain
- Few Cypress Knees Above Water Surface
- Flow Visually Observed in Floodplain



Edge of Floodplain Looking East 10:13



Looking Downstream at Tag #601 10:18



At 75m looking West 10:52

Figure 5-10. River Stage Conditions at Transect 1 on 9/29/04 with 476 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Figure 5-11 is a cross-sectional profile near Transect 1-1 based on the June 2003 survey data. The measured water stage elevations for each observation date. The depth and lateral extent of floodplain inundation is readily evident at each level of inundation. Flows are contained in the main river channel up to and through 88 cfs. That flow creates an associated river stage of approximately 9.4 feet NGVD. Water levels at that stage remain well below the lateral ground surface elevations in the floodplain.

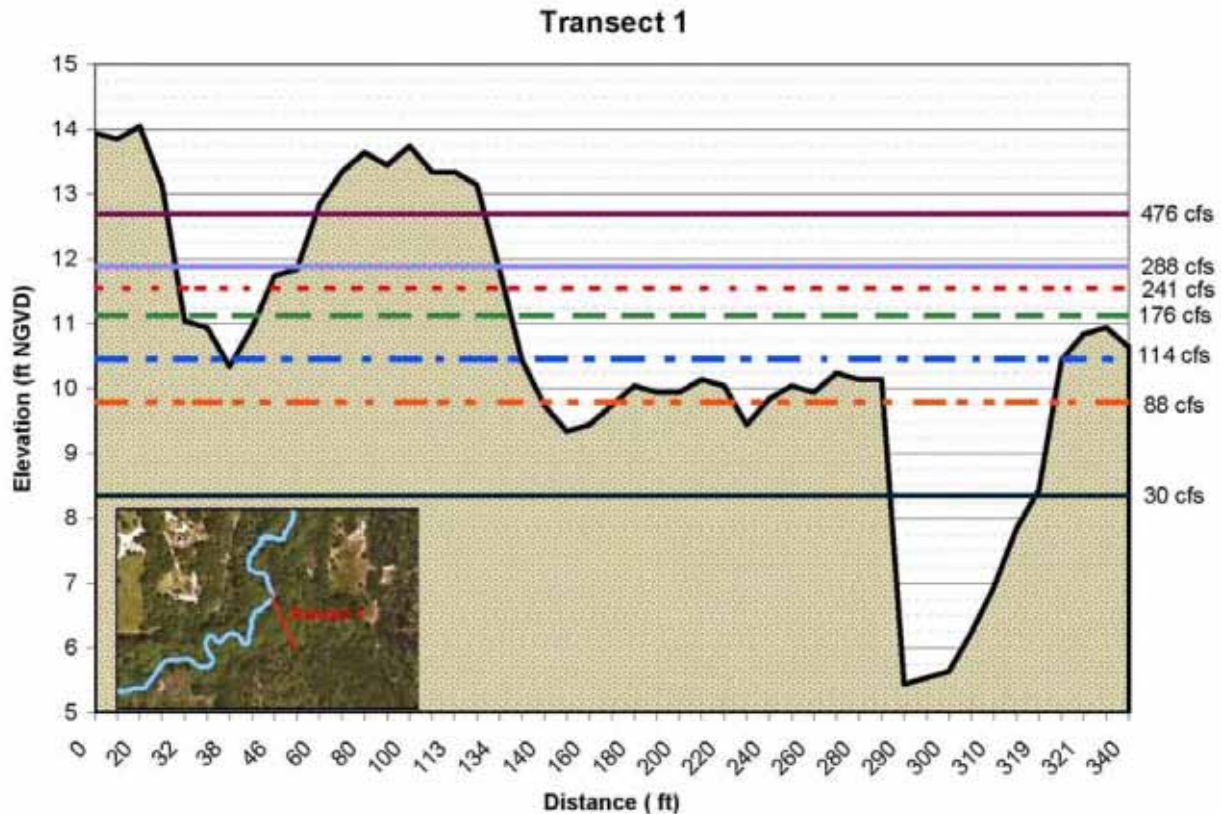


Figure 5-11. Cross Section near Transect 1-1 (RM 14.5) and Observed Surface Water Stage and Inundation Depth and Extent.

TRANSECT 2 (RM 13.57)

Figures 5-12 through 5-16 are photographs of the river and floodplain at Transect 2 taken during the observation period (July 27 - December 1, 2004) with flows ranging from 88 cfs to 476 cfs. Transect 2 has two segments. One segment (Transect 2-1) is upstream of Masten Dam and the other (Transect 2-2) is downstream of the dam.

Transect 2

89 cfs 8/13/04 10:15 AM

— River Flowing in Bank



Below Masten Dam Next to Tag #603 and Stream Flow Measurement site 10:15



MastenDam 10:00



Below Masten Dam measuring Tag #603 10:15

Figure 5-12. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 8/13/04 with 89 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 2

121 cfs 8/12/04 10:30 AM

— Ebbing Side of Controlled Release from G-92



Masten Dam 10:35



Below Masten Dam Tag #603 10:30



Above Masten Dam Tag #606 10:40

Figure 5-13. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 8/12/04 with 121 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 2

236 cfs 9/10/04 12:23 PM



Masten Dam 11:56



Below Masten Dam Tag #603 12:23



Above Masten Dam Tag #606 12:00

Figure 5-14. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/10/04 with 236 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 2

325 cfs 9/23/04 10:02 AM



Above Masten Dam Upstream of Tag #606 10:04



Above Masten Dam Tag #606 10:03



Masten Dam 10:07

Figure 5-15. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/23/04 with 325 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 2

470 cfs 9/29/04 11:05 AM



Floodplain Downstream of Masten Dam 11:20



Above Masten Dam Tag #606 11:15



Masten Dam 11:08

Figure 5-16. River Stage Conditions at Transect 2 on 9/29/04 with 470 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Figures 5-17 and 5-18 are cross-sectional profiles of the upstream and downstream segments of the transect. The profiles depict the depth and lateral extent of floodplain inundation over the range of flows on those dates that water surface elevations were observed and measured.

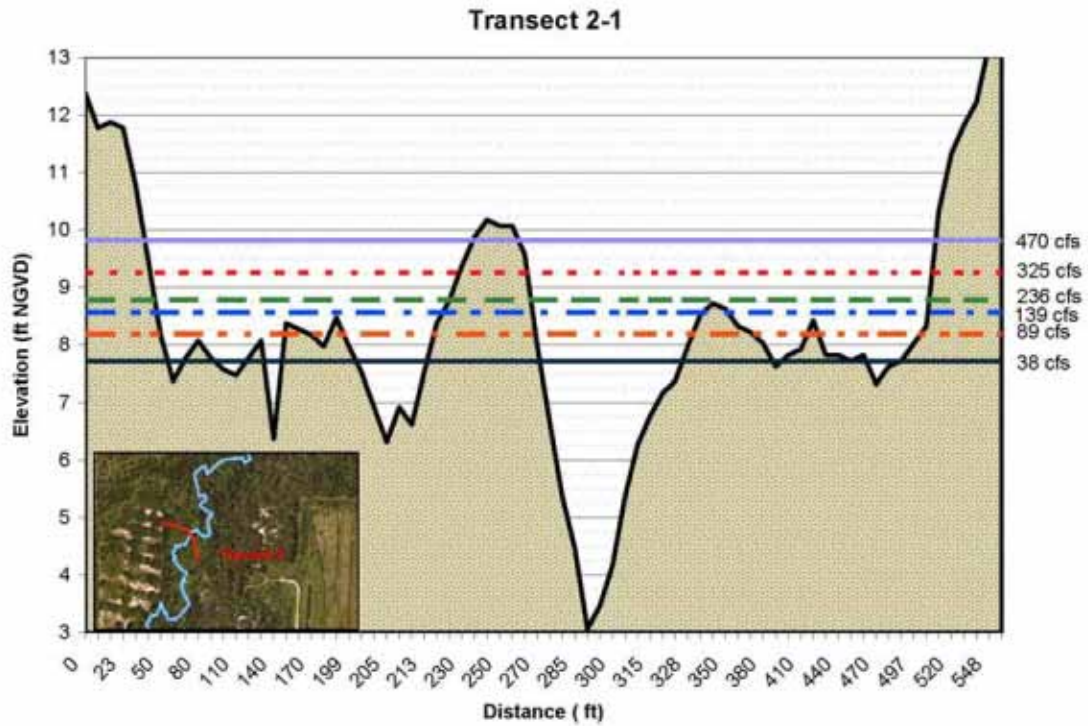


Figure 5-17. Transect 2-1 (RM 13.57) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.

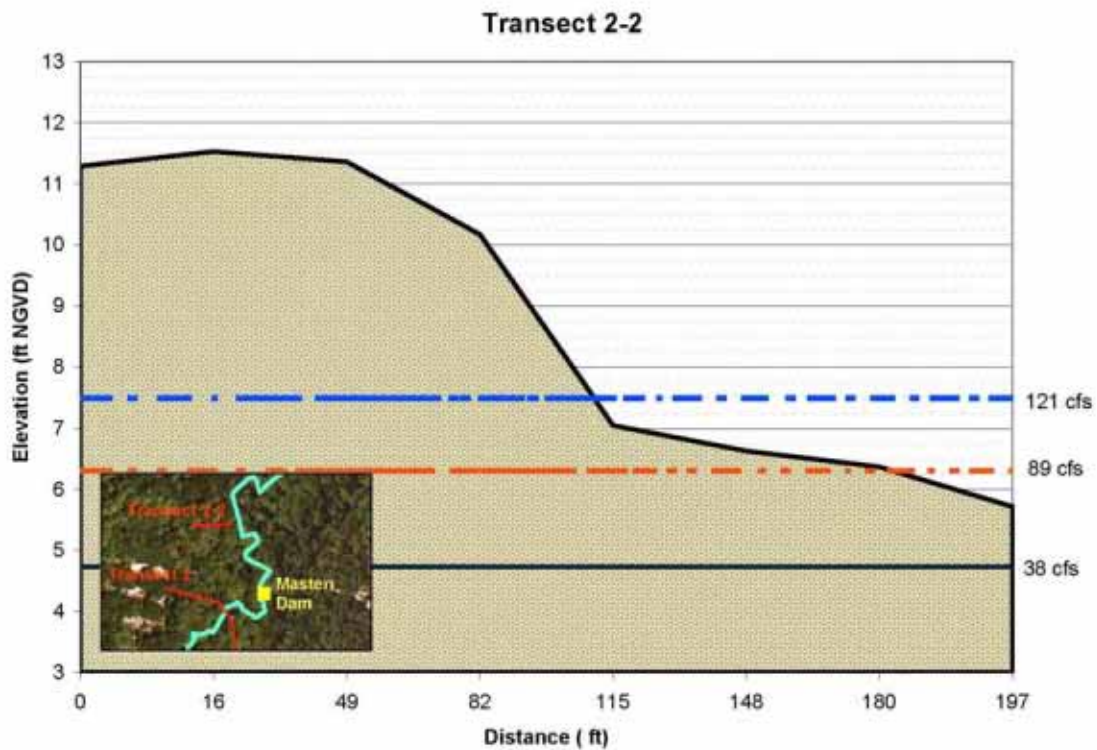


Figure 5-18. Transect 2-2 (RM 13.43) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.

TRANSECT 3 (RM 12.07)

Figures 5-19 and **5-20** contain photographs of the river and floodplain at Transect 3 taken over a range of flows from 83 cfs to 229 cfs.

Transect 3

83 cfs 8/17/04 9:20 AM
91 cfs 8/13/04 11:20 AM

- Channel Flowing Within Banks
- Little to No Flow in Braided Streams



Braided Channel at 35m North
8/13/04 11:54



Flow within the channel: 8/17/04 9:33



Stream Flow Measurement Site 8/13/04 11:33

Figure 5-19. River Stage Conditions of Transect 3 on 8/13/04 and 8/17/04 with 83 cfs and 91 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 3



On Transect at 15m Looking West Towards River 9/14/04
11:45



Stream Flow Measurement Site 9/14/04 12:05



Looking South at 35m North on Flowing Braided
Channel 9/10/04 2:29



Edge of Floodplain 9/10/04 2:45

Figure 5-20. River Stage Conditions at Transect 3 on 9/14/04 and 9/10/04 with 182 cfs and 229 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Figure 5-21 is a cross-sectional profile of Transect 3-1. The profiles depict the depth and lateral extent of floodplain inundation over the range of flows on those dates that water surface elevations were observed and measured.

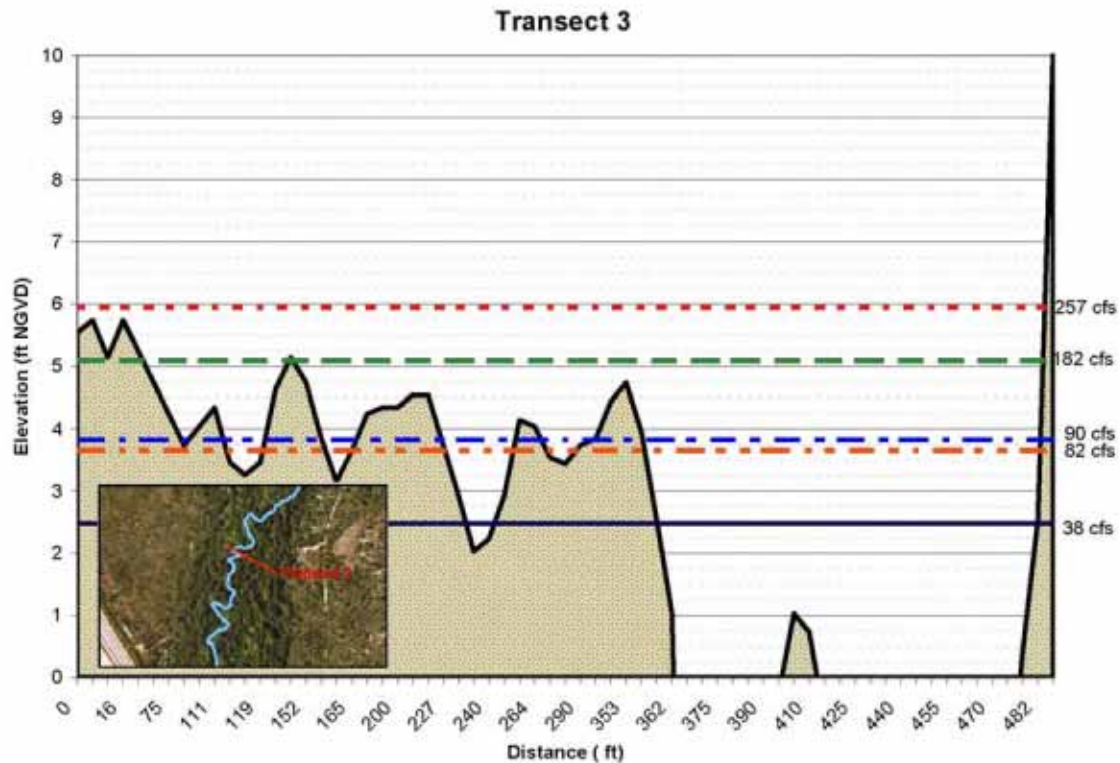


Figure 5-21. Transect 3-1 (RM 12.07) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent.

Flows of up to 88 cfs remained confined to the main river channel and braided lateral channels. The water stage elevation associated with that flow is just slightly below that of the riverine floodplain ground elevation. It is apparent that flows in excess of this amount would likely result in some degree of floodplain inundation.

TRANSECT 4 (RM 11.18)

Figures 5-22 through 5-25 are photographs of the river and floodplain at Transect 4 taken over a range of flows from 83 cfs to 461 cfs.

Transect 4

- 83 cfs 8/17/04 3:30 PM
- 93 cfs 8/13/04 12:49 PM
 - No Flow Outside of Channel



Stage Measurement Site Tag #608 8/13/04 12:56



Stream Flow Measurement Site 8/17/04 3:42



Double Logs in Channel 8/13/04 1:00

Figure 5-22. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 8/13/04 and 8/17/04 with 83 cfs and 93 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 4

- 186 cfs 9/14/04 1:25 PM
 - Knee Deep
 - Dry Hammocks



Stage Measurement Site Tag #608 1:26



Site of Double Logs in Channel 1:34

Figure 5-23. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 9/14/04 with 186 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 4

- 309 cfs 9/23/04 11:36 AM
 - Visual Flow Through Entire Floodplain
 - Waist Deep
 - Causeway Still Dry



Edge of Floodplain 11:05



At 25m South Looking Towards Floodplain 11:20



Stage Measurement Site Tag #608 11:40

Figure 5-24. River Stage Conditions of Transect 4 at 9/23/04 with 309 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Transect 4

- 461 cfs 9/29/04 12:30 PM
 - Visual Flow Through Entire Floodplain
 - Over Waist Deep
 - Water Hickory at 85m 20" Deep



Water Hickory 12:51



Edge of Floodplain Looking North 1:05



Stage Measurement Site Tag #608 12:32

Figure 5-25. River Stage Conditions at Transect 4 on 9/29/04 with 461 cfs Flow at Lainhart Dam.

Figure 5-26 is a cross-sectional profile of the transect. It depicts the depth and lateral extent of floodplain inundation observed over the range of flows observed during the course of this floodplain evaluation.

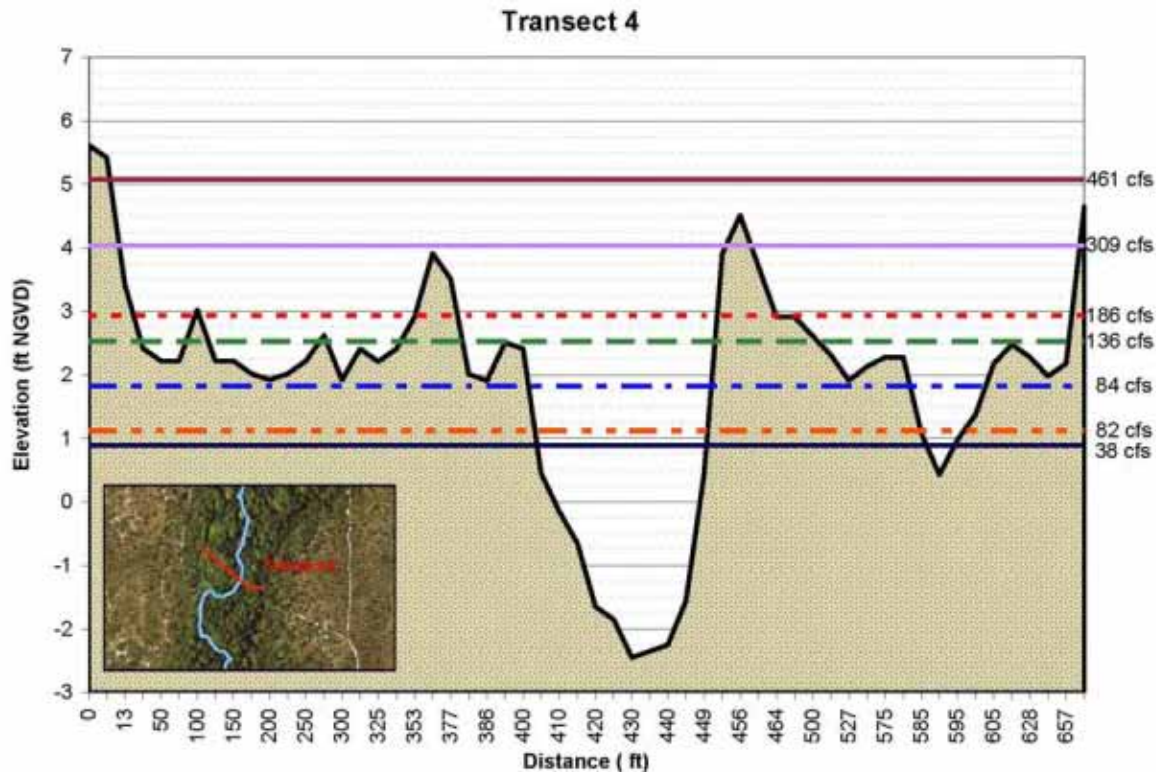


Figure 5-26. Transect 4 (RM 11.18) Cross Section and Observed Inundation Depth and Extent (No vegetation data were collected along the transect east of the river).

Of the four transects, Transect 4 (RM 11.18) is the farthest downstream and the water stage elevations are impacted by daily tidal regimens. The difference in stage at a flow of between 82 cfs and 84 cfs clearly depicts the degree of tidal influence on the particular date that these measurements were made. While not directly impacted by the saline waters coming upstream from Jupiter Inlet, the water surface at this location is obviously raised as the Lainhart Dam flow meets the incoming tidal prism from the downstream ocean. No floodplain inundation was observed nor is any inundation expected at the river stages associated with the 84 cfs flow at either low tide or high tide.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The floodplain inundation observed at the four transects during the episodic field study is, in general, consistent with the conclusions of the controlled release study. Measured river stages at the four transects were plotted against flow at Lainhart Dam in **Figure 5-27**. In general, at all four transects flows of 90 cfs or less seem to result in little or no overbanking of the main river channel or flooding of the floodplain. Conversely, flows of 110 cfs or greater would appear to begin flooding at least some of the floodplain areas.

The stage/flow relationship at Transect 2 (RM 13.43) is distorted to a somewhat flatter relationship on the upstream side of Masten Dam at low flows and a steeper relationship on the downstream side. The impacts of Masten Dam seem to dissipate by the time the flow reaches Transect 3 at RM 12.07. Tidal fluctuation has imperceptible impacts at Transect 2 (downstream section). Tidal fluctuation had an insignificant impact at Transect 3 during the 8/17 Controlled Release Study. Tidal fluctuation appears to have a regular and noticeable impact on water stages at Transect 4. Also note that observation points made after Hurricane Jeanne (see **Figure 5-3**; end of September 2004) were not included in the stage/flow figure (**Figure 5-27**). Post hurricane investigations indicated that the storm damage resulted in fallen branches and snags in the channel which may change the channel conveyance capacity. A periodic re-evaluation of the flow-stage relationship is needed for adaptive management.

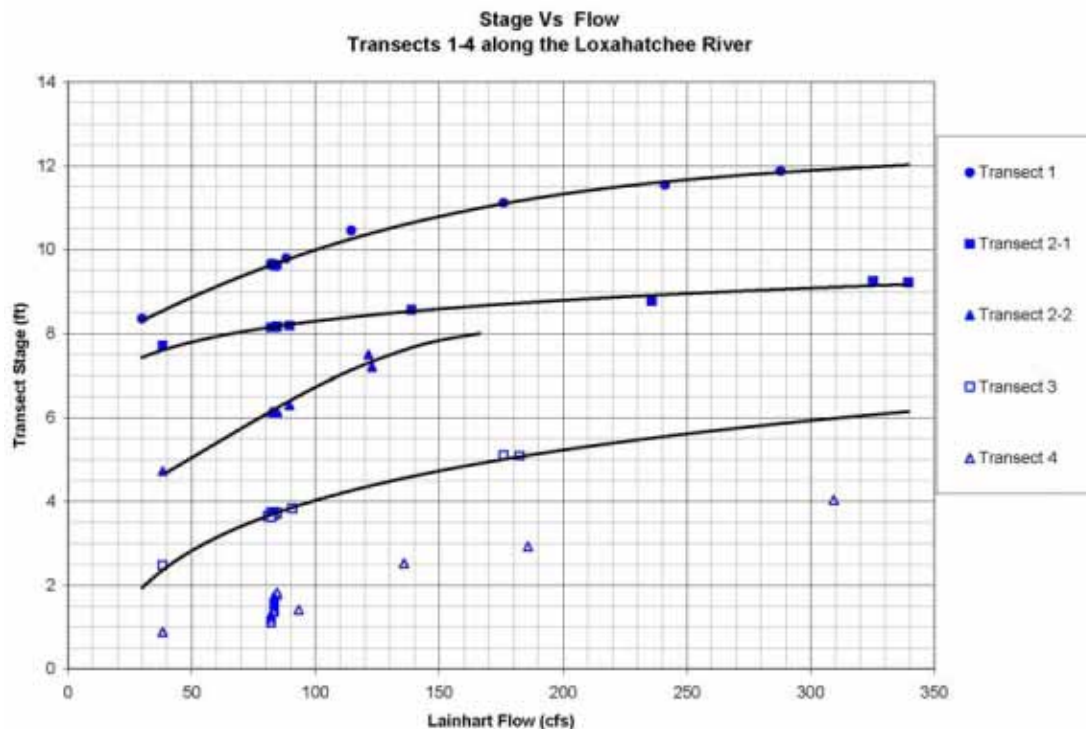


Figure 5-27. Observed Surface Water Stages at Various Flow Rates Over Lainhart Dam.

The basic assumption underpinning the strategy and approach for performing this evaluation is that by achieving hydrologic performance measures for “Floodplain Swamps” and “Hydric Hammocks,” hydrologic requirements for the entire floodplain ecosystem will be met and achieved. In **Chapter 4**, the hydroperiod requirement for a healthy floodplain swamp vegetative community in the Northwest Fork is for inundation to occur during the wet season (June through November) for 4 months to 8 months in a year. The hydrologic requirement for hydric hammocks is for the community to be inundated by major storm events for about 2 to 6 inches above the ground surface. The total number of inundation days during a year can range from less than 30 days to about 60 days, depending on the elevation of the hydric hammock community. However, the inundations do not have to be continuous. A hydroperiod diagram is presented in **Figure 5-28** which shows the range of surface or groundwater stages necessary to achieve a healthy cypress swamp and hydric hammock community. The stage is expressed as relative to the mean ground elevation of cypress swamps. The two lines in the diagram are the maximum and minimum average monthly water surface elevations. With appropriate management, this range of water stage elevations could be maintained during a normal year. Note that this diagram is not

based on any measured data. It only serves for the purpose of showing the anticipated seasonal variations. As can be seen, the inundation of the floodplain would typically occur in the wet season. However, due to the variations of rainfall from year to year, La Niña and El Niño effects can shift monthly rainfall values significantly from the average monthly rainfall for any given month. Thus, in some years, a good portion of the 4- to 8-month inundation period may occur in the dry season. Furthermore, daily fluctuations, which are not illustrated in **Figure 5-28**, may also push the stage out of the range indicated in the figure, particularly during extreme events like hurricanes.

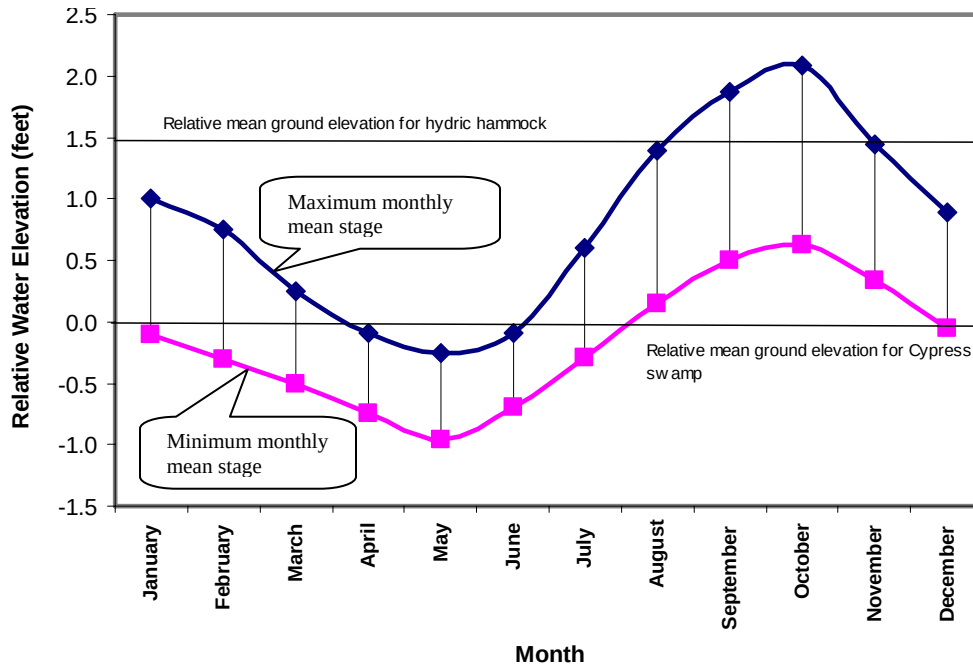


Figure 5-28. Annual Hydroperiod Diagram for Cypress Swamps and Hydric Hammocks in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

In the riverine floodplain, hydric hammock communities are generally distributed on or below the periphery of the floodplain with a mean ground elevation about 1.5 feet higher than that of cypress swamp (**Figure 5-28**). This is consistent with our field measurements taken during the flow/stage and WRAP analyses. For example, in the area near Transect 1, the mean ground elevation of cypress swamp is at 9.9 feet (ranging from 9.3 to 10.2 feet) whereas the mean elevation for hydric hammocks is 11.5 feet (ranging from 11.0 to 12.2 feet). Using the flow stage relationship presented in **Figure 5-27**, the required flow over Lainhart Dam needs to be at a minimum of 110 cfs to inundate the entire cypress swamp and to be from about 180 cfs to 400 cfs to inundate the hydric hammock communities. Our field observations indicated that 400 cfs flow created stages inundating the upper boundary of the hydric hammock communities. Thus, flows at Lainhart Dam of 110 cfs to 400 cfs for a minimum of 4 months in a year should be sufficient to provide the appropriate degree of wet season riverine floodplain inundation.

In the dry season when the floodplain does not need to be inundated (December to May), our measurements and observations indicate that flows over Lainhart Dam less than 90 cfs will not

inundate the floodplain. From a water management perspective, it is desirable to maintain a normal dry season flow variability ranging from 50 cfs to 90 cfs for the riverine floodplain. Extended inundation of the riverine floodplain during the dry season is considered harmful since it would decrease seed germination and seedling survival of the desired floodplain community species. The utilization and inundation requirement of wildlife in the floodplain will be studied and such investigations are proposed in **Chapter 10** of this document.

CHAPTER 6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
MODELING FRESHWATER FLOWS	6
The Watershed (WaSh) Model Description	6
Model Cell Structure and Cell-based Routing	7
Surface Water and Groundwater Interaction	8
Irrigation Demand and High Water Table Conditions	10
Drainage Canal Network and Canal Routing	10
Implementing the WaSh Model	12
Model Setup	12
Model Calibration and Validation	15
WaSh Model Simulation Results	23
MODELING SALINITY	28
The Hydrodynamic/Salinity (RMA) Model Description	28
Implementing the RMA Model	29
Model Setup	29
Model Verification	31
RMA Model Simulation Results	37
Long-term Salinity Management Model	47
Summary	52

List of Figures

Figure 6-1. The Relationship of the Three Models Used to Evaluate Restoration Plan Scenarios for the Ecosystems in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.	6
Figure 6-2. The Loxahatchee WaSh Model Grids: (A) JDSP Model, (B) Pal-Mar-Grove Model, (C) Jupiter Farms Model, and (D) C-18 Model.	14
Figure 6-3. Flow Monitoring Stations (green dots) and Groundwater Monitoring Stations (white dots) in the Loxahatchee River Watershed for WaSh Model Calibration.	15
Figure 6-4. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Plots for the Lainhart Dam and S-46 Stations (1/1/87–1/31/04).	19
Figure 6-5. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Plots at Kitching Creek Station (1990-2000).	21
Figure 6-6. Model Calibration and Validation Plots at Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch Stations (1981–1990)	22
Figure 6-7. Observed and Modeled Water Levels in Groundwater Monitoring Wells PB-689 and M-1234. Land Surface Elevation is 24.43 feet at PB-689 and 21.15 feet at M -1234.	23
Figure 6-8. Median Monthly Flow and the 75 th Percentile Monthly Flow over Lainhart Dam from 1965 to 2003.	27
Figure 6-9. Bathymetric Map of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary with Elevation in Feet.	29
Figure 6-10. The RMA Model Domain Map.	30
Figure 6-11. Combined Freshwater Flow from the Major Tributaries to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River for the Period May1 to August 12, 2003.	32
Figure 6-12. Tide Measurements at the Coast Guard Station (RM 0.70): Field Data and RMA Model Output. WSE = Water Supply and Environmental; NAVD = North American Vertical Datum 1988.	32
Figure 6-13. Tide Measurements at Kitching Creek Station (RM 8.13) and Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92): Field Data and RMA Model Output. WSE = Water Supply and Environmental; NAVD = North American Vertical Datum 1988.	33
Figure 6-14. Comparison of Model Output of Depth-Averaged Salinity (ppt) with Field Measurements at Fixed Elevations of Salinity (ppt) in the Water Column at Three Locations.	36
Figure 6-15. Location of the 20 Salinity and Ecological Assessment Sites.	39
Figure 6-16. The Relationship between Freshwater Flow (cfs) and Salinity (ppt) at 20 Sites.	41
Figure 6-17. Salinity Gradients by River Mile Location under Various Freshwater Flow Conditions.	42
Figure 6-18. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at RM 9.1 from October 15, 2003 to April 14, 2004.	43
Figure 6-19. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) from October 15, 2003 to April 14, 2004.	43
Figure 6-20. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) from December 11, 2002 to April 14, 2004.	44
Figure 6-21. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity in the Embayment near Pompano Drive (RM 1.77) from November 24, 2002 to April 14, 2004.	44
Figure 6-22. Salinity at Pennock Point Seagrass Transect (RM 2.44) in a Lunar Month; Total Freshwater Flow to the Loxahatchee River: 500, 800, and 1200 cfs.	46

Figure 6-23. Salinity Regimen Transition Process.....	47
Figure 6-24. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for RM 9.12.	50
Figure 6-25. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Kitching Creek (RM 8.13).....	50
Figure 6-26. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92).	51
Figure 6-27. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Pompano Drive Embayment Area (RM 1.77).....	51

List of Tables

Table 6-1. The Time Scale of the Freshwater Flow and Salinity Models.....	6
Table 6-2. The Watershed (WaSh) Model Components and Functions.	7
Table 6-3. WaSh Water Routing Operations for Each Cell Type.	8
Table 6-4. Average Annual Water Budget (inches) for the Pal-Mar and Grove Regions.	16
Table 6-5. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Performance Results.	18
Table 6-6. Flow Contributions from Each of the Basins and Major Tributaries into the Northwest Fork and Loxahatchee River and Estuary.	24
Table 6-7. Mean Monthly Flows (cfs) over Lainhart Dam from 1965 to 2003.	25
Table 6-8. Mean Monthly Flows (cfs) into the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River from Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek Stations from 1965 to 2003.	26
Table 6-9. Root Mean Square (RMS) Error and Relative RMS Error (RRE) Statistics for the RMA Model Tide Output at Three Locations.	34
Table 6-10. Comparison of RMA Model Tide Output with Field Observations at Three Locations.	35
Table 6-11. Root Mean Square (RMS) Error and Relative RMS Error (RRE) Statistics for the RMA Model Salinity Output at Three Locations.....	37
Table 6-12. Comparison of RMA Model Salinity Output with Field Observations at Three Locations.	37
Table 6-13. The 20 Salinity and Ecological Assessment Sites.....	38
Table 6-14. Tidally Averaged Salinity (ppt) vs. Freshwater Flow (cfs) for the 20 Study Sites in the Loxahatchee River.....	40
Table 6-15. Comparison of Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: December .2002 to April 2004 (517 days).	48
Table 6-16. Comparison of Dry Season Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: March through May 2003 and March through April 2004 (153 days).	49
Table 6-17. Comparison of Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: December 2002 through February 2003 and June 2003 through February 2004 (364 days).....	49

Chapter 6

Modeling Freshwater Flows and Salinity in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary

INTRODUCTION

Estuaries are the most productive ecosystems on the earth and freshwater flows are the single most important determinant of estuary health. Alterations in the timing and amount of flows will influence the overall estuary productivity and health. In the Loxahatchee River, the importance of freshwater flows has been presented in the previous chapters. Salinity in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary is controlled by both freshwater flows and tidal circulation, which represent the competition between river and ocean influences. The hydroperiods of the Loxahatchee River floodplain ecosystem also may be influenced by freshwater flows into the river. Formulation of the Preferred Restoration Scenario for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary largely depends on developing models to accurately predict long-term freshwater flow and salinity in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary.

During the past several years, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has initiated several data collection and model development projects. To date, three models have been developed to simulate freshwater flows and salinity conditions in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary (**Figure 6-1**). These models include a watershed hydrologic model (WaSh) simulating long-term freshwater flows from all tributaries into the Northwest Fork, a two-dimensional (2-D) estuarine hydrodynamic and salinity model (RMA) that simulates the influence of the freshwater flows and tide on salinity conditions within the Loxahatchee River and Estuary, and a Long-term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) that predicts daily salinity conditions according to freshwater flows from the Loxahatchee River Watershed. The LSMM was developed based on the results from the RMA model. During the model development process, a 39-year period of record (POR) consisting of daily freshwater flows into the river was simulated with the WaSh model to ensure that a wide range of climatic conditions was included. Various flow scenarios were proposed and the resulting daily salinity at key salinity and ecological assessment sites was simulated with the LSMM. An integrated ecological assessment was conducted to evaluate the effects of the flow scenarios on the health of the Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs): freshwater floodplain vegetation, fish larvae, oysters and seagrasses. This assessment is critical in selecting restoration alternatives to achieve maximum benefits to all the VECs throughout the system. The purpose of this chapter is to document the calibration and validation results of these models and to describe how these models are used to evaluate the Northwest Fork Restoration Scenarios.

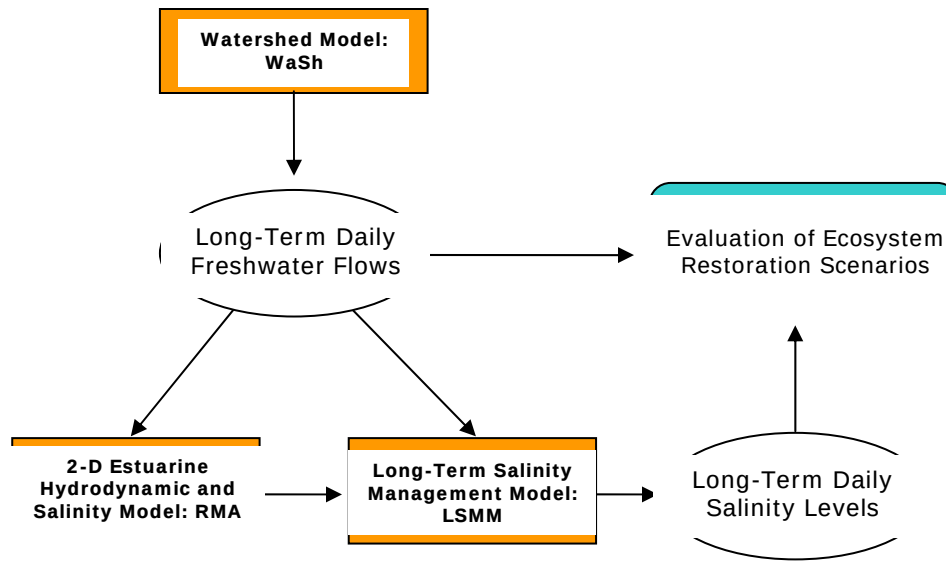


Figure 6-1. The Relationship of the Three Models Used to Evaluate Restoration Plan Scenarios for the Ecosystems in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

Table 6-1 lists the time steps and the length of simulations for each model. Because ecological assessments require long simulation periods that are beyond the capability of a multiple dimensional hydrodynamic model, the Long-term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) was designed to provide a bridge between the hydrodynamic model (RMA) and the VEC models so they could interact in the same long-term simulation period.

Table 6-1. The Time Scale of the Freshwater Flow and Salinity Models.

Study Components/Models	Spatial Resolution	Time Step	Maximum Length of Simulation
Watershed Model (WaSh)	Site-specific data	Daily or monthly	Several years to several decades
Estuary Model (RMA)	Thousands of data points that may not coincide with specific sites	One minute to 30 minutes	Several months to several years
Ecosystem Evaluation Tools (LSMM and VEC)	Site-specific data	Daily, monthly, or annual	Long-term (several decades)

MODELING FRESHWATER FLOWS

THE WATERSHED (WASH) MODEL DESCRIPTION

Freshwater flows from major tributaries of the Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River and Estuary are simulated with the watershed (WaSh) model. This model was developed based on restructuring the HSPF (Hydrologic Simulation Program – Fortran; Donigian et al. 1984) into a cell-based system with the addition of a groundwater model and a full dynamic channel routing model (Wan et al. 2003). The WaSh model is capable of simulating hydrology in watersheds with high groundwater tables and dense drainage canal networks, which is typical in South Florida. The model consists of four basic components: (1) a cell-based representation of the watershed

basin land surface, (2) a groundwater component that is consistent with the basin cell structure, (3) a surface water drainage system, and (4) water management practices. Key features of the model are surface water and groundwater interactions, irrigation demands, and transfers between elements of the surface water drainage network. For each cell, the model uses an infiltration routine to determine the amount of rainfall that infiltrates into the groundwater, evaporates into the atmosphere, or drains to the surface water system. The HSPF (Version 12) modules PWATER and IWATER are used for this portion of the model. The infiltrated water is routed to a groundwater model that represents the unconfined aquifer in the watershed. The groundwater model receives the infiltrated water, exchanges groundwater between cells, and also exchanges water between surface water flow and groundwater flow. The surface water drainage system consists of a cell-based system and a reach-based system. The reach-based system is typically configured to follow the major canals, streams, and rivers and supports branches and common flow structures. The water quality component of WaSh is built on the surface water, groundwater, and channel flow components of the model. However, the water quality component of the model was not implemented in this application which focuses on hydrologic simulation. The WaSh model is supported by a Graphic User Interface (GUI) that was developed as an ArcView extension. The GUI handles file management, model configuration, execution, and post processing. The WaSh model also supports numerous water management practices such as irrigation, reservoirs, Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) and land use changes. Key components of the WaSh model are summarized in **Table 6-2**.

Table 6-2. The Watershed (WaSh) Model Components and Functions.

Model Component	Modeling Approach	Functions
Surface Water Flow	PWATER and IWATER of HSPF with PQUAL, SEDMNT, IQUAL, and SOLIDS for water quality	High water table algorithms of HSPF
Groundwater Flow	A new 2-D unconfined groundwater flow model with a prescribed leaching function for water quality constituents	Canal drainage and recharge
Channel Flow	A new 1-D fully dynamic shallow wave model with a scalar mass transport function for water quality	Structures, branching, point sources
Water Management	Reservoirs, Stormwater Treatment Areas, irrigation supply and demands, land use changes	Executed by an ArcView GUI

Model Cell Structure and Cell-based Routing

The WaSh model uses a uniform structured grid network. Each cell represents a discrete part of the model domain and has associated physical characteristics such as land use, soil type, ground elevation, impervious area, and a representative ground slope. Hydrological parameters relating runoff, infiltration, and evaporation are specific to these attributes, particularly land use types. For example, swamps and forests have different model parameters so that their hydrologic responses to climatic input can be properly simulated. If tertiary canals are present in the cell, then the length and width of canals in the cell are computed and added as a cell attribute. Generally, the cell attributes are obtained by combining the cell network with Geographic Information System (GIS) coverage for each of the physical characteristics. For the purpose of routing the simulated daily runoff from each cell, a special cell attribute is assigned to indicate where runoff from that cell is directed. Each cell is labeled as one of three primary types: (1) free

cell, (2) canal cell, or (3) reach cell. A free cell represents an area of the basin that does not contain canals. Canal cells are any cells with tertiary canals that are not coincident with the reaches. Reach cells are cells that contain a reach (major canals) in the primary canal system. Some secondary canals can be included in the reach system. These labels are needed to designate the types of surface water and groundwater interactions that may occur for a given cell. **Table 6-3** lists the methods in which water is routed for each type of cell.

Table 6-3. WaSh Water Routing Operations for Each Cell Type.

Cell Type	Flow Routing Operations
Free	Infiltration is directed to cell groundwater Surface water is directed to a nearby cell's canals
Canal	Infiltration is directed to cell groundwater Surface water is directed to cell canals Groundwater can be exchanged with canal surface water Surface water can be exchanged between the canal and the reach
Reach	Infiltration is directed to cell groundwater Surface water is directed to the cell's reach or nearby cell's canals Groundwater can be exchanged with canal or reach surface water Reach water can be exchanged with canal water

Surface Water and Groundwater Interaction

The surface water and groundwater is modeled in the same grid network. For each cell, WaSh uses the PWATER and IWATER modules of HSPF (Version 12) to simulate surface water hydrology (**Table 6-2**). A detailed description of these modules is available in the HSPF user's manual (Donigian et al. 1984). Version 12 includes recent model enhancements that simulate irrigation demand, high water tables, and wetland conditions that are common in South Florida (Aqua Terra 1996, 1998). The HSPF routine is implemented in one-hour time step for 24-hour blocks. Thus, the HSPF-based routine is applied daily for each cell and water balance, consisting of rainfall, evaporation, soil storage, surface runoff, and infiltration to groundwater. At the end of each one-day simulation period, the accumulated surface runoff and infiltration are routed to the drainage and groundwater systems, respectively. All HSPF model parameters are calibrated and assigned to each cell based on the land use and soil type characteristics as additional cell attributes.

The groundwater module in WaSh is based on the numerical solution of the standard groundwater flow equation for an unconfined aquifer. The model operates on a daily time step, during which it receives infiltrated water, loses water to evaporation, and exchanges water with adjacent cells and with canals. The basic governing equation for the groundwater module is:

$$\rho \frac{\partial h}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} K_x (h - h_c) \frac{\partial h}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial}{\partial y} K_y (h - h_c) \frac{\partial h}{\partial y} + S_i - S_e + S_c + S_r \quad [1]$$

where h is the groundwater elevation, ρ is the porosity, K_x and K_y are the hydraulic conductivity in the x -, and y - directions, h_c is the aquifer base elevation, and S_i , S_e , S_c , and S_r are source/sink terms representing infiltration, evaporation, exchanges with the canal cells, and exchanges with reaches. The governing equation is solved numerically using the basin cell structure. A second-order finite difference approximation is used for the second derivatives, and an explicit

backward difference approximation is used for the time derivative. During each time step the right-hand side of the equation is evaluated based on current time level conditions, and the new water elevation is found. By designating the equation parameters and water elevation h for each cell by the indexes $_{ij}$, and the time level by the index ^{m} , the resulting finite difference equation for each cell is:

$$\frac{1}{\rho_{i,j}} \frac{h_{i,j}^{m+1} - h_{i,j}^m}{\Delta t} = K_x \left[\frac{\left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m + h_{i+1,j}^m}{2} - h_c \right) \left(\frac{h_{i+1,j}^m - h_{i,j}^m}{\Delta x} \right) - \frac{\left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m + h_{i-1,j}^m}{2} - h_c \right) \left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m - h_{i-1,j}^m}{\Delta x} \right)}{\Delta x} \right] + \quad [2]$$

$$K_y \left[\frac{\left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m + h_{i,j+1}^m}{2} - h_c \right) \left(\frac{h_{i,j+1}^m - h_{i,j}^m}{\Delta y} \right) - \frac{\left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m + h_{i,j-1}^m}{2} - h_c \right) \left(\frac{h_{i,j}^m - h_{i,j-1}^m}{\Delta y} \right)}{\Delta y} \right] + S_{i,j}^m - S_{e,i,j}^m + S_{c,i,j}^m + S_{r,i,j}^m$$

where Δt is the time step (one day), and Δx and Δy are the grid cell dimensions in each direction. During each time step the right-hand side of the equation is evaluated based on current time level conditions, and the new water elevation is found by solving for $h_{i,j}^{m+1}$. When an active cell is adjacent to the grid boundary or to an inactive cell, a no-flow condition is imposed.

Implementation of the groundwater model has required some modification to the P WATER module, primarily to account for evaporation from groundwater and also to link to the irrigation and high water table modules. The original HSPF groundwater algorithm is based on groundwater storage, AGWS. Changes to the storage for each time step are due to infiltration (GWI), evaporation (BASET), and flow to surface water (AGWO). Infiltration is predicted using subroutines representing the Stanford Watershed Model approach. Evaporation is modeled as a loss term, which is based on a model parameter Basetp. The discharge is based on a rating curve, specified by the model parameters AGWRC and KVARy. This groundwater discharge algorithm in HSPF has been disabled and replaced by the equivalent parameters in WaSh. For each of the cells, two of the source terms on the right-hand side of the equation, $S_{i,j}^m$ and $S_{e,i,j}^m$ are set equal to output variables from HSPF P WATER groundwater subroutine related to infiltration (GWI) and evaporation (BASET). The groundwater elevation $h_{i,j}$ replaces the storage variable, AGWS, and when combined with the two source terms, represent essentially the same processes as AGWO in HSPF. However, this modification provides a process-based approach to represent surface water and groundwater interactions when compared with the rating curve-based groundwater discharge approach in HSPF. For example, the source/sink terms for a canal/reach cell are now defined as:

$$S_{c,i,j}^m = \frac{\Delta H C_c}{A} \quad [3]$$

$$S_{r,i,j}^m = \frac{\Delta H C_r}{A} \quad [4]$$

where ΔH is the difference in groundwater elevation and canal or reach surface water elevation, which are dynamically tracked in WaSh, A is the cell area, and C_c and C_r are the conductance of canal or reach, respectively. The conductance is physically related to the hydraulic conductivity of the stream bed material and the length and width of the canal. In the Loxahatchee River

watershed, the hydraulic conductivity of the deep canals (reaches) and shallow canals is different. The hydraulic conductivity and canal dimension are provided as input data for each cell according to the basin hydrography and land use.

Irrigation Demand and High Water Table Conditions

The WaSh groundwater module also has been developed to interact with the irrigation module and the high water table module of the HSPF. WaSh simulates the irrigation demand by monitoring the moisture in the upper and lower soil zones and generating a demand for water based on the existing moisture relative to the desired moisture level that is specified by the user. After the irrigation demand is calculated, the algorithm tries to meet the demand by supplying water from a number of sources. Groundwater can serve as both an irrigation source and an irrigation sink (receptor) in the HSPF irrigation algorithm. In each case, the amount of water demanded from, or applied to, the groundwater is extracted or added to the cell's groundwater volume. At the beginning of each day, the irrigation demand is calculated and if groundwater is affected, then the groundwater elevation $h_{i,j}$ is adjusted according to the following equation:

$$h_{i,j} = h_{i,j} + \Delta V / \rho \quad [5]$$

where ΔV is the volume (expressed as depth) of groundwater irrigation demand or application for the cell calculated by the HSPF irrigation module, and ρ is the aquifer porosity as defined previously in Equation [1].

The high water table module in the HSPF requires certain vertically referenced parameters and variables to allow for exchange of water between storage components when the groundwater level interferes with the upper and lower zone storage (UZS and LZS). For applications in WaSh, the vertical referencing is already completed, as the surface elevation (a cell attribute) and the groundwater elevation h are all referenced to the same datum. Thus, the only required modification is to provide these two variables to the high water table algorithms. The HSPF high water table algorithm then calculates the exchange between the storage zones and the groundwater. The groundwater elevation is updated with Equation [5], where ΔV now represents the exchange between the upper and lower storage zones.

Drainage Canal Network and Canal Routing

The surface water drainage canal network is modeled implicitly in the cell-based system and explicitly in the reach-based system. The major channels are simulated in the reach-based system which consists of a series of reaches and nodes. This drainage system is separated from the cell system, but its elements (reaches and nodes) overlay the cell network and coincide with a subset of the cells. This system is typically configured to follow the major canals, streams, and rivers in the basin. The small or tertiary canals are represented in the cell-based system. These canals receive surface and subsurface runoff from the adjacent cells and exchange water with neighboring canal cells.

Flow through the reach-based systems is modeled using the continuity equation, Equation [6], and the depth- and width-averaged shallow water wave equation, Equation [7]. The governing equations are:

$$\frac{\partial wh}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial q}{\partial s} + Q_e \quad [6]$$

$$\frac{\partial q}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial uq}{\partial s} + \frac{gw}{2} \frac{\partial h^2}{\partial s} = -w\tau_b - gwh \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial s} \quad [7]$$

where q is the flow, u is the width- and depth-average flow velocity, g is the acceleration due to gravity, w is the canal width, h is the water depth (referenced to the canal bed), η is the bed elevation, t is time, and s is distance along the canal. The bottom stress τ_b is based on a Manning's n formulation. Boundary conditions can be one of two types: a specified flow or a specified water elevation. Specified flow conditions are typically used when a flow structure controls the flow out of the system. The water elevation (or head) condition is used when the system drains unobstructed into a receiving water body. The governing equations are solved using a finite volume procedure, with the reach and node system for a single branch equivalent to a finite volume staggered grid approach.

The source term Q_e in the continuity equation, Equation [6], consists of point sources or sinks, exchange with groundwater, and exchange with canals from the cell-based system. The units for the source term are flow per unit length of channel. The general form for the source term can be expressed as:

$$Q_e = Q_{kp} + Q_{ki} + Q_{r,gw} \quad [8]$$

where Q_{kp} are external sources or sinks (user-specified time series), $Q_{r,gw}$ is the exchange with the groundwater and is equal to S_r , the exchange calculated in the groundwater model, Equation [1], and Q_{ki} is the exchange with the canal cells where the tertiary canals are connected with the reach.

When the reach-based system contains branches, the flow in each branch is determined independently. The method for estimating the flow between branches depends on whether the flow is natural at the connection or whether a structure exists. When a structure is present at the branch connections, the flow is determined using a rating curve specific to the structure. Since the flow can be bi-directional, the flow direction for the time step is first determined from the water elevations in the reaches at the branch juncture. The water elevations for headwater and tailwater are then assigned appropriately and the rating curve is used to calculate the flow. It is noted that structures can also occur at any node along the reach node system. When a structure is present, the flow at that node is determined at the beginning of the time step using the structure flow formulas and its value replaces the momentum equation for that node. When no structures are present at the branch connections, the flow is solved using the shallow water wave equation, Equation [7], and the continuity equation, Equation [6]. The two equations are solved explicitly for the flow between branches using the two reaches that connect the branches. The calculated flow in the 'local' explicit solution is then used as a boundary condition for the implicit solution for the upstream branch and as a source to the downstream reach.

Flow in the cell-based canal system (i.e., the tertiary canals) is represented in the WaSh model using the same governing equations and numerical scheme as used for the reach-based system. To implement this approach, the cell-based canal parameters are first mapped into a

‘local’ branch and reach network. When this mapping is completed, the solution algorithm for the reach system can be applied to the local system with only minor modifications to the downstream boundary condition and the source terms. The source term in the cell canal would then include surface runoff simulated with HSPF routines.

The tertiary canals are characterized by the total length LC of these canals within the cell, the average canal width w_c , the average canal bottom elevation, and a critical or ‘design’ water depth. These parameters are attributes of the cell. They can be obtained by mapping GIS hydrologic data onto the basin grid and then specifying widths, bottom elevations, and critical depths based on the cell land use. The surface water elevation is the dependent variable in the system. In order to map these parameters into a branched network, each cell’s canals are designated as a single reach. The reach parameters for the cell are determined as follows:

If the total canal length L is less than the cell length LC , then:

$$\Delta s = L, \quad \text{and } w = w_c \quad [9]$$

If the total canal length L is greater than the cell length LC , then:

$$\Delta s = LC, \quad \text{and } w = w_c * \frac{L}{LC} \quad [10]$$

After the cell-based canal parameters are transformed into reach parameters, the connectivity of the branch network is determined. The connectivity of the cells is used directly to establish branches and the assignments of reaches within each branch. The canal-to-canal flow is generally towards the reaches, but the instantaneous flow is determined by the difference in relative surface water elevations between hydraulically connected canal cells. When canal cells exist in cells with reaches, the canals are assumed to be hydraulically connected to the reach via a structure. It is in these cells that water can flow between the canals and reaches. Between the reaches and tertiary canals, the flow is assumed to be controlled by pumps. The pumping capacity is derived from land use types, representing the design (or estimated) drainage capacities for the canal systems associated with each land use. The drainage capacities of the major land use types are the key parameters for calibrating the magnitude of peak flow during a high magnitude and low frequency event.

IMPLEMENTING THE WaSh MODEL

Model Setup

Delineation of the Loxahatchee River Watershed is described in detail in **Chapter 2**. The WaSh model was implemented into four regions of the Loxahatchee River Watershed (**Figure 6-2**). These regions include all of the major drainage basins except the Coastal Basin. The JDSP region (A) includes the North Fork, Kitch Gauge, Park River, and the Loxahatchee Estuary basins. The Pal-Mar and Grove region (B) includes the Pal-Mar, Historic Cypress Creek, Grove West, and Grove East basins. The Jupiter Farms region (C) includes the Jupiter Farms and the Wild and Scenic basins. The C-18 region (D) represents the C-18/Corbett Basin and flow diversion from the L-8/Grassy Basin. Detailed description of these sub-basins is provided in in

Chapter 2. The cells for each of the regions are shown in **Figure 6-2**. The cell size was 750 ft by 750 ft for the Jupiter Farms region, 1000 ft by 1000 ft for the JDSP region and Pal-Mal/Grove region, and 1500 ft by 1500 ft for the C-18 region.

Input data required to generate the model grid include primary and secondary basin coverages, polygon features with basin name attributes, hydrography including streams and canals as line or polyline features, the 2000 base land use coverage, soil coverage, and land surface elevation. The land surface contour was resampled (100-foot intervals) based on 5 ft by 5 ft Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data to get a smooth land surface profile and to remove data artifacts. For limited areas where LIDAR data are not available, the 1-foot contour was used. Using the ArcView GUI, these coverages are overlaid to get an aerial extent of the model domain along with cell attributes of land use type, soil, canal length and width, and elevation.

When creating the primary reaches for the basins, the hydrography theme is overlaid on the grid and those grid cells intersecting with polylines of the hydrography theme are classified as canal cells. The canal length in a grid cell is calculated with all the intersecting canal segments inside a grid cell. Reach cells are created by digitizing major river segments and canals starting from the basin outlet. After digitizing, the length of a reach, which is typically the grid cell size, is specified to allow for redistribution of the nodes along the reach network. Each of the reach segments has a reach ID along with the width and bottom elevation assigned according to the cross-section of the major canal and river segment. In **Figure 6-2**, the cells are color coded to represent free cells (turquoise), canal cells (green) and reach cells (pink). The surface elevation of cells is used to create flow paths. In general, flow in free cells is routed to the nearest canal or reach cell (**Figure 6-2**, Region B). A no flow boundary condition is imposed along the boundary cells.

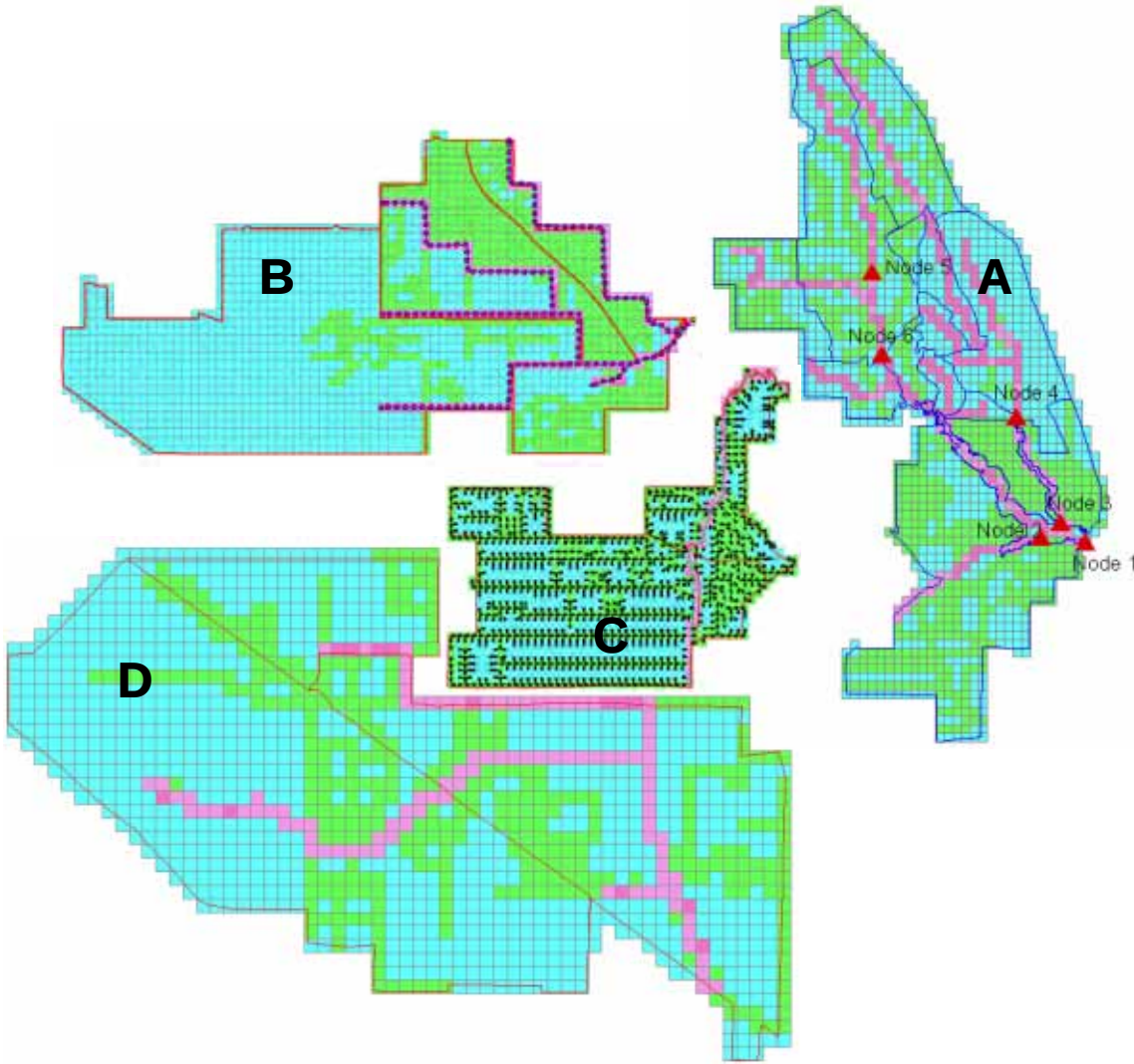


Figure 6-2. The Loxahatchee WaSh Model Grids: (A) JDSP Model, (B) Pal-Mar-Grove Model, (C) Jupiter Farms Model, and (D) C-18 Model.

Note: Free cells, canal cells, and reach cells are color coded turquoise, green, and pink, respectively. In Region A, the thin blue line represents the model boundary, and the nodes represent examples of possible model output locations. In Region B, the nodes are shown in the reach system. In Region C, flow routing directions are shown with arrows.

Each of the cells is linked with a Master Lookup Database consisting of HSPF parameters, evapotranspiration (ET) coefficients, canal parameters, and aquifer properties. Based on the grid cell attribute, this master database is queried to populate the respective parameters for each cell in the grid. Some of the model parameters can be changed during the model calibration process.

The other important input data required by the model are rainfall and ET. These data were obtained from the District's South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM) for the period from 1965 to 2000. The dataset was extended to March 2004 with available rainfall and ET data stored in the District's DBHYDRO database in the model area. Daily rainfall is disaggregated into hourly rainfall based on an analysis of available hourly rainfall distribution in South Florida.

Model Calibration and Validation

The Loxahatchee WaSh model has been calibrated with five flow monitoring stations (**Figure 6-3**). Flow data collected at the G-92 Structure were not used since it was determined that the data are likely not accurate. The Kitching Creek station started to collect data in the early 1980s. The data are not continuous until 1990, and thus only the data collected after 1990 are used for calibration and validation of the JDSP model. The Hobe Grove and the Cypress Creek stations have been collecting data since 1980; however, there are significant periods of time when data were not collected or are missing. Data collected from the flow stations at S-46 and Lainhart Dam have the longest record. Only the data collected after 1987 were used for WaSh model calibration and validation due to structure changes of G-92. All the collected flow data were evaluated for their validity before being used for model calibration and validation. In addition, water level data collected in two groundwater wells (PB-689 and M-1234) were used. PB-689 is located in the C-18/Corbett basin where the land use is dominated by wetland whereas M-1234 is located in a forested area of the Cypress Creek basin.

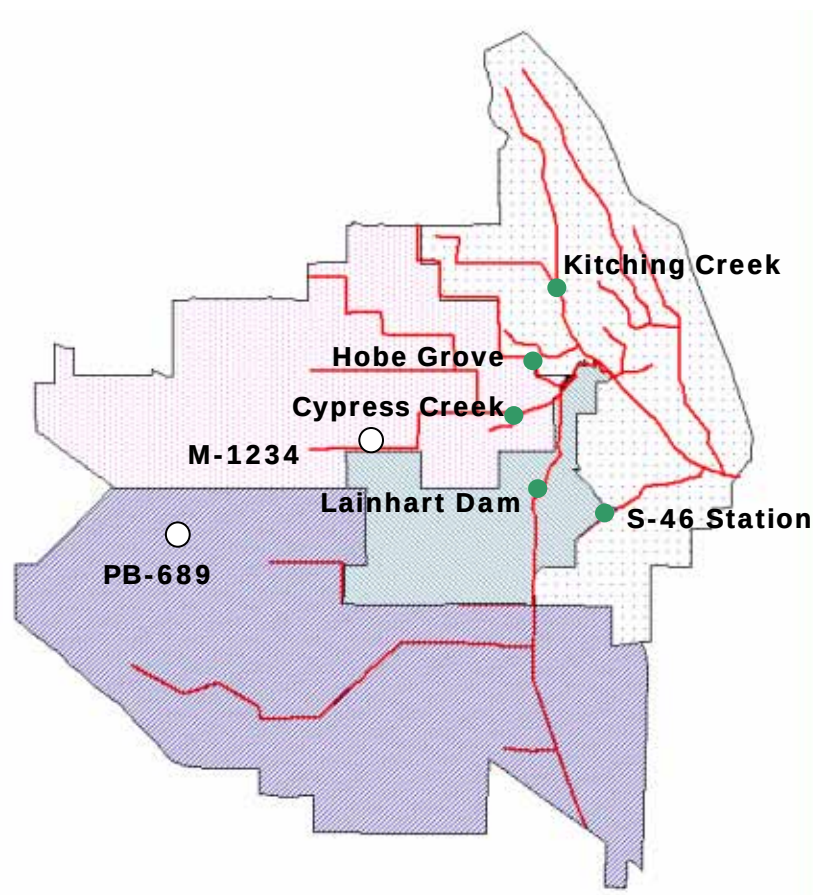


Figure 6-3. Flow Monitoring Stations (green dots) and Groundwater Monitoring Stations (white dots) in the Loxahatchee River Watershed for WaSh Model Calibration.

Model calibration involves conducting a model simulation of each region for the period of record (POR) and comparing the simulated flow with the observed flow. The model parameters are then adjusted in subsequent simulations to improve the shape of simulated flow time-series

until the model output meets the performance criteria. In general, the hydrological calibration is conducted in two main steps:

1. Macro Scale: Adjust hydrological parameters to obtain the long-term basin water budget.
2. Micro Scale: Fine tune model parameters to get the best match between observed and simulated flow. At this stage, the shape of the hydrograph is adjusted with respect to peak and base flow. Groundwater levels were also checked with data from observation wells.

In the first step, the long-term water budget is used to ensure that the model calibrations are not biased for one type of climatic condition. Another component of the water budget calibration is verifying that the fractions of groundwater and surface water contribution to runoff properly reflect the partitioning between surface runoff and subsurface runoff. For this component of the simulation, the average annual water budget for each of the land uses as well as for the entire watershed were used to make decisions to adjust parameters. An initial run of the model was made using model parameters that were calibrated in the St. Lucie Estuary Watershed (Wan et al. 2003). The most sensitive model parameters in completing the water budget calibrations are evaporation coefficients for individual months and infiltration parameters of the HSPF. An example of the water budget is provided in **Table 6-4** for the Pal-Mar and Grove regions. The water budget is partitioned into the Pal-Mar and historic Cypress Creek basins, which consist mostly of wetland and forest, and the Grove West and Grove East basins, which consist mostly of irrigated citrus groves. Citrus irrigation significantly increases the runoff from a water budget perspective.

Table 6-4. Average Annual Water Budget (inches) for the Pal-Mar and Grove Regions.

Basins	Rainfall	Irrigation	ET	Runoff		Storage
				Surface	Subsurface	
Pal-Mar & Historic Cypress Creek	61.2	--	44.9	13.6	2.6	1.7
Grove West & Grove East	61.2	8.2	40.2	16.9	11.9	0.2

After the long-term calibration is completed, the next step is to validate the model by matching the simulated daily flow hydrograph to the measured daily flow values recorded for each of the flow stations. The more significant parameters to be calibrated during this step includes the groundwater cell conductance parameters that control the rate at which groundwater flows to the canals, the irrigation parameters, and the canal pumping parameters that control the rate at which tertiary canals flow to primary reaches. To a lesser degree, the length-scale parameter associated with surface drainage (LSUR) has an effect on the shape of the hydrographs. Reducing the LSUR increases runoff and decreases infiltration. The model validation process is similar to the calibration process, except that a different POR is used for the relevant input data. The model parameters are kept constant. Model validation is considered complete if the simulation meets the performance criteria. Otherwise, the model is recalibrated and validated.

Model calibration and validation performance are evaluated with two of three criteria recommended by the ASCE Task Committee on Definition of Criteria for Evaluation of Watershed Models (1993): the deviation of volume, the Nash-Sutcliffe coefficient, and the coefficient of daily gain. The coefficient of gain from the daily mean is not used because of its similarities with the Nash-Sutcliffe coefficient in this particular case. Instead, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is calculated as part of the hydrologic analysis.

The deviation of volume, DV , quantifies the difference in observed and predicted water volumes and is calculated:

$$DV = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (Vm - Vs)}{\sum_{i=1}^n Vm} \times 100\% \quad [11]$$

where DV is the deviation of volume (%), Vm is the measured water yield for the period of comparison, and Vs is the modeled water yield for the period of comparison. The calibration and validation is considered satisfactory if the absolute value of DV is less than 10 percent. Donigian et al. (1984) indicated that HSPF calibration is considered to be very good if the absolute value of DV is less than 10 percent, and good when DV is between 10 and 15 percent.

The Nash-Sutcliffe coefficient, NS , measures how well the daily simulated flow corresponds with the measured flow. This coefficient is calculated:

$$NS = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (Qm - Qs)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (Qm - Q)^2} \quad [12]$$

where Qm is the measured daily discharge, Qs is the simulated daily discharge, and Q is the average measured daily discharge. A NS value of 1.0 indicates a perfect fit, while a value of 0 indicates that the model is predicting no better than the average of the observed data. Daily flow calibration and validation is considered to be satisfactory if NS value is larger than 0.4.

The model calibration and validation performance results are summarized in **Table 6-5**. Note that during the period of model calibration or validation, those days with missing or problematic data were excluded, so the count of days indicates the number of days with valid flow data. In general, the model simulates daily flow reasonably well with R^2 and NS values of most of the stations above 0.5 for both calibration and validation analyses except for the Hobe Grove station.

Table 6-5. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Performance Results.

Monitoring Station	S-46	Lainhart Dam	Cypress Creek Station	Hobe Grove Station	Kitching Creek Station
Calibration Results					
Period	1987–1996	1987–1996	1980–1986	1981–1985	1990–1996
Number of days	3193	3193	1680	1058	2192
DV (%)	–1.78	–0.83	–7.50	–14.67	0.21
NS	0.69	0.47	0.43	0.08	0.51
R ²	0.71	0.53	0.53	0.54	0.51
Validation Results					
Period	1997–2004	1997–2004	1987–1990	1987–1989	1997–2000
Number of days	2587	2587	990	687	1461
DV (%)	12.52	9.43	–2.87	10.66	9.09
NS	0.71	0.56	0.61	0.27	0.54
R ²	0.73	0.32	0.72	0.63	0.57

To aid in the evaluation of model calibration and validation performance, three types of plots are prepared:

1. Daily flow distribution: Plot of the distribution of the measured and modeled daily flow to visually examine the overall model performance. Particular attentions are paid to the low flow regime.
2. Double mass curve: To compare the measured and modeled daily flow in a cumulative manner along with increasing rainfall. This is a visual check of the DV calculated in **Table 6-5**.
3. Daily flow time series of modeled flow and observed flow for selected periods.

Figure 6-4 includes the three plots for the Lainhart Dam and S-46 stations, which provide the longest period of flow data for model calibration and validation. In general, the values of DV and NS during the calibration and validation periods show that the calibration and validation of the WaSh model are acceptable at with respect to simulation of daily flow at Lainhart Dam and S-46.. Panels **A** and **B** in **Figure 6-4** compare the frequency distribution of the modeled versus the observed daily flows. A slight high frequency of flow in the range of about 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) is predicted by the model at Lainhart Dam, possibly due to low flow leakage at the structure becoming significant but is not measured. The double mass curves for both stations (**Figure 6-4**, Panels **C** and **D**) show satisfactory model performance when comparing the patterns of the increase of modeled and measured flow with increasing rainfall. At Lainhart Dam, the model over-predicted flow for a 3-month period during the wet season of 1999. This has been attributed partly to the 9 percent of DV and 0.32 of R² during the validation period (**Table 6-5**). Panels **E** and **F** in **Figure 6-4** are the time-series plots of measured flow and modeled flow from 2000 through 2003. In general, the simulated daily flow agrees well with the measured daily flow except for a few occasions when the model under- or over-estimated flow.

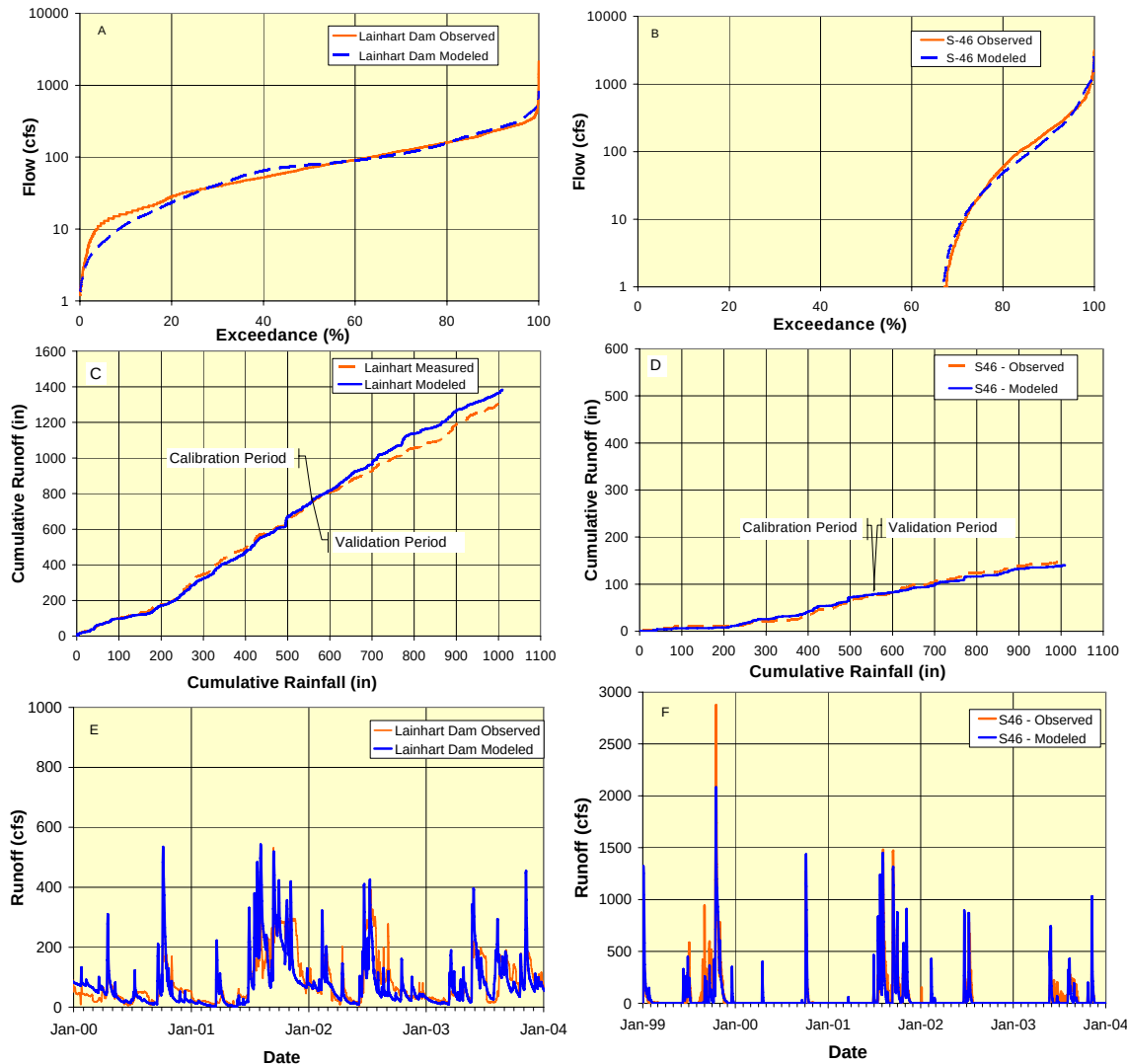


Figure 6-4. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Plots for the Lainhart Dam and S-46 Stations (1/1/87–1/31/04).

Note: (A) Daily flow distribution at Lainhart Dam station, (B) Daily flow distribution at S-46 station, (C) Double mass curve at Lainhart Dam station, (D) Double mass curve at S-46 station, (E) Time-series plot at Lainhart Dam station (2000–2004), and (F) Time-series plot at S-46 station (2000–2004).

Calibration of the C-18 and Jupiter Farms portion of the model is especially difficult because the Jupiter Farms Basin, the C-18/Corbett Basin, and the Grassy Waters Preserve Basin are hydrologically connected. The model represented the G-92 Structure by using the ‘special structure option. In its simplest form, the special structure consisted of a weir with a 12-foot elevation located in a reach consistent with its location along the C-18 Canal. When the water elevation in the C-18 Canal is above 12 feet, the weir structure will allow water from the C-18 Canal to flow out of the basin. This flow was subsequently used as input into the Jupiter Farms Basin as the model boundary condition. The flow rate is determined internally by the model, and

is dependent on the prescribed weir configuration and the water elevation in the C-18 Canal. The width of the special weir was adjusted in a series of simulations until approximately 50 cfs of water flows during normal operations and a maximum of approximately 400 cfs flows under the flood control mode.

Similarly, for the inter-basin transfer of water from the Grassy Waters Preserve (West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area) into the C-18 Canal, a special structure was imposed in a separate model set up for the L-8 Basin to allow for a time series of flow as the boundary condition for the C-18 Basin model. Water flow was based on stage in the Water Catchment Area. According to a water budget model developed for the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area (Sculley 1995), an annual contribution of 20,000 ac-ft of water from the Water Catchment Area to the C-18 Basin during April 1992 to March 1995 was used as a target to calibrate the special structure. The time-series plots for Lainhart Dam and S-46 stations (**Figure 6-4**, Panels **E** and **F**) indicate that the special structures provide a reasonable estimation of inter-basin transfers over the G-92 Structure and through the existing culverts in Grassy Waters Preserve into the C-18 Basin.

The Kitching Creek station collects flow from a large area dominated by forest and wetland. **Figure 6-5** presents the performance of the model calibrated and validated at Kitching Creek. Overall, the model is capable of simulating flow fairly well in this area. The daily flow distribution of the modeled flow matches the measured flow very well. The double mass curves are consistent with 0.21 percent of *DV* for calibration and 9.09 percent for validation shown in **Table 6-5**. However, the time-series plot (**Figure 6-5**, Panel **C**) did show that in 1999, a significant event is underestimated by the model. This underestimation is also seen in the simulations of S-46 and Lainhart Dam, implying that such deviations are likely related to the poor quality of rainfall data in that period.

The plots for the Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch stations are shown in **Figure 6-6**. The plots for the Cypress Creek station are consistent with the model calibration and validation performance measures shown in **Table 6-5**. Model calibration and validation at the Hobe Grove Ditch station is considered to be fair for the total volume. Daily flow calibration, however, did not meet the performance criteria. This is likely due to the quality of the data collected at the site. The Hobe Grove Ditch dataset is obtained from a stage–flow relationship downstream from several culverts that discharge from Gulf Stream Grove (owned by the District) and the structure owned by the Hobe St. Lucie Water Control District. Measuring flows under these conditions is challenging due to the complexity of the hydrologic connections and grove operations along with slight tidal influence in the downstream area. The stage-flow relationship is not as accurate as other flow gauges in the District. For example, in 1987 the Hobe Grove Ditch station failed to collect accurate data during several significant storm events; these significant events were accurately recorded by the nearby Cypress Creek station (**Figure 6-6**, Panels **E** and **F**). Also note that land use in Hobe Grove basin is predominantly citrus. The hydrologic processes for this land use type have been simulated well by WaSh in its application in the St. Lucie Estuary watershed (Wan et al. 2003). In the case of Hobe Grove Ditch, the simulated data are considered to be acceptable in light of the complex tidal influence and poor quality of data collected at this site.

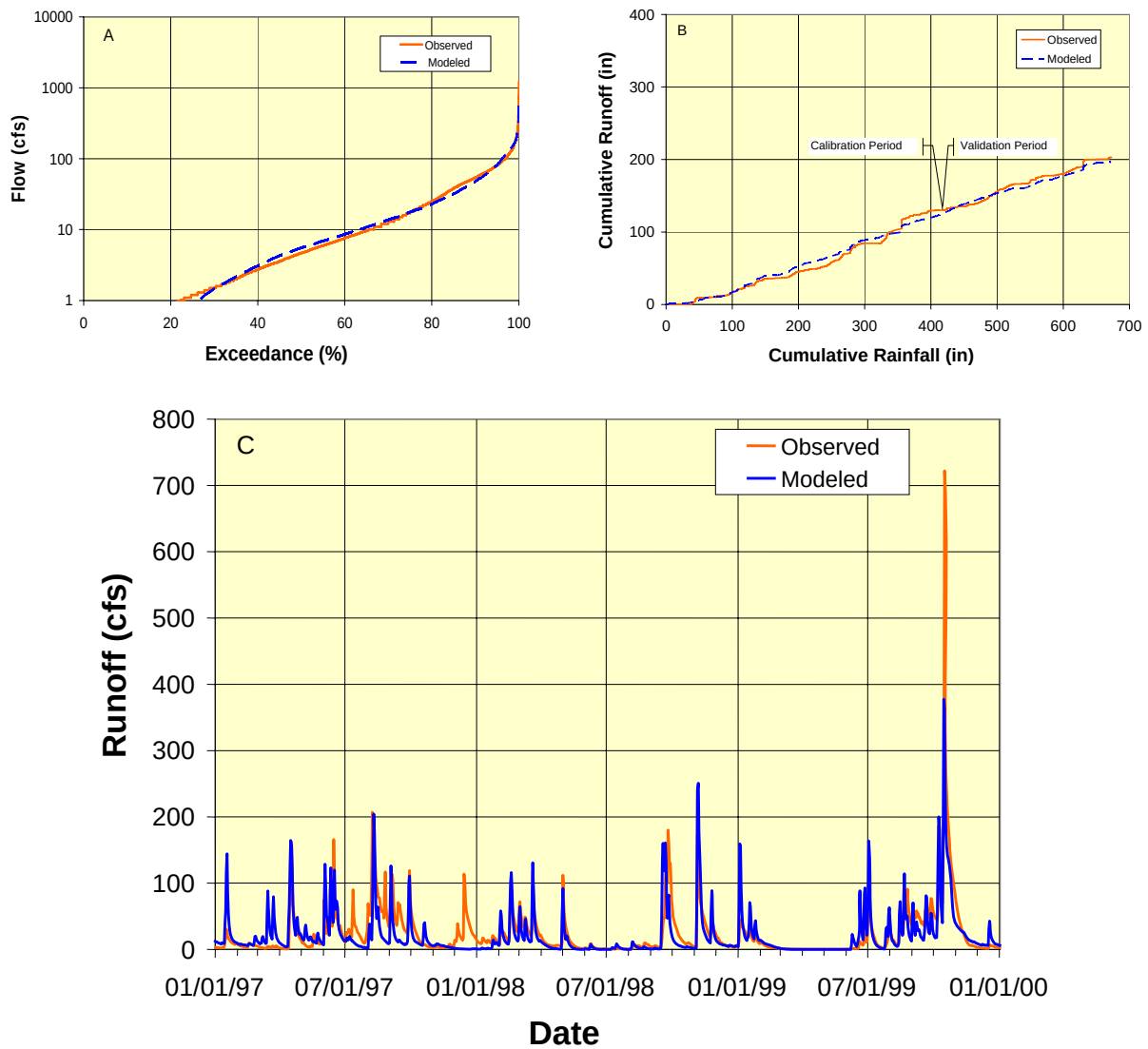


Figure 6-5. WaSh Model Calibration and Validation Plots at Kitching Creek Station (1990-2000).

Note: (A) Daily Flow Distribution, (B) Double Mass Curve, and (C) Time-Series Plot (1997-2000).

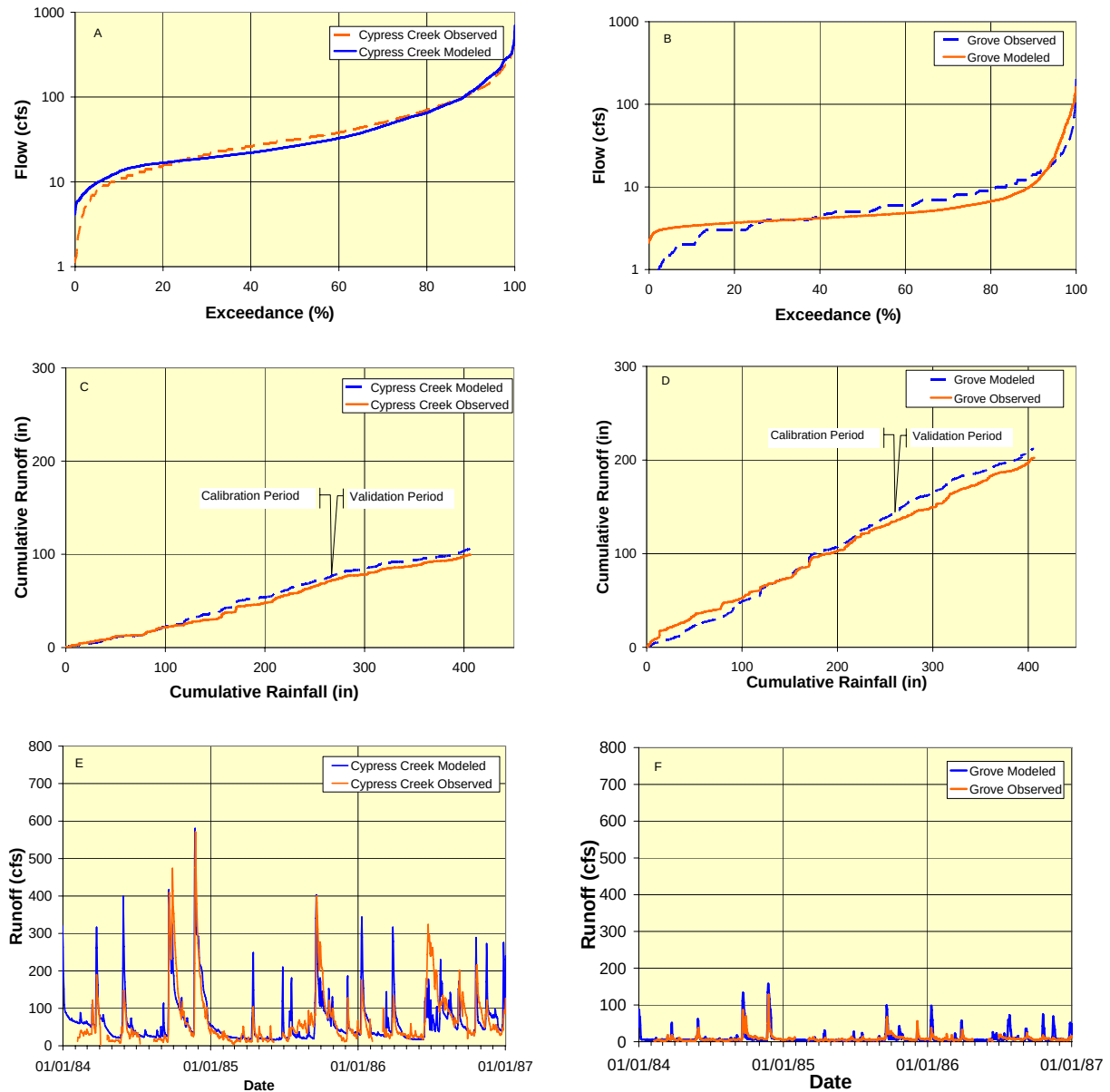


Figure 6-6. Model Calibration and Validation Plots at Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch Stations (1981–1990)

Note: (A) Daily Flow Distribution at Cypress Creek Station, (B) Daily Flow Distribution at Hobe Grove Ditch Station, (C) Double Mass Curve at Cypress Creek Station, (D) Double Mass Curve at Hobe Grove Ditch Station, (E) Time-Series Plot at Cypress Creek Station (1984–1987), and (F) Time-Series Plot at Hobe Grove Ditch Station (1984–1987).

The calibration of the groundwater level was conducted in the last step of WaSh model validation. **Figure 6-7** shows the time series of the observed and modeled water levels at the two groundwater monitoring wells used for validation. The cell hydrology simulated by the model is reasonable. Water level predictions could be further refined if the model is to be used for water level evaluations.

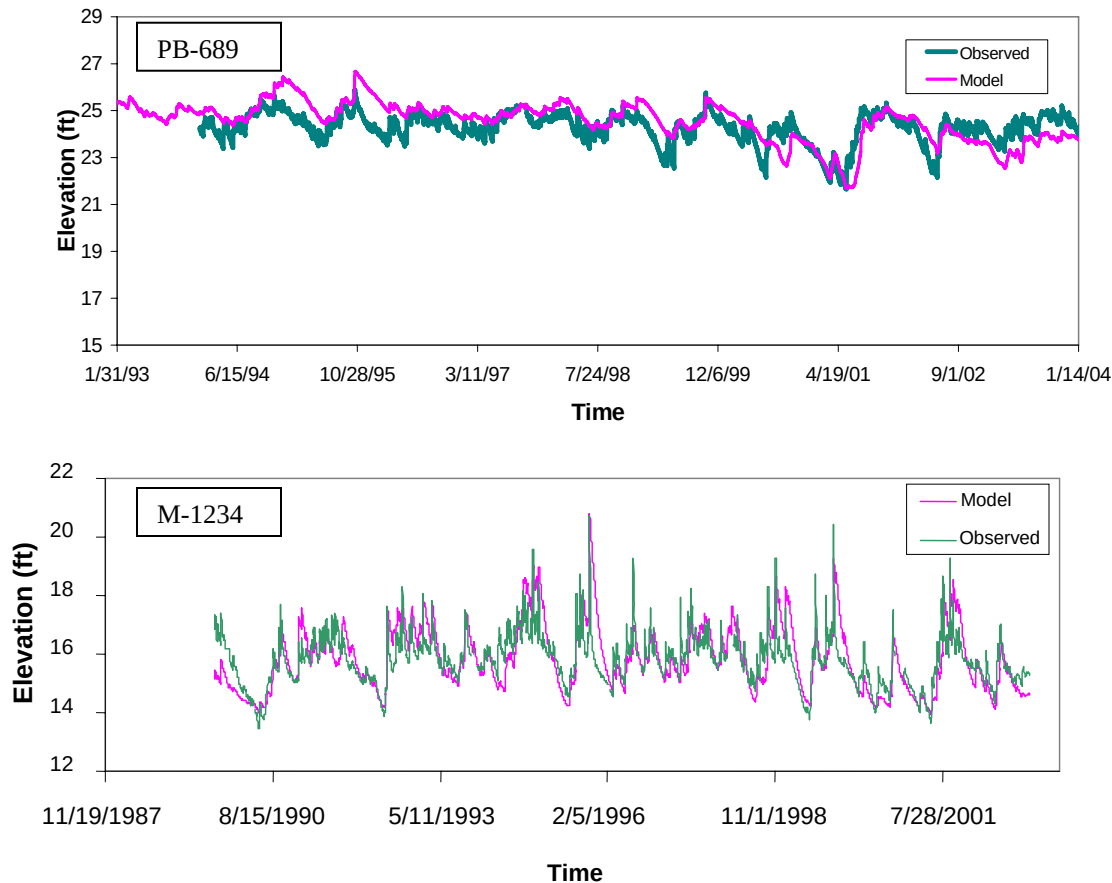


Figure 6-7. Observed and Modeled Water Levels in Groundwater Monitoring Wells PB-689 and M-1234. Land Surface Elevation is 24.43 feet at PB-689 and 21.15 feet at M -1234.

WaSh MODEL SIMULATION RESULTS

A final long-term simulation for the period from 1965 to 2003 was conducted after the calibration and validation of the Loxahatchee WaSh model was completed. Daily flows from each of the tributaries and each of the basins were averaged based on the model output of the 39-year POR simulation. **Table 6-6** is a summary of the data expressed as average daily flows and percentage of contributions from each of the basins (tributaries) into the Loxahatchee River and Estuary and the Northwest Fork. On average, the Northwest Fork receives about 65 percent of total freshwater flow into the entire Loxahatchee River and Estuary. Flow over Lainhart Dam (C-18/Corbett G-92 plus Jupiter Farms) accounts for about 45 percent of the total freshwater flow into the Northwest Fork. The next largest contributor is Cypress Creek (32 percent with Pal-Mar and Grove West combined). Kitching Creek at the monitoring station contributes about 8 percent, and Hobe Grove Ditch contributes about 5 percent. The remaining 8 percent is contributed from

the areas that are not currently covered by flow monitoring stations. However, the actual freshwater flow contribution varies on a daily basis, depending on the specific hydrologic condition and water management practices. For example, there is little freshwater flow from S-46 during the dry season, whereas a disproportionately large quantity of fresh water is released from S-46 during a flood event.

Table 6-6. Flow Contributions from Each of the Basins and Major Tributaries into the Northwest Fork and Loxahatchee River and Estuary.

Basin	Average Daily Flow (cfs)	Flow Contribution	Northwest Fork Average Daily Flow (cfs)	Northwest Fork Flow Contribution
1. Kitching Gauge	17.4	5%	17.4	8%
2. North Fork	20.2	6%	-- ^a	-- ^a
3. Park River	5.1	2%	5.1	2%
4. Lox Estuarine	41.4	13%	-- ^a	-- ^a
5. C-18/Corbett G-92	69.7	22%	69.7	34%
5. C-18/Corbett S-46	51.3	16%	-- ^a	-- ^a
6. Historic Cypress Creek	7.0	2%	7.0	3%
7. Pal-Mar	57.7	18%	57.7	28%
8. Grove West	11.1	3%	11.1	5%
9. Grove East	10.6	3%	10.6	5%
10. Jupiter Farms	21.9	7%	21.9	11%
11. Wild and Scenic	6.9	2%	6.9	3%
Totals	320.3	100%	207.4	100%

^a This basin does not contribute flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Tables 6-7 and **6-8** summarize the mean monthly flow for each of the years from 1965 to 2003 for flows over the Lainhart Dam and the total flow into Northwest Fork covered by the four flow monitoring stations (Lainhart Dam station, Cypress Creek station, Hobe Grove station, and Kitching Creek station). For flows over Lainhart Dam (**Table 6-7**), mean monthly flows less than 35 cfs are shaded in red, and flows from 35 cfs to 65 cfs are shaded in yellow. These two flow ranges were selected because 35 cfs is the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) for the Northwest Fork (SFWMD 2002b), and 65 cfs is defined as a flow target in the model for the development of the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan (SFWMD 2002a). The Lainhart Dam data (**Table 6-7**) shows that a low flow period occurred from 1970 through 1978. For some years, mean monthly flows were less than 35 cfs even during the wet season (June through November). Another low flow period occurred from 1987 to 1990. Extended high flow years occurred from 1991 to 1999 and are shaded in light green. This pattern is consistent with the total Northwest Fork flows presented in **Table 6-8**; mean monthly flows less than 70 cfs are shaded in red, and flows from 70 cfs to 130 cfs are shaded in yellow. The extended low-flow dry season periods in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s probably coincide with the period during which the Northwest Fork floodplain experienced the most significant saltwater encroachment. The high flow regime instituted in the 1990s has likely helped the floodplain hydrologic condition to recover from the preceding dry years.

Table 6-7. Mean Monthly Flows (cfs) over Lainhart Dam from 1965 to 2003.

Years	Month												Annual Mean
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1965	39	35	14	2	1	14	29	45	10	136	71	10	34
1966	90	76	34	22	53	211	220	127	88	203	63	37	102
1967	22	40	37	18	5	52	89	114	67	193	79	26	62
1968	14	13	7	2	19	302	173	136	197	274	147	62	112
1969	71	45	116	35	154	120	79	131	135	269	173	86	119
1970	113	104	208	237	97	155	112	64	56	71	29	18	105
1971	16	18	12	3	47	19	38	46	136	79	194	73	57
1972	44	39	21	41	191	204	85	50	33	33	68	28	70
1973	28	36	14	9	13	80	66	124	134	168	41	39	63
1974	150	39	45	14	8	131	151	156	54	134	57	63	84
1975	27	30	20	7	33	104	141	31	85	108	39	15	54
1976	9	20	27	5	106	114	30	67	182	72	72	28	61
1977	60	19	10	2	25	33	11	24	271	42	24	139	55
1978	72	30	32	6	14	145	140	145	88	168	263	190	108
1979	193	79	56	47	61	51	31	19	161	146	113	66	85
1980	47	58	39	20	33	29	86	34	32	80	26	17	42
1981	7	9	3	1	2	6	6	152	176	46	53	9	39
1982	12	26	150	200	166	241	124	93	110	145	302	182	146
1983	143	200	172	108	76	141	77	135	268	342	198	157	168
1984	123	86	127	84	102	124	65	48	179	120	196	150	117
1985	72	43	28	61	21	25	65	40	144	110	53	71	61
1986	125	42	102	82	14	93	112	72	76	80	92	99	83
1987	112	36	69	25	15	24	43	30	39	137	234	34	67
1988	57	47	42	14	29	91	116	184	75	18	14	7	58
1989	4	2	17	8	7	8	30	85	25	79	14	15	25
1990	11	6	7	10	7	15	17	77	93	151	22	16	36
1991	142	118	53	141	119	160	128	86	134	192	92	83	121
1992	49	117	66	56	20	122	125	188	217	164	198	95	118
1993	231	204	200	122	92	104	87	85	164	281	149	89	150
1994	96	142	84	82	70	143	114	223	273	209	278	285	166
1995	140	96	98	85	69	101	131	288	186	352	271	153	165
1996	82	73	156	116	137	140	176	96	128	163	123	78	123
1997	81	104	84	121	93	214	109	200	222	105	83	149	130
1998	148	204	161	88	106	53	84	66	208	133	289	102	136
1999	227	89	70	39	30	172	122	109	198	335	206	109	142
2000	81	74	62	91	34	19	40	18	52	174	29	23	58
2001	16	9	46	24	8	43	197	260	254	236	145	78	110
2002	69	125	60	44	15	116	185	57	40	51	43	36	70
2003	22	14	62	46	119	137	48	149	90	73	146	75	82
Monthly Mean	78	65	67	54	57	104	94	104	130	151	120	77	92

Note: Mean monthly flows less than 35 cfs are shaded in red, flows from 35 cfs to 65 cfs are shaded in yellow, flows greater than 65 cfs are shaded in light green.

Table 6-8. Mean Monthly Flows (cfs) into the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River from Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek Stations from 1965 to 2003.

Years	Month												Annual Mean
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1965	89	106	56	16	10	44	95	129	34	457	259	53	112
1966	281	258	115	82	184	678	682	418	271	628	206	125	328
1967	83	132	122	68	35	158	270	336	210	607	238	94	197
1968	60	54	39	23	74	952	530	420	652	848	436	181	356
1969	204	136	346	108	438	372	256	395	426	876	523	253	363
1970	337	300	671	728	268	452	328	178	167	200	93	64	315
1971	58	64	48	28	148	68	121	135	403	246	633	239	182
1972	138	133	78	137	593	639	252	155	107	110	222	95	221
1973	99	121	59	44	56	242	205	405	408	517	134	126	202
1974	483	133	145	53	39	367	428	479	175	398	181	181	257
1975	89	95	65	36	107	299	436	107	260	323	124	59	167
1976	40	77	80	29	332	354	100	208	560	227	220	99	193
1977	193	67	44	22	95	97	41	78	853	142	84	406	177
1978	234	102	106	32	50	504	449	438	244	522	840	573	343
1979	544	226	152	139	164	147	91	62	517	483	342	192	255
1980	152	173	122	66	110	95	260	107	120	285	106	70	139
1981	39	53	25	18	16	26	28	476	542	154	188	43	134
1982	55	103	504	685	566	749	417	284	356	458	983	476	470
1983	455	656	552	330	203	418	202	388	853	1,074	606	487	517
1984	367	247	382	237	300	345	166	130	563	360	615	466	348
1985	192	116	83	183	65	89	185	115	448	350	160	210	183
1986	400	122	336	232	51	272	341	259	237	255	305	334	263
1987	335	113	218	84	62	88	134	89	143	441	741	119	214
1988	176	154	138	52	92	250	348	583	254	73	58	36	185
1989	30	24	62	38	30	32	88	233	88	246	58	58	83
1990	49	41	34	42	31	46	63	243	333	435	85	68	123
1991	495	374	161	417	345	481	361	267	400	594	282	240	368
1992	147	326	179	160	64	372	415	584	645	496	632	293	359
1993	740	619	598	340	244	274	233	237	447	867	416	238	437
1994	269	438	225	216	185	465	344	670	842	675	887	874	507
1995	417	275	284	227	172	256	343	858	568	1,146	812	401	482
1996	228	186	430	304	380	389	545	270	383	543	409	225	359
1997	247	300	241	372	262	689	343	594	671	314	224	446	392
1998	431	639	485	233	279	133	228	174	661	414	908	301	404
1999	749	261	181	103	84	495	343	299	599	1,079	606	314	427
2000	216	187	161	255	100	60	114	56	150	516	85	73	165
2001	53	37	126	66	39	149	477	794	792	668	387	203	318
2002	175	343	156	151	51	288	532	164	114	138	115	102	193
2003	65	47	202	136	372	392	126	354	235	184	381	181	224
Monthly Mean	241	201	205	166	172	314	280	312	403	470	374	231	281

Note: Mean monthly flows less than 70 cfs are shaded in red, flows from 70 cfs to 130 cfs are shaded in yellow, flows greater than 130 cfs are shaded in light green.

Because of the hydrologic variability during the past 39 years, the 39-year daily flow data at Lainhart Dam were analyzed to determine the daily flow distribution for each of the 12 months for all 39 years. This analysis indicates that the mean of the daily flow distribution in a month during the 39-year period of record does not match the median flow. The results are summarized in **Figure 6-8** which plots the median flow and the 75th percentile flow for each month. The 75th percentile flow represents the flow that is exceeded by only 25 percent of days in that month during the 39 years. Daily flow from Lainhart Dam is less than 50 cfs for 50 percent of time during the months of February, March, April and May. Flows in April and May are the lowest among all the months. This also shows the importance of flow augmentation during these low flow months.

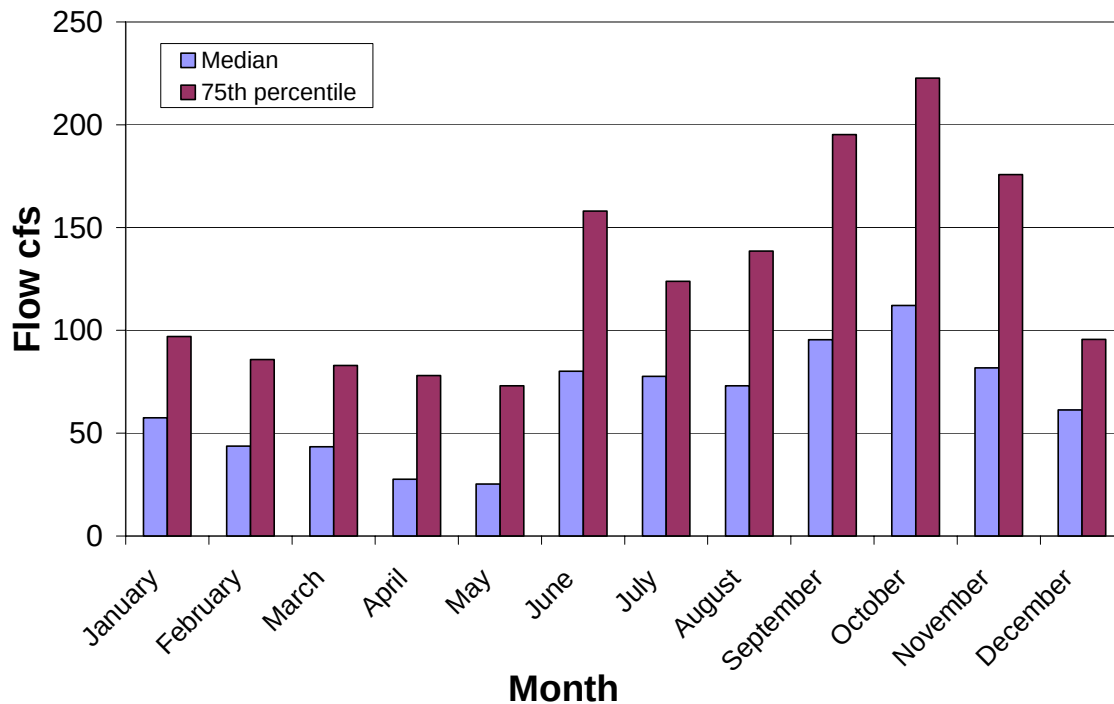


Figure 6-8. Median Monthly Flow and the 75th Percentile Monthly Flow over Lainhart Dam from 1965 to 2003.

MODELING SALINITY

THE HYDRODYNAMIC/SALINITY (RMA) MODEL DESCRIPTION

Salinity in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary is controlled by both freshwater flows and tidal circulation, which represent the competition between river and ocean influences. A hydrodynamic/salinity (RMA) model was developed to study the influence of freshwater flows from the tributaries of the Northwest Fork and S-46 on the salinity conditions in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. In parallel with model development, a data collection network was established to measure tide and salinity at five sites from the embayment area near the Jupiter Inlet (RM 0.70) to RM 9.12. The objective of salinity data collection and model development was to establish the relationship between salinity and the amount of freshwater flow. The requirement to the model is to predict average daily salinity over a long period of time such as 30 years under various project scenarios. The main focus of the data collection and salinity modeling has been on the upper reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

The software programs used in developing the Loxahatchee River hydrodynamics/salinity model were RMA-2 and RMA-4 (USACE 1996). RMA-2 is a 2-D depth-averaged finite element hydrodynamic numerical model. It computes water surface elevations and horizontal velocity components for subcritical, free-surface flow in two-dimensional flow fields. RMA-2 computes a finite element solution of the Reynolds form of the Navier-Stokes equations for turbulent flows. Friction is calculated with the Manning's n or Chezy equation, and eddy viscosity coefficients are used to define turbulence characteristics. Both steady and unsteady state (dynamic) problems can be analyzed. RMA-2 has been used to calculate water levels and flow distribution around islands; flow at bridges having one or more relief openings, in contracting and expanding reaches, into and out of off-channel hydropower plants, at river junctions, and into and out of pumping plant channels; circulation and transport in water bodies with wetlands; and general water levels and flow patterns in rivers, reservoirs and estuaries.

The water quality model, RMA-4, is designed to simulate the depth-average advection-diffusion process in an aquatic environment. The model is used for investigating the physical processes of migration and mixing of a soluble substance in reservoirs, rivers, bays, estuaries and coastal zones. This model was used to evaluate salinity and the effectiveness of various restoration scenarios. For complex geometries, the model utilizes the depth-averaged hydrodynamics from RMA-2.

Figure 6-9 is a bathymetric map of the Loxahatchee Estuary. The estuary is shallow and well-mixed with the depth for most of the estuary ranging from 3 feet to 10 feet.

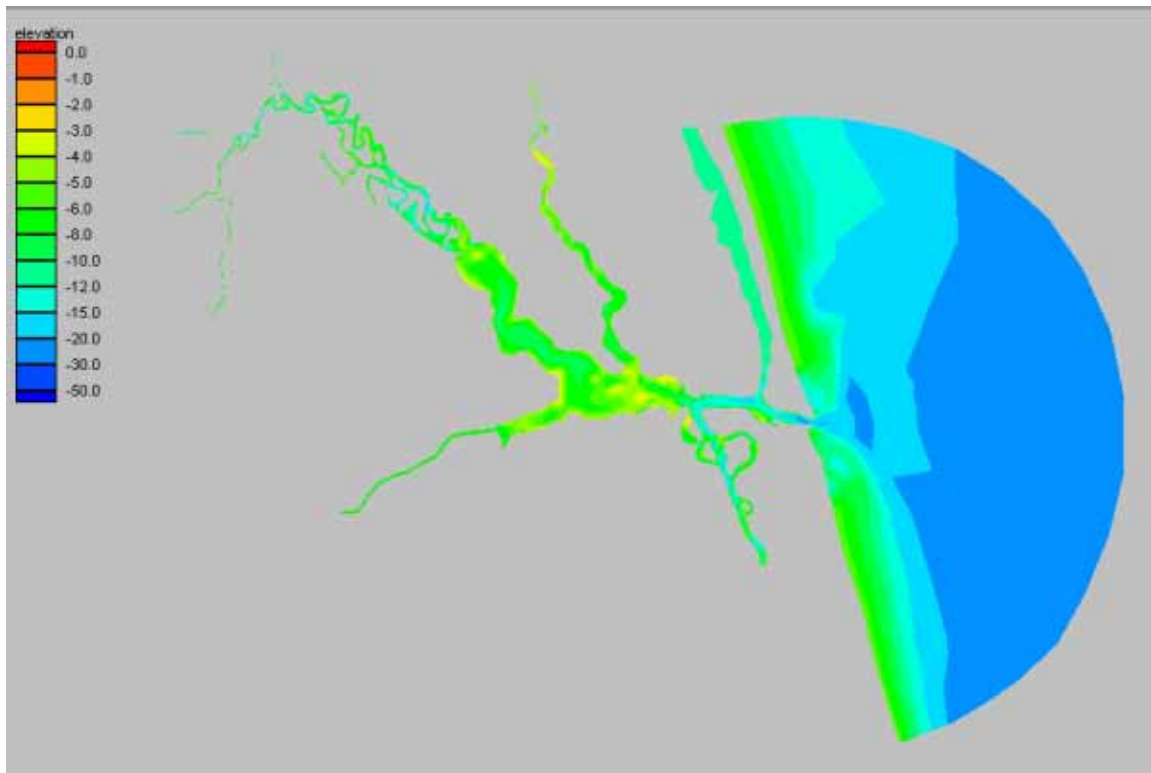


Figure 6-9. Bathymetric Map of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary with Elevation in Feet.

IMPLEMENTING THE RMA MODEL

Model Setup

The RMA model was updated in early 2004 using the most recent bathymetry, freshwater flow and tide data. The model mesh includes a total of 4,956 nodes with elevations derived from the survey data provided by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). **Figure 6-10** shows the RMA model mesh construction with 1,075 quadrilateral elements and 231 triangular elements. The red arrows in the figure indicate the locations where freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork are applied. The four tributaries that contribute freshwater flow to the Northwest Fork are Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek. The RMA model domain also includes the Southwest Fork and flows from the S-46 Structure. The RMA does not predict the amount of fresh water entering the system from the watershed or discharge structures. The freshwater flow amounts from these tributaries and structures are provided by the WaSh model or from recorded data from the flow gauges.

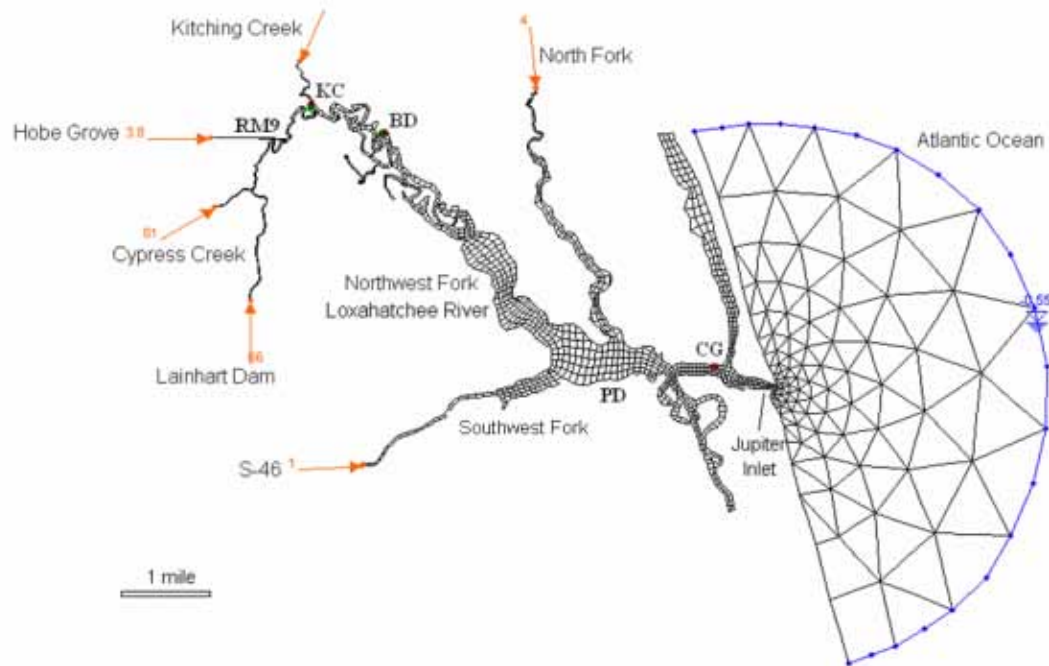


Figure 6-10. The RMA Model Domain Map.

Note: KC = Kitching Creek USGS Station; BD = Boy Scout Dock Station; CG = U.S. Coast Guard Station. The Red Arrows Indicate Where Freshwater Flows Are Provided to the Northwest Fork.

The meandering river channel pattern is one of the fundamental characteristics of the natural system of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Previous studies have demonstrated that restoring the natural oxbows to the Northwest Fork can effectively reduce saltwater intrusion into the historically freshwater reaches. The meandering river channel and oxbows of the Northwest Fork are preserved in the construction of the RMA model mesh.

Several natural river channel restoration projects have been implemented in the past decade to restore oxbows to the Northwest Fork. Salinity measurements taken before and after the implementation of the projects indicate that the oxbows can reduce the extent of saltwater intrusion into the Northwest Fork. The RMA model mesh contains the geographic features of the river channel. Depending on the time period, the model simulation can be conducted with the oxbow restoration projects completed for the post-project period or without the restored oxbows for the pre-project period. The current model mesh is also detailed enough to simulate the effectiveness of potential channel restoration projects in river reaches up to the Trapper Nelson's Interpretive Site (RM 10.50). The detailed geometry of the channel above Trapper Nelson's will be further refined after an ongoing GIS project is completed. On the ocean side, the model mesh

was extended 3 miles offshore into the Atlantic Ocean to obtain a relatively stable salinity boundary condition (Hu 2004).

The RMA model was applied to establish the relationship between the amount of freshwater flow and the salinity regime in the Northwest Fork. This freshwater/salinity relationship is used to evaluate the various restoration scenarios.

Model Verification

A data collection program was implemented in conjunction with the preliminary RMA model design. A bathymetric survey of the Loxahatchee River was conducted by the USGS in early 2003. The Northwest Fork survey covered river reaches from RM 4.0 to Trapper Nelson's Interpretive Site (RM 10.50). Approximately 3 miles of the North Fork were also surveyed. In addition to the flow gauges located at Lainhart Dam and Kitching Creek, two additional gauges were established on Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch in November 2002. These four flow gauges monitor the majority of freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork. Four tide and salinity stations also have been deployed in the Loxahatchee Estuary since November 2002 by the USGS. An additional tide/salinity gauge was installed at RM 9.12 in October 2003 by the District's Water Supply Department. These five stations monitor the tide and salinity in the estuary continuously and record the data at 15-minute intervals. The data are retrieved at scheduled maintenance times and reported quarterly after quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) has been conducted. To detect temperature and salinity stratification, three of the tide/salinity stations record salinity and temperature measurements at two water depths. The three sites with double temperature/salinity sensors are located at RM 9.12, Boy Scout Camp Dock (RM 5.92) and the U.S. Coast Guard Station near the Jupiter Inlet (RM 0.70). All sensors were installed at water levels below lower low tides to avoid exposure to air.

In addition to the tide and salinity measurements obtained from the USGS sites, the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) also has an estuarine data collection program at several additional locations that are not covered by the USGS monitoring network. The LRD uses multi-parameter datasondes to record time, dissolved oxygen, water depth, conductivity/salinity, pH and temperature. The meters are located near the bottom of the channel in order to track maximum salinity changes in the water column. The LRD data were collected at North Bay seagrass survey site (RM 1.48), Pennock Point seagrass survey site (RM 2.44), Northwest Fork near the mouth of Kitching Creek (RM 8.13), Station 66 in the Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River, and Station 69 near the Indiantown Road (RM 14.93). To measure current velocity, the SFWMD contracted Scientific Environmental Applications to install two bottom mount Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) units at various locations in the estuary in 2003.

The Loxahatchee hydrodynamic/salinity (RMA) model was verified against field data for the period from May 1 to August 12, 2003. **Figure 6-11** shows the combined freshwater flow from four major tributaries to the Northwest Fork for this period. Average daily flow rates (cfs) from flow gauges on upper Northwest Fork at Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove, and Kitching Creek were used for the calculation. Flow from S-46 into the South Fork was based on measurements at the S-46 Structure for the model simulation period.

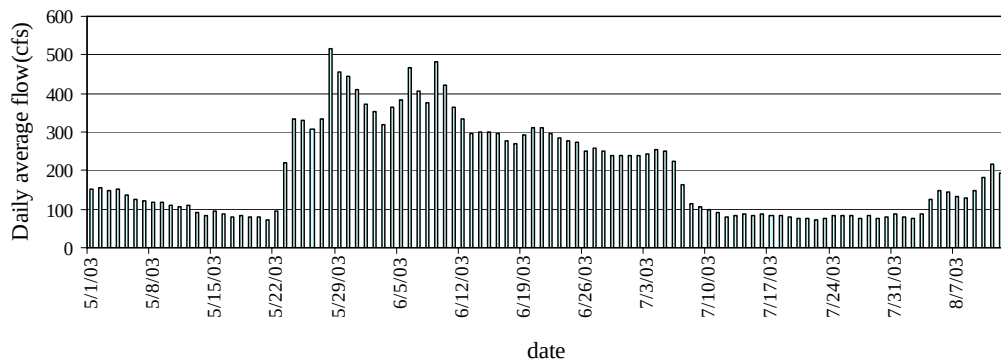


Figure 6-11. Combined Freshwater Flow from the Major Tributaries to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River for the Period May1 to August 12, 2003.

Figure 6-12 is a comparison of tidal data from the Coast Guard station (RM 0.70) with the RMA-2 model output for the same location. Because the two curves overlap when printed in the same chart, the model output and field data are plotted in separate charts using the same scale and grid lines for ease of comparison. For RMA-4 applications, a constant salinity of 35.5 parts per thousand (ppt) was applied on the ocean boundary.

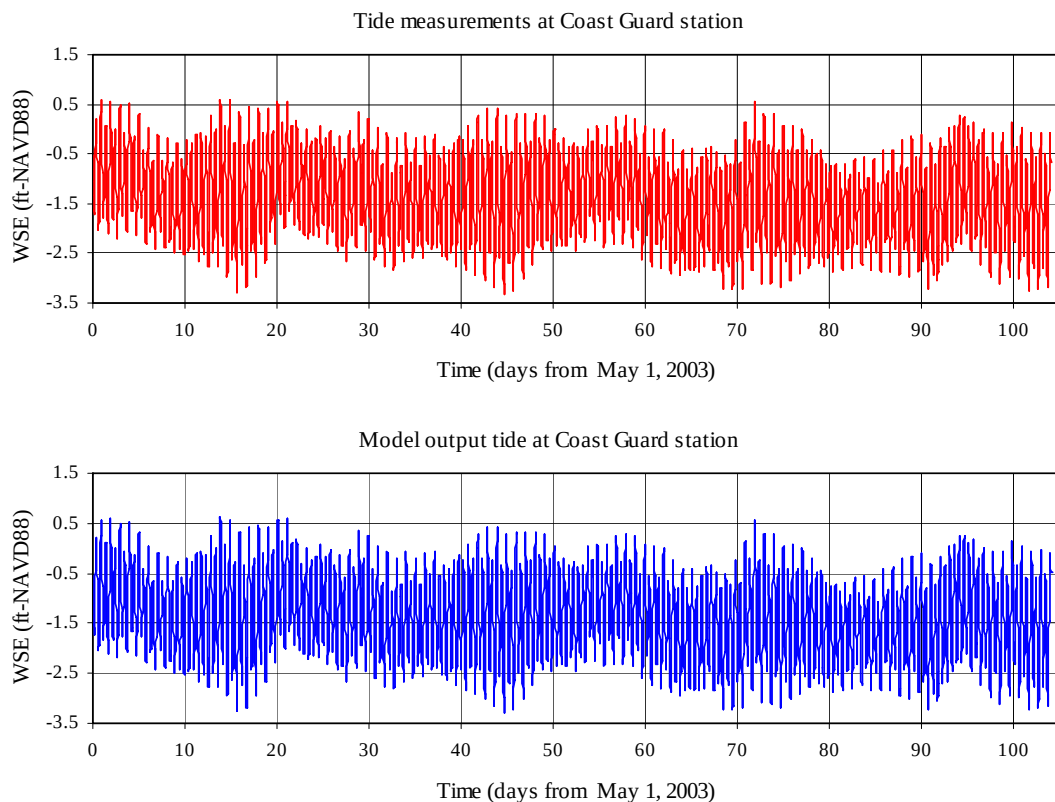


Figure 6-12. Tide Measurements at the Coast Guard Station (RM 0.70): Field Data and RMA Model Output. WSE = Water Supply and Environmental; NAVD = North American Vertical Datum 1988.

Field data and model output for tides at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) and Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) are plotted in **Figure 6-13**. These two stations are approximately 2 river miles apart and there is no major tributary between these locations. Both field data and model output indicate that the tidal regimens at these two sites are similar in terms of range.

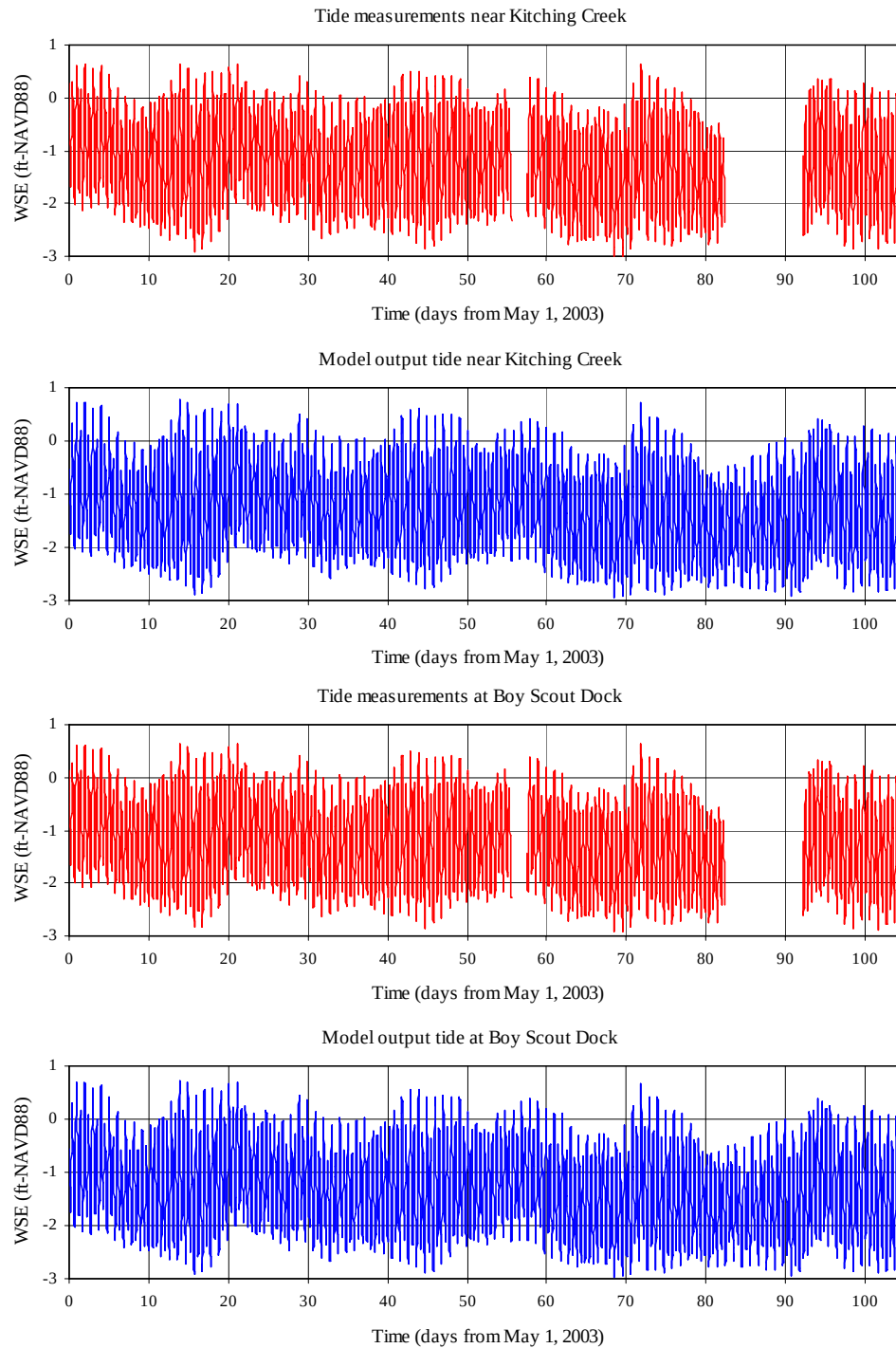


Figure 6-13. Tide Measurements at Kitching Creek Station (RM 8.13) and Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92): Field Data and RMA Model Output. WSE = Water Supply and Environmental; NAVD = North American Vertical Datum 1988.

To more precisely evaluate RMA model accuracy, statistical analyses were conducted. The root mean square (RMS) error and the relative RMS error (RRE) statistics were used to evaluate model performance. The smaller the RMS, the better the model output tracks the field observation. A RMS error of zero is ideal. The RMS is the average of the squared differences between observed and predicted values:

$$RMS \text{ Error} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^N (O^n - P^n)^2} \quad [13]$$

where N = number of observed-predicted pairs

O^n = the value of the n^{th} observed data

P^n = the value of the n^{th} predicted data

The relative RMS error (RRE) provides another measurement of the model performance. A zero percentage RRE indicates a perfect match. The RRE is defined as the ratio of RMS error to the observed change:

$$RRE = \frac{RMS \text{ Error}}{Observed \text{ Change}} \times 100 = \frac{\sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^N (O^n - P^n)^2}}{O_{\max} - O_{\min}} \times 100 \quad [14]$$

where $O_{\max}$ = maximum value of observations

$O_{\min}$ = minimum value of observations

$(O_{\max} - O_{\min})$ = the range of the observation data

N = the total number of the observation records

Table 6-9 lists the RMS and RRE of the model tide output at two sites in the Northwest Fork and one site near the model boundary. CG is the station ID for the tide gauge at the Coast Guard station. BD and KC are station IDs for tide gauges at the Boy Scout Camp Dock and at the mouth of the Kitching Creek, respectively. The mean square errors (RMSs) were less than 2 inches at each of the three sites. The relative error (RRE) was less than 3 percent near the model boundary (CG) and was less than 5 percent at the two Northwest Fork stations.

Table 6-9. Root Mean Square (RMS) Error and Relative RMS Error (RRE) Statistics for the RMA Model Tide Output at Three Locations.

Station ID (RM)	No. of Observations	RMS (feet)	RRE (%)	Observed Range (feet)
CG (RM 0.70)	4983	0.1058	2.71%	3.90
BD (RM 5.92)	4423	0.1700	4.78%	3.56
KC (RM 8.13)	4423	0.1612	4.40%	3.66

Table 6-10 compares the model output and field observations in terms of maximum, minimum, and mean tidal values. The difference in mean tide over the entire 3-month simulation period was less than one-tenth of an inch near the model boundary (at the Coast Guard Station). The difference in mean tide at the two Northwest Fork stations was about an inch.

Table 6-10. Comparison of RMA Model Tide Output with Field Observations at Three Locations.

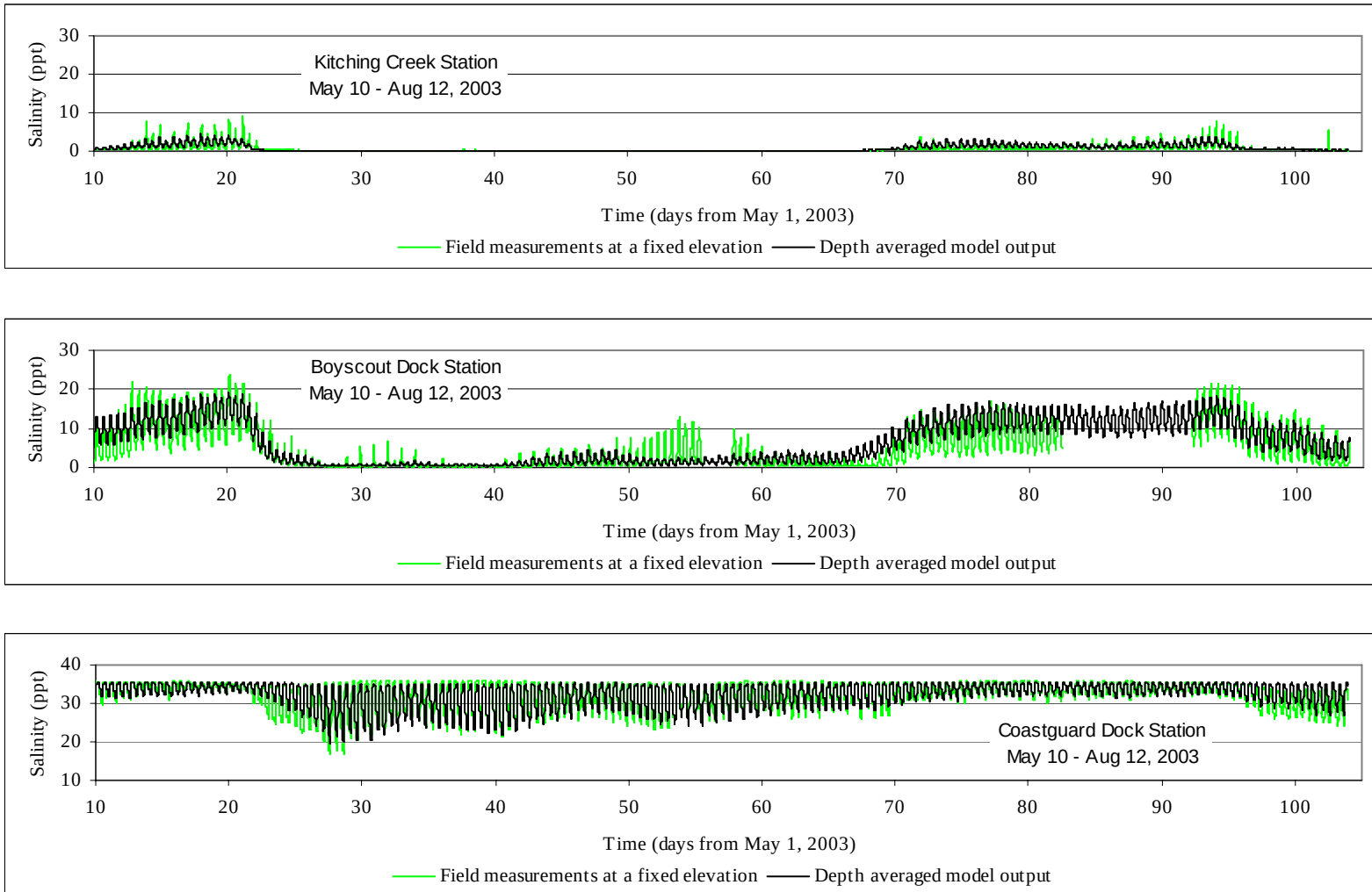
Station ID (RM)	Maximum Tide (ft)		Minimum Tide (ft)		Mean Tide (ft)	
	Observed	Modeled	Observed	Modeled	Observed	Modeled
CG (RM 0.70)	0.5900	0.6150	-3.3100	-3.2900	-1.3710	-1.3833
BD (RM 5.92)	0.6300	0.7230	-2.9300	-2.9590	-1.2104	-1.3316
KC (RM 8.13)	0.6500	0.7740	-3.0100	-2.9370	-1.1982	-1.2900

Figure 6-14 compares model output of depth-averaged salinity with actual field salinity measurements from instruments at fixed elevations. However, although these two quantities are similar, they do not represent the same physical parameters and are not directly comparable. The difference between the model output (representing depth-averaged salinity) and the actual field measurement (representing salinity at a fixed depth) could be significant when the system is stratified.

The salinity recorded at Boy Scout Dock increased to 10 ppt between Day 50 and Day 60 (**Figure 6-14**). This sudden salinity increase does not seem to be related to or supported by data from other field records. A salinity of 10 ppt usually occurs at this site when freshwater flow is below 100 cfs. The flow gauges actually recorded over 200 cfs for this period. The salinity record from the adjacent Kitching Creek station is also inconsistent with the salinity increase at the Boy Scout Dock station. Previous studies indicated that 10 ppt at Boy Scout Dock station would have raised salinity at Kitching Creek station to 2 ppt or above (Russell and McPherson 1984); however, there was no salinity increase for Kitching Creek during this time period (see the Kitching Creek chart in **Figure 6-14**). Therefore, the accuracy of the salinity field measurements at Boy Scout Dock between Day 50 and Day 60 is questionable.

Both RMA-2 and RMA-4 are two-dimensional depth-averaged models. When the system is minimally stratified, such as the condition near the Jupiter Inlet at the Coast Guard station, the modeled salinity output tracks the field salinity data rather closely. However, when the system is highly stratified, as occurs in certain areas, the modeled salinity output for that area could give a smaller salinity variation between high tide and low tide when compared to the field salinity measurements from fixed depths (see the Boy Scout Dock chart in **Figure 6-14**).

The RMA-4 output is depth-averaged salinity, which differs from salinity measured by a transducer at a fixed elevation. The conductivity transducers were installed at elevations that would remain below the water surface at low tide. Because the range between higher high and lower low water is close to 4 feet and the overall water depth is only about 6 feet to 10 feet, the conductivity transducers would be situated in the lower water column during high tide. Under these conditions, the instrument would take measurements from the surface layer at low tide and from the bottom layer at high tide. If the system is well mixed (i.e., no stratification), then there should be no difference between the modeled depth-averaged salinity and field salinity measurements. However, when the system is stratified, the daily salinity variation recorded by the instruments would be wider than the daily salinity variation output from depth-averaged salinity model.



1 **Figure 6-14.** Comparison of Model Output of Depth-Averaged Salinity (ppt) with Field Measurements at Fixed Elevations of Salinity (ppt) in
2 the Water Column at Three Locations.

Table 6-11 lists the statistics of model salinity output accuracy analysis at Kitching Creek, Boy Scout Camp Dock, and the U.S. Coast Guard Stations. **Table 6-12** lists the statistical characteristics of both model salinity output and the observed values.

Table 6-11. Root Mean Square (RMS) Error and Relative RMS Error (RRE) Statistics for the RMA Model Salinity Output at Three Locations.

Station ID (RM)	No. of Observations	RMS (ppt)	RRE (%)	Observed Range (ppt)
KC (RM 0.70)	4509	0.6047	6.65%	9.10
BD (RM 5.92)	3951	2.5454	10.76%	23.65
CG (RM 8.13)	4507	1.8713	9.70%	19.30

Table 6-12. Comparison of RMA Model Salinity Output with Field Observations at Three Locations.

Station ID (RM)	Mean Salinity (ppt)		Maximum Salinity (ppt)		Minimum Salinity (ppt)	
	Observed	Modeled	Observed	Modeled	Observed	Modeled
KC (RM 0.70)	0.7507	0.5732	4.3670	9.2000	0.1500	0.1000
BD (RM 5.92)	6.3726	4.6928	19.0380	23.8000	0.2220	0.1500
CG (RM 8.13)	32.3625	31.9756	35.4250	36.0000	19.5460	16.7000

The most likely reason for the salinity differences between RMA model predictions and field measurements is that there is additional freshwater flow into the system that bypasses the four stations on the river and the major tributaries. Such additional sources of fresh water may include overland flow and groundwater seepage into the system. A groundwater monitoring network that was established in 2003 indicates active exchanges between the river and the groundwater table. The model predicted higher salinity at the beginning of dry periods when the groundwater tables are still relatively high and therefore provide additional fresh water to the system. Including groundwater input in the model will likely increase the accuracy in salinity prediction. The current model, without the input of groundwater input and overland flow, tends to be conservative (predicting higher salinity).

The current RMA model does not include driving forces such as wind, precipitation/evaporation, and the exchange between the river and the groundwater which can be significant in the upper river reaches. The model verification simulation, which only was driven by major tributary freshwater input and ocean tide, was able to predict the tide regimen rather accurately and predict the trend of salinity changes over the 3-month simulation period that included both low and high freshwater input to the estuary. This indicates that tide and the amount of freshwater flow to the estuary are the two most dominant factors that affect the salinity regimen in the upper Northwest Fork.

RMA MODEL SIMULATION RESULTS

The tidal circulation and salinity structure of estuaries involves competition between freshwater river flows and ocean influences. River flow persistently adds fresh water to the estuary, however saltwater may still penetrate far inland due to gravitational and diffusive fluxes (MacCready 2004). Although there are other factors in addition to tide and freshwater flows that affect the salinity regime, the analysis of the field data from the Loxahatchee River suggests that

tide and freshwater flow are the two most important factors that determine the salinity conditions in the Northwest Fork (Hu 2004). To establish the relationship between freshwater flow and salinity in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, the RMA model was used in 12 modeling scenarios where the amount of total freshwater flow from all three forks of the Loxahatchee River into the estuary was held constant for rates varying from 40 cfs at the low flow end to 7,000 cfs at the high flow end. These flow rates were determined based on an analysis of freshwater flows simulated by the watershed model. During RMA model output processing, 20 study sites were identified for ecological assessment where salinity predictions are needed. Information about study and assessment sites is provided in **Table 6-13**. Sites noted as USGS stations are locations where tide and salinity measurement data are collected by the U.S. Geological Survey as discussed in the previous sections. **Figure 6-15** shows the locations of the 20 assessment sites.

Table 6-13. The 20 Salinity and Ecological Assessment Sites.

Coordinates ^a		Site		Description
X (feet)	Y (feet)	Station ID	River Mile	
955325	951200	CG	0.70	USGS Coast Guard
951456	952232	SGNB	1.48	Seagrass site - North Bay
949616	951344	SGSB	1.74	Seagrass site - Sand Bar
949538	950648	PD	1.77	USGS Pompano Drive
945680	951761	SGPP	2.44	Seagrass site - Pennock Point
945105	953335	O1	2.70	Oyster site 1
942902	954999	O2	3.26	Oyster site 2
942332	957383	O3	3.74	Oyster site 3
940923	958927	O4	4.13	Oyster site 4
938854	961625	O5	4.93	Oyster site 5
936681	963169	O6	5.45	Oyster site 6
935708	965258	BD	5.92	USGS Boy Scout Dock
935406	964872	RM 6	6.0	River mile 6.0
934835	965534	RM 6.5	6.5	River mile 6.5
934538	966065	RM 7	7.0	River mile 7.0
934679	966363	VT9	7.1	Vegetation Transect 9
933306	966580	RM 7.5	7.5	River mile 7.5
931920	966458	RM 8	8.0	River mile 8.0
931399	966948	KC	8.13	USGS Kitching Creek
929733	964696	RM 9	9.12	Vegetation Transect 7. USGS River Mile 9.1

^a Coordinates are in State Plane Florida East NAD83.

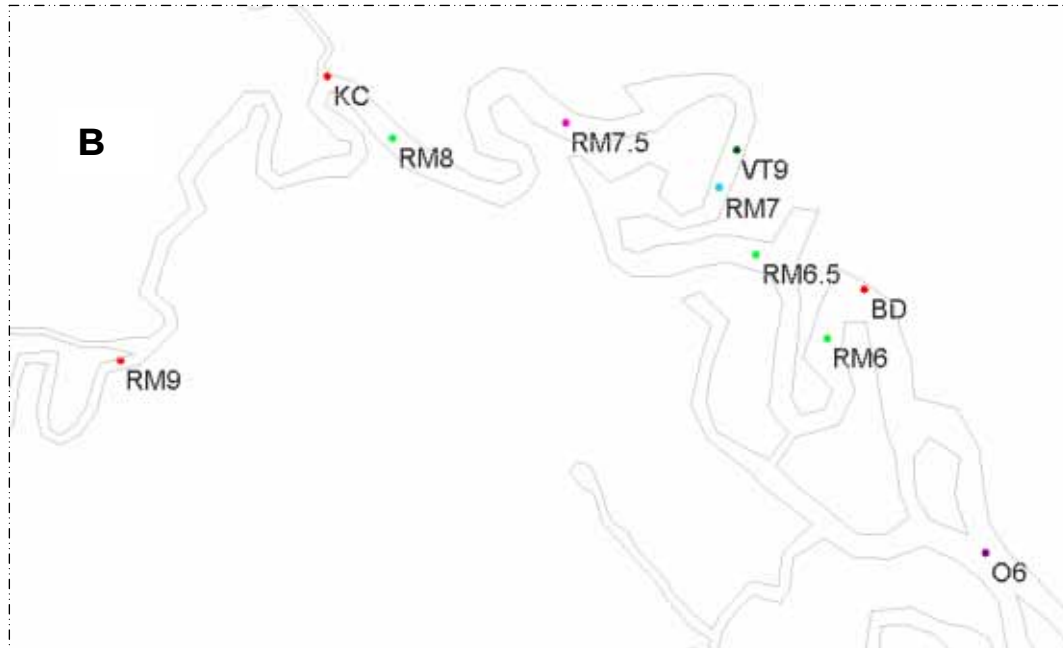
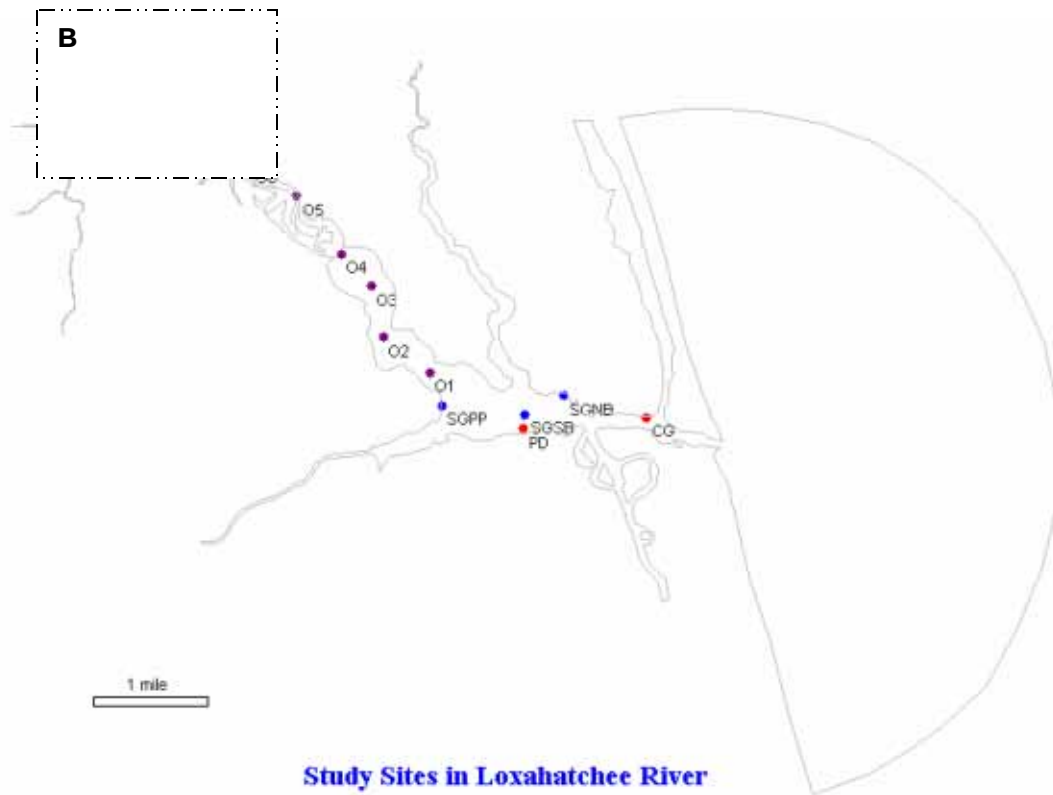


Figure 6-15. Location of the 20 Salinity and Ecological Assessment Sites.

Note: Red dots represent the USGS sites; blue dots represent seagrass sites; purple dots represent oyster sites; and green dots represent vegetation sites.

The objective of the RMA model is to establish a relationship between the amount of freshwater flow and tidally averaged salinity. The RMA model output was averaged over a lunar month that includes a full lunar tidal cycle with both spring and neap tides. Thus, these results reflect the daily averaged salinity under an average tidal condition.

Table 6-14 is a summary of the RMA model output of average salinity for 12 flow scenarios at each of the 20 sites. Regression analysis of the results yielded regression equations with excellent curve fitting. The best fit ($R^2 = 0.999$ for all the 20 sites) was achieved with exponential functions in the form of

$$Y = Y_0 + a e^{-bX} \quad [15]$$

where X is freshwater flow in cubic feet per second and Y is salinity in parts per thousand.

Table 6-14. Tidally Averaged Salinity (ppt) vs. Freshwater Flow (cfs) for the 20 Study Sites in the Loxahatchee River.

River Mile and Site Name	Freshwater flow to the Northwest fork in cfs											
	32	56	79	119	159	238	397	636	954	1908	3815	5564
RM 0.7 (CG)	34.6	34.4	34.1	33.7	33.3	32.5	31.0	28.8	26.1	19.3	10.1	5.0
RM 1.48 (SGNB)	34.1	33.6	33.1	32.4	31.6	30.1	27.4	23.8	19.6	10.9	3.1	0.6
RM 1.74 (SGSB)	33.9	33.3	32.7	31.8	30.9	29.1	26.0	21.8	17.3	8.5	1.9	0.3
RM 1.77 (PD)	33.8	33.2	32.7	31.7	30.8	29.0	25.8	21.6	17.0	8.3	1.8	0.3
RM 2.44 (SGPP)	33.2	32.3	31.5	30.1	28.8	26.4	22.2	17.1	12.1	4.3	0.6	0.2
RM 2.7 (O1)	32.7	31.7	30.6	29.0	27.4	24.5	19.6	14.0	9.0	2.5	0.4	0.2
RM 3.26 (O2)	32.0	30.5	29.0	26.8	24.8	21.1	15.4	9.6	5.2	0.9	0.2	0.2
RM 3.74 (O3)	31.1	29.2	27.4	24.7	22.2	18.0	11.8	6.3	2.8	0.4	0.2	0.2
RM 4.13 (O4)	30.5	28.3	26.2	23.1	20.4	15.9	9.6	4.6	1.8	0.3	0.2	0.2
RM 4.93 (O5)	27.8	24.4	21.5	17.3	13.9	9.1	3.9	1.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 5.45 (O6)	25.8	21.6	18.1	13.5	10.0	5.6	1.8	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 5.92 (BD)	23.6	18.8	15.0	10.3	7.1	3.4	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 6	23.2	18.3	14.4	9.6	6.5	3.2	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 6.5	20.4	15.0	11.0	6.5	4.0	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 7	17.1	11.4	7.5	3.9	2.0	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 7.06 (VT9)	16.8	11.0	7.2	3.6	1.9	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 7.5	14.2	8.5	5.1	2.2	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 8	10.6	5.5	2.9	1.0	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 8.13 (KC)	9.7	4.9	2.5	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
RM 9	4.2	1.4	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

The freshwater flow versus salinity relationships presented in **Table 6-14** are plotted in **Figures 6-16** and **6-17**. Each curve in **Figure 6-16** represents the flow/salinity relationship for each of the 20 sites. For each site, salinity (ppt) increases as freshwater flow (cfs) decreases.

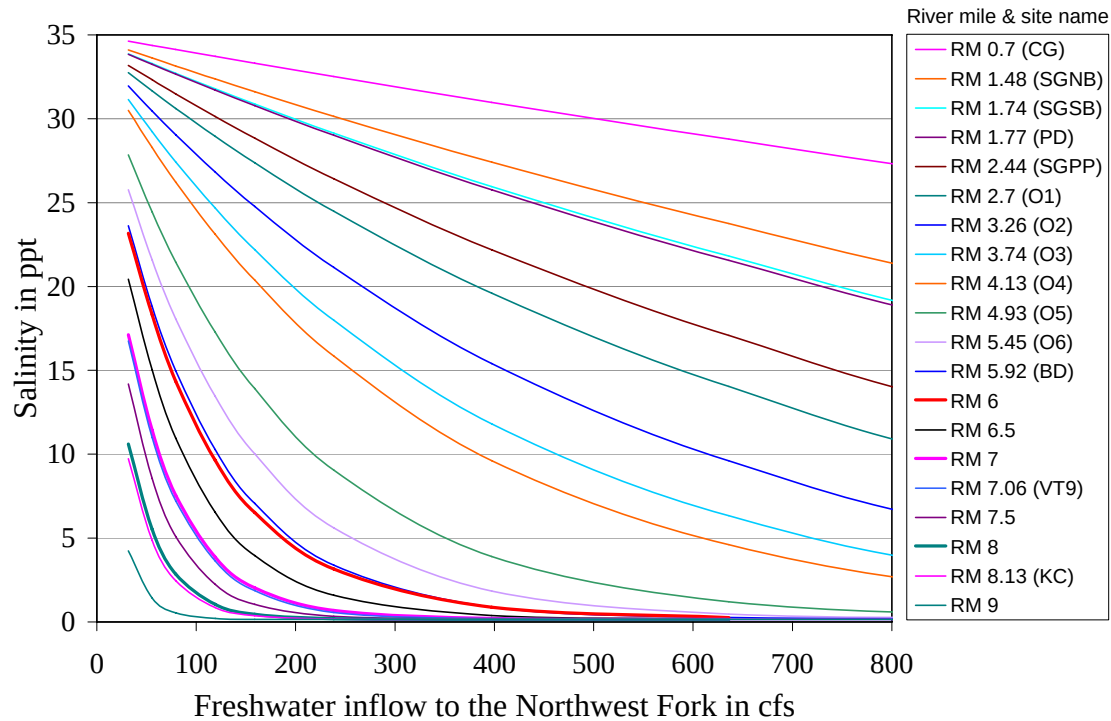


Figure 6-16. The Relationship between Freshwater Flow (cfs) and Salinity (ppt) at 20 Sites.

In order to show the details of salinity variation at low flow end, the charts were plotted only for flows up to 800 cfs. For salinity regimens with freshwater flows greater than 1200 cfs, either **Table 6-14** or Equation [15] can be used to determine the salinity value. The curves in **Figure 6-17** represent the salinity gradients at various levels of freshwater flow. Each line represents the spatial salinity distribution for a particular flow scenario.

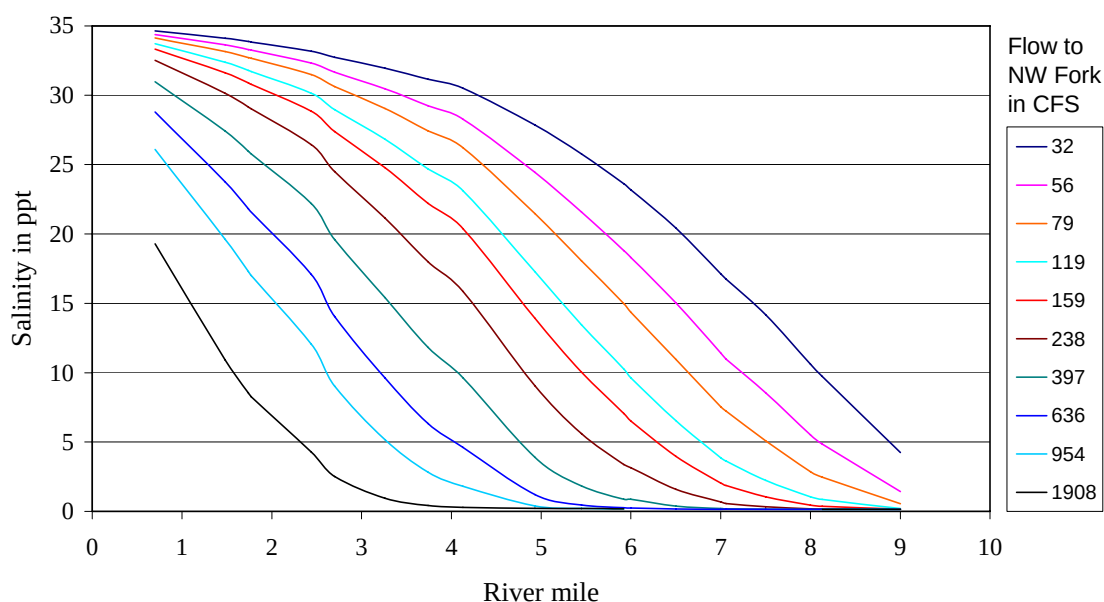


Figure 6-17. Salinity Gradients by River Mile Location under Various Freshwater Flow Conditions.

Although Equation [15] expresses salinity as a single dependent variable function, there are other driving forces that affect salinity including tide, wind, flux between river and groundwater, precipitation, and evaporation. However, the analysis of field data indicated that freshwater flow is the most important factor affecting salinity. When salinity is plotted against freshwater flow, the data points form a clear trend line. Comparing results from Equation [15] with actual field data provides a reality check. **Figures 6-18** through **6-21** compare the model results from Equation [15] with actual field measurements. As expected, deviations from the modeled flow/salinity curve indicate the existence of other driving forces that affect salinity. Nonetheless, the correlation between salinity and freshwater flow is significant. Another factor that could cause deviations is that the system is under constant transition in response to the changes in the driving forces. Therefore, it is rare for the system to reach equilibrium as the case in the constant flow simulations. The overall trend of the field measurements shows a strong correlation between the amount of freshwater flow and salinity throughout the estuary.

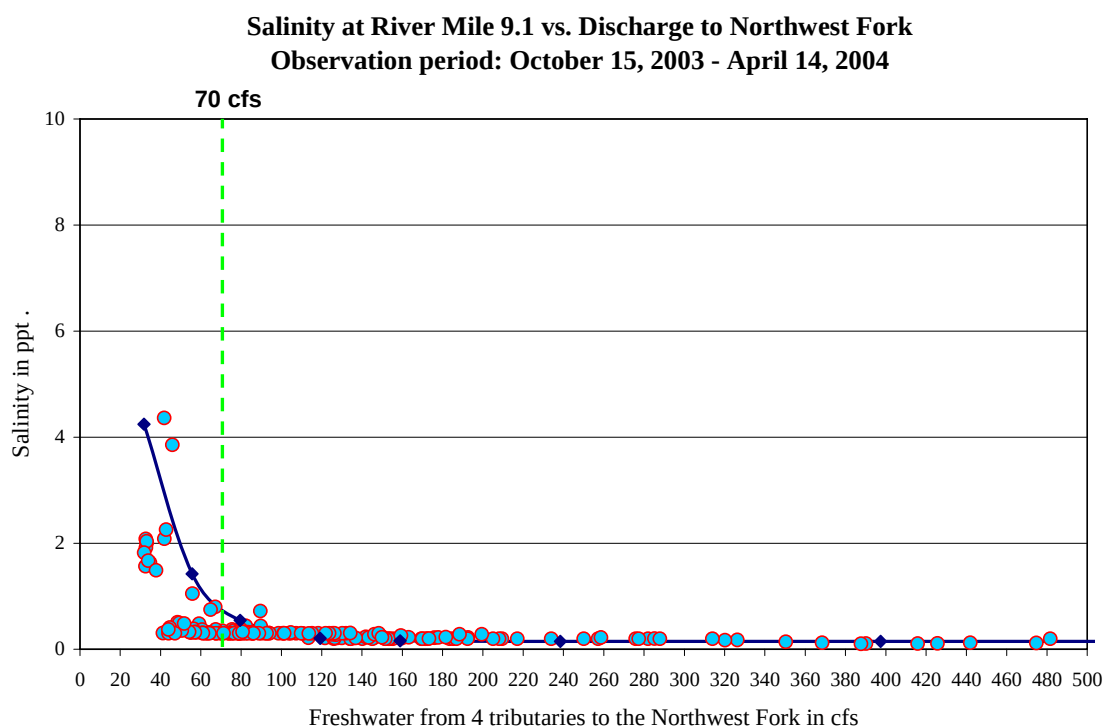


Figure 6-18. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at RM 9.1 from October 15, 2003 to April 14, 2004.

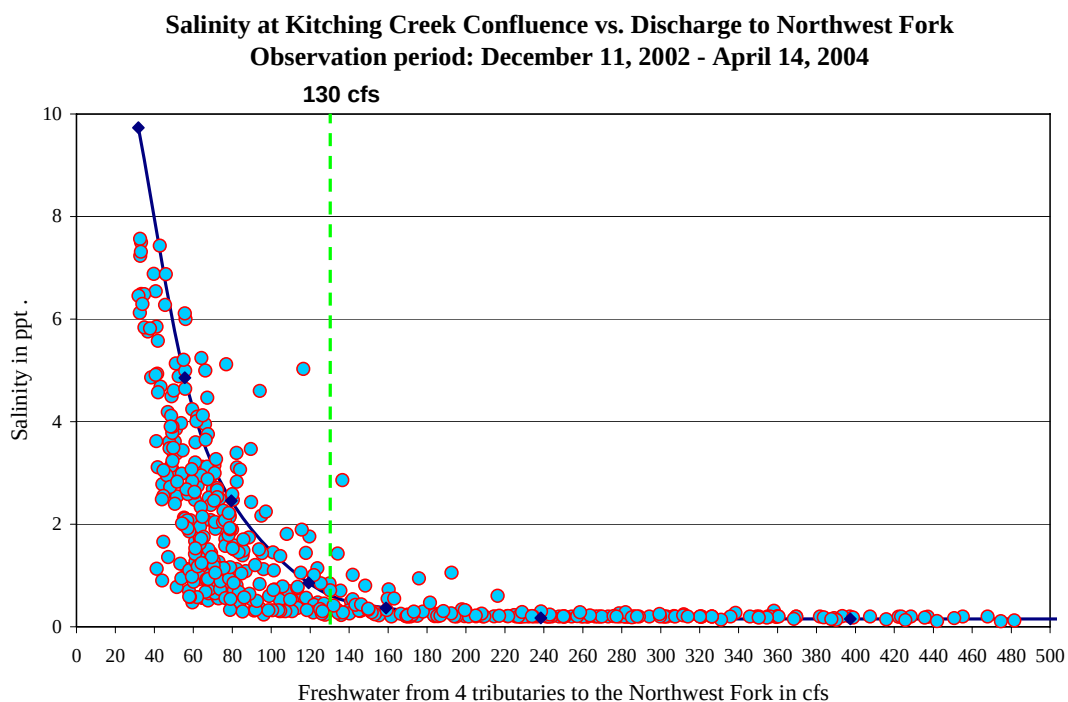


Figure 6-19. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) from October 15, 2003 to April 14, 2004.

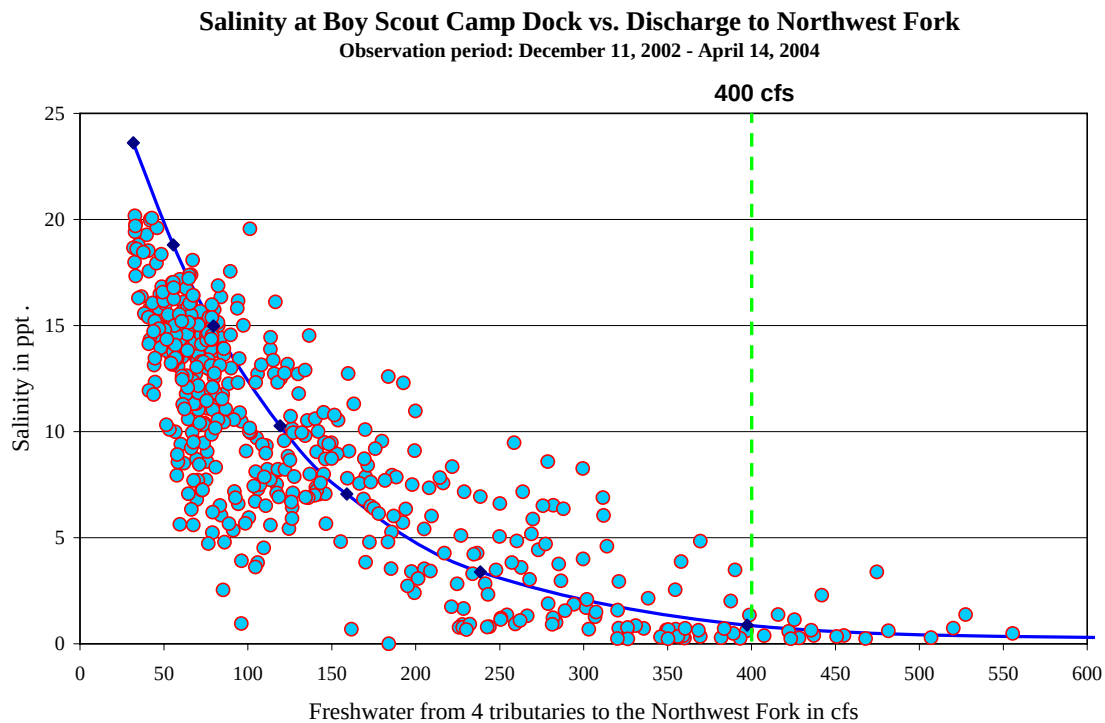


Figure 6-20. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) from December 11, 2002 to April 14, 2004.

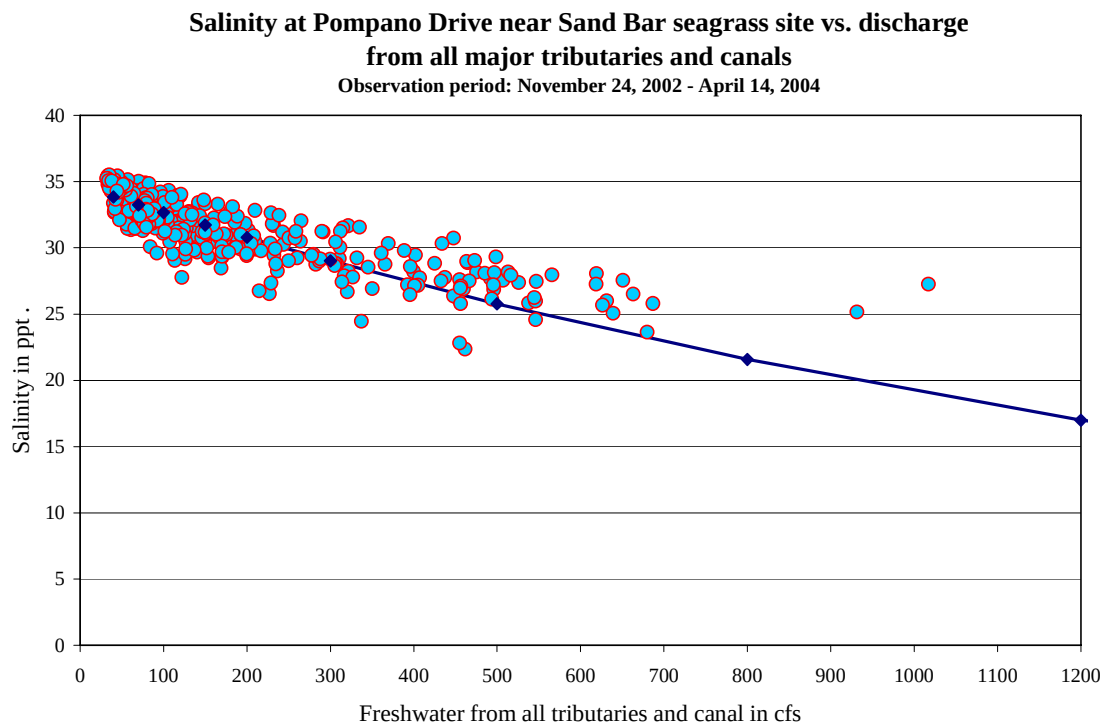


Figure 6-21. The Effects of Freshwater Flow on Salinity in the Embayment near Pompano Drive (RM 1.77) from November 24, 2002 to April 14, 2004.

Freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork from the four major tributaries, several small tributaries, and overland flow were modeled. If the flows from all the tributaries were considered individually, they would form a large array of scenarios. The analysis of the field data indicates that there is a good correlation between salinity at various sites with the total freshwater flow volume to the Northwest Fork. The physical explanation for this correlation is the strong tidal mixing in the Northwest Fork. For example, when the tide rises, freshwater flows from Kitching Creek will be pushed upstream into the river reaches above the mouth of Kitching Creek and thus influence the salinity there. It is the total volume of fresh water entering the Northwest Fork that matters the most for the reaches between RM 6 and RM 9. The origin of fresh water (whether the fresh water was from Kitching Creek or some other tributary) does not seem to be an important factor in the current analysis. Such a finding has two implications:

1. Freshwater from all the tributaries affects the salinity in the Northwest Fork. Therefore, any increase of freshwater discharge from any combination of tributaries will help achieve the salinity management goal of the Northwest Fork between RM 6 and RM 9. In addition to increasing freshwater flows from the G-92, flows from other tributaries and basins such as Cypress Creek/Pal Mar, and Kitching Creek also should be fully utilized.
2. Salinity predictions in the Northwest Fork between RM 6 and RM 9 can be based on total freshwater flow to the Northwest Fork instead of freshwater flow from each individual tributary. Such an approach will allow the testing of more restoration scenarios with limited resources. This capability is especially critical in the initial alternative assessment phase of the restoration plan since numerous scenarios need to be analyzed. When the total amount of freshwater demand is determined, the analysis can then evolve into the next phase, that is, to consider the freshwater contribution from each tributary individually to meet the Northwest Fork freshwater demand. At that phase, a model with more refined spatial resolution, such as the RMA model that was described in the previous sections, can be used for scenarios where tributaries are simulated separately from each other.

The salinity value predicted by Equation [11] is tidally averaged salinity over a lunar tidal cycle. The actual salinity in the river constantly varies in response to tides. If the hourly salinity variation over each tidal cycle needs to be considered, then the information is available from the original model output.

Figure 6-22 is the model output of salinity at the Pennock Point seagrass transect (RM 2.44) in a lunar month. The graphs are the output under three freshwater flow conditions: 500 cfs, 800 cfs, and 1200 cfs. The amount of freshwater flow affects both the overall salinity level and the range of salinity variation (the difference of salinity between high tide and low tide).

Although **Figure 6-22** represents the salinity predictions for only one site under three flow conditions, the model simulation output included salinity for 20 sites under 12 different constant flow conditions; thus 240 sets of time-series data were produced. **Figure 6-22** represents one example from a large array of charts in the model output that cover a wide range of freshwater flows. The salinity conditions represented by 500, 800, and 1200 cfs are relatively high flows that begin to affect salinity conditions at the Pennock Point seagrass site.

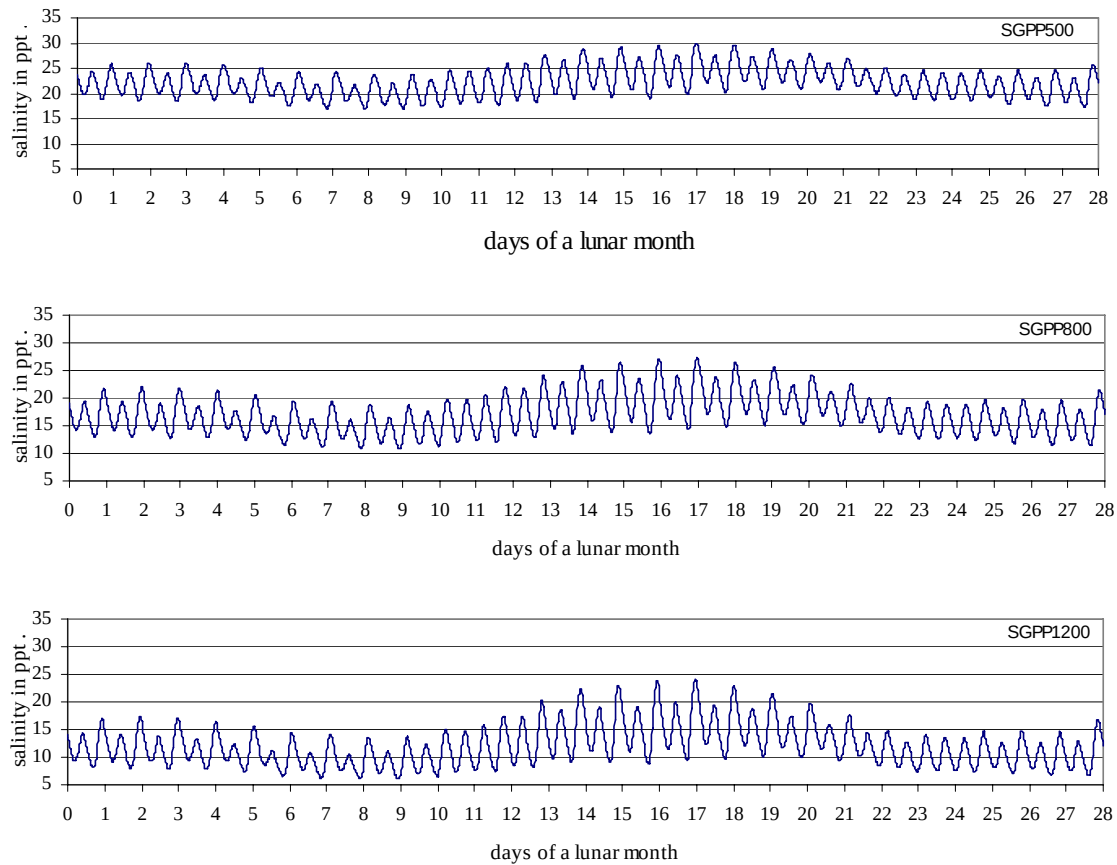


Figure 6-22. Salinity at Pennock Point Seagrass Transect (RM 2.44) in a Lunar Month; Total Freshwater Flow to the Loxahatchee River: 500, 800, and 1200 cfs (S-46 discharge accounted for about 20% of the total flow in the simulations).

The RMA was applied to scenarios with varying amounts of freshwater flow. Both the field data and model simulation indicated that there is a strong correlation between freshwater flow and the salinity regimen in the estuary. Based on model output and field data analysis, a relationship was established to predict salinity at various points in the estuary with respect to freshwater flow rates and tidal fluctuations. The salinity/freshwater relationship was applied in the Loxahatchee River MFL study (SFWMD 2002b). The RMA model was also used to provide a preliminary assessment of the impacts that inlet deepening and sea level rise have had on the salinity regime in the estuary (Hu 2002).

LONG-TERM SALINITY MANAGEMENT MODEL

The freshwater/salinity relationship described in the previous section was coded into the Loxahatchee Estuary Long-Term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) to predict tidally averaged salinity in response to various restoration scenarios. This model also can simulate system operation rules and calculate the amount of freshwater demand for salinity management.

The salinity values in **Table 6-14** are based on an equilibrium state with constant freshwater flows. In the applications of the freshwater input versus salinity relationships, the dynamic nature of the system needs to be considered. Under natural conditions, freshwater flow is rarely constant. The salinity conditions observed in the estuary are the result of a series of transitions from one state to the next. The changes in salinity lag behind the changes in freshwater flow. Following an increase of freshwater flow, salinity in the estuary will decrease accordingly and gradually approach a new equilibrium state. As the amount of freshwater decreases, the salinity in the estuary will increase gradually. Depending on the direction of salinity changes, the process can be described as an exponential increase or decay. **Figure 6-23** is a graphic description of salinity transition when an increase of freshwater flow occurs. The dotted line indicates the equilibrium salinity at the higher level of freshwater flow.

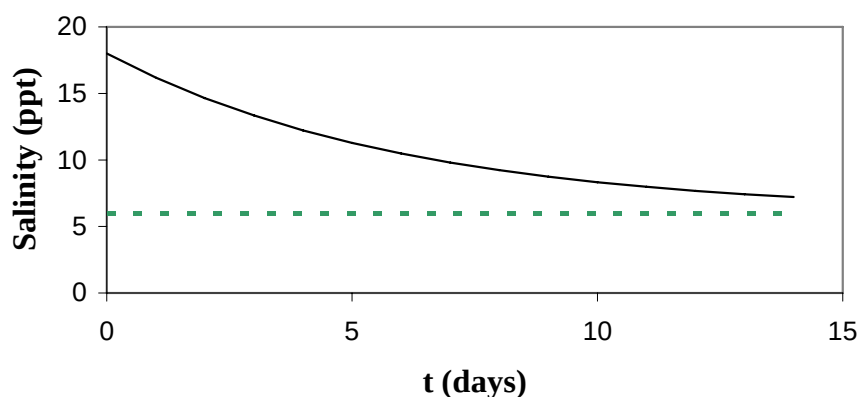


Figure 6-23. Salinity Regimen Transition Process.

The salinity condition within the estuary consists of a series of transitions from one quasi-equilibrium condition to another. This concept is reflected in the LSMM model. The LSMM calculates the potential target (equilibrium) salinity based on the amount of freshwater flow. It then calculates the salinity change on daily time steps using the following equation:

$$\text{SAL2} = \text{SALEQ} + (\text{SAL1} - \text{SALEQ}) * \text{Exp}(-cT) \quad [16]$$

where SAL1 is the salinity at the beginning of the time step, SAL2 is the salinity at the end of the time step, SALEQ is the equilibrium salinity for certain amount of freshwater flow after the transition has completed. T is time and c is a constant that determines the speed of transition. Apparently at the beginning of the time step (T=0), SAL2 = SAL1 and if the freshwater flow remains the same, SAL2 will eventually reach SALEQ.

Because freshwater flow is provided by the watershed (WaSh) model in daily time steps, the calculation of the Long-Term Salinity Management Model is carried at fixed 24-hour time steps. The predicted salinity depends on both target (equilibrium) salinity and the initial salinity

condition at the beginning of the time step. If the freshwater flow changes before the salinity transition are complete, then a new transition begins and the calculations are repeated under the new flow condition.

The LSMM is designed to assess daily average salinity over a long period of time. Because the program operates on daily time steps (versus minutes or seconds of a full hydrodynamic model), it allows the assessment of long-term data (39 years in this model simulation) at minimum cost and computing time. In addition to using hydrologic data provided by the WaSh model, the LSMM can also modify the hydrograph based on certain operational rules such as MFL criteria. The model also calculates the amount of freshwater demand for salinity management and nutrient loadings assuming a target concentration for flows.

Figures 6-24 through 6-27 depict the salinity calculations of the LSMM for December 2002 through April 2004 (517 days). The model output was compared with field data from four salinity stations in the Northwest Fork and the embayment area near the Jupiter Inlet. **Table 6-15** lists the salinity values of both the LSMM model prediction and field data. The mean salinity of LSMM model output is slightly higher than field data at the four stations by 0.1 ppt to 1.4 ppt. The modeled salinity values are likely higher than the field values because the flow gauges on the Northwest Fork and major tributaries do not monitor all of the fresh water entering the system. Thus the actual freshwater flows were higher than measured values resulting in lower actual recorded salinity values. **Tables 6-16 and 6-17** list the statistics of LSMM model prediction and field data for two relatively dry periods (March through May) and the rest of the year, respectively. In general, the simulated daily salinity statistically matches the observed salinities.

Table 6-15. Comparison of Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: December .2002 to April 2004 (517 days).

Station ID	PD (RM1.77)		BD (RM 5.92)		KC (RM 8.13)		RM9	
Date Type	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field
Maximum salinity (ppt)	34.7	35.5	21.8	20.2	7.6	7.6	2.9	4.4
Minimum salinity (ppt)	25.0	22.4	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Mean salinity (ppt)	32.1	31.8	11.1	9.7	2.1	1.5	0.6	0.5
Median salinity (ppt)	33.1	32.4	12.5	10.1	1.8	0.7	0.4	0.3
Standard Deviation (ppt)	2.40	2.50	6.22	5.49	1.94	1.71	0.62	0.58
Data Count	517	477	517	502	517	506	517	199
Number of Missing Records	0	40	0	15	0	11	0	318

Table 6-16. Comparison of Dry Season Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: March through May 2003 and March through April 2004 (153 days).

Station ID	PD (RM 1.77)		BD (RM 5.92)		KC (RM 8.13)		RM9	
Date Type	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field
Maximum salinity (ppt)	34.7	35.5	21.8	20.2	7.6	7.6	2.9	4.4
Minimum salinity (ppt)	26.2	30.1	3.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3
Mean salinity (ppt)	33.5	33.7	15.9	12.3	3.6	2.5	1.0	1.0
Median salinity (ppt)	33.8	33.9	15.9	13.1	3.1	1.7	0.7	0.5
Standard Deviation (ppt)	1.40	1.19	3.98	4.97	2.04	2.08	0.78	0.87
Data Count	153	117	153	150	153	153	153	61
Number of Missing Records	0	36	0	3	0	0	0	92

Table 6-17. Comparison of Salinity Values from the LSMM Model and Field Data: December 2002 through February 2003 and June 2003 through February 2004 (364 days).

Station ID	PD (RM 1.77)		BD (RM 5.92)		KC (RM 8.13)		RM9	
Date Type	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field	Model	Field
Maximum salinity (ppt)	34.5	35.1	20.3	19.6	6.0	6.9	2.0	0.8
Minimum salinity (ppt)	25.0	22.4	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Mean salinity (ppt)	31.5	31.1	9.1	8.6	1.5	1.1	0.4	0.3
Median salinity (ppt)	32.2	31.7	7.9	8.6	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.3
Standard Deviation (ppt)	2.48	2.48	5.90	5.34	1.52	1.32	0.41	0.10
Data Count	364	360	364	352	364	353	364	138
Number of Missing Records	0	4	0	12	0	11	0	226

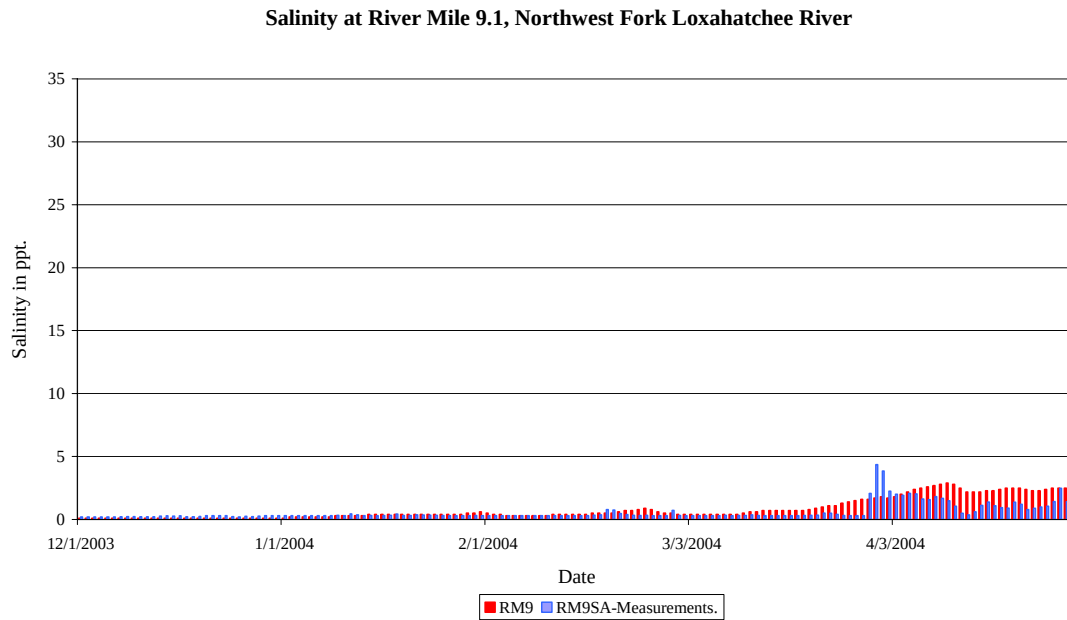


Figure 6-24. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for RM 9.12.

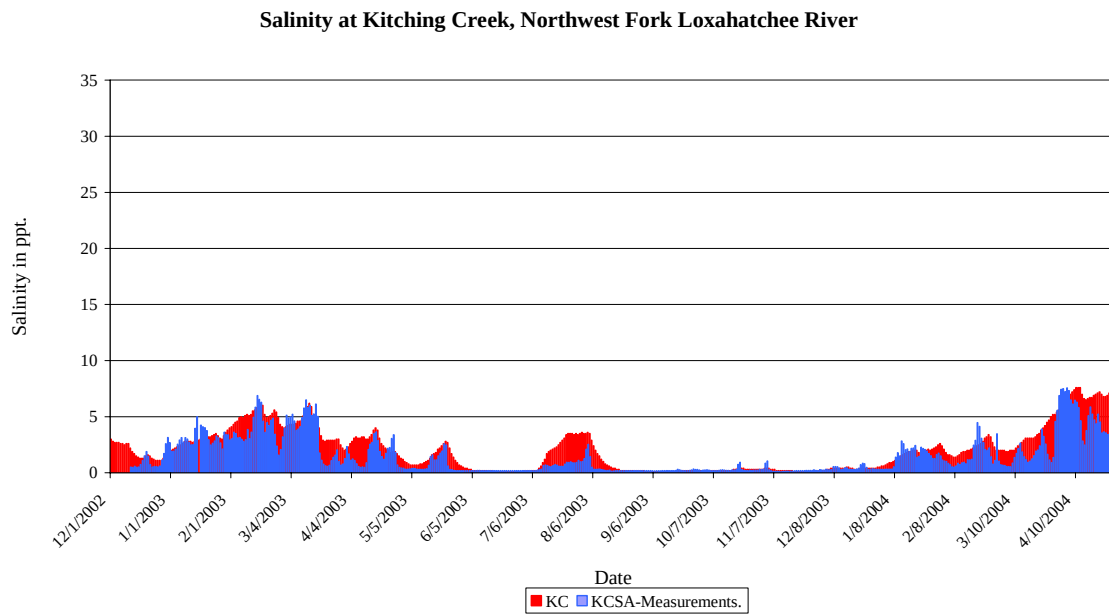


Figure 6-25. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Kitching Creek (RM 8.13).

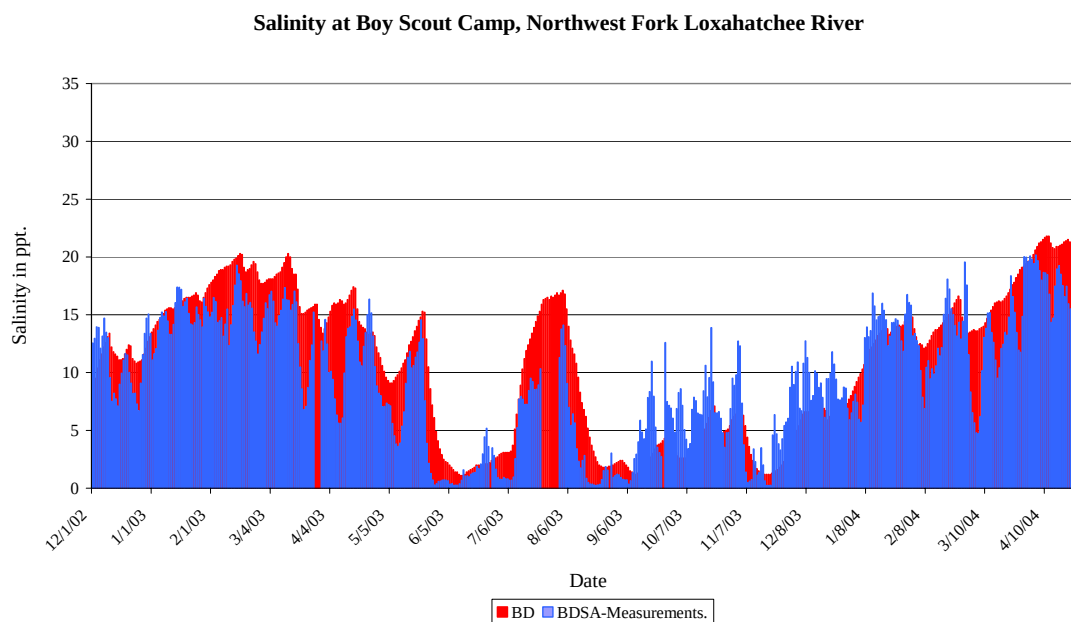


Figure 6-26. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92).

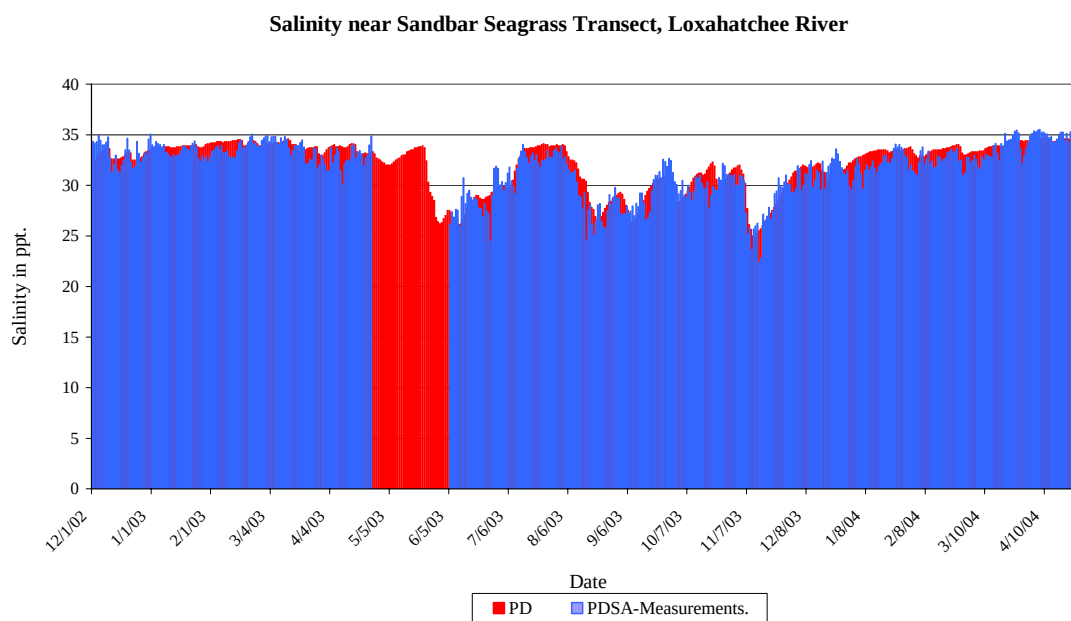


Figure 6-27. Field Measurements vs. LSMM Salinity Computation Results for Pompano Drive Embayment Area (RM 1.77).

SUMMARY

This chapter describes the hydrologic and salinity models applied in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Restoration Plan. The Loxahatchee Watershed (WaSh) model was developed to simulate freshwater flow from each of the tributaries into the Northwest Fork. The WaSh model is based on restructuring HSPF (Hydrologic Simulation Program – Fortran) into a cell-based system with the addition of a groundwater model and a full dynamic channel routing model (Wan et al. 2003). The model is capable of simulating surface water and groundwater hydrology in watersheds with high groundwater tables and dense drainage canal networks. The WaSh model was calibrated and validated using long-term flow data collected at S-46, Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek. The daily flow outputs from the 39-year simulation (1965–2003) provide the basis for the base condition and flow restoration scenarios of the Northwest Fork ecosystem restoration.

The Loxahatchee River Hydrodynamics/Salinity (RMA) model was developed to simulate the influence of freshwater flows on salinity conditions in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. The RMA model is based on the RMA-2 and RMA-4 and was calibrated against field data from five locations and provided salinity predictions for many other sites where field data are not available. Tide/salinity data collected since 2002 have provided a field database for the investigation of the impact of freshwater flow on the salinity regime in the Northwest Fork.

A Long-Term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) was developed to predict long-term daily salinity and calculate several other performance parameters under various ecosystem restoration scenarios. Field data, regression analyses, and results from multidimensional hydrodynamic computer models were integrated into the LSMM as a system simulation and management tool. This salinity management model is applied to predict daily salinity from for the simulation period from 1965 to 2003 under the base condition and various restoration scenarios.

Salinity prediction and other computations were conducted using the Long-Term Salinity Management Model over the 39-year period. Such long-term simulations are required to investigate ecosystem response and assess the effectiveness of proposed restoration approach. The output of the Long-Term Salinity Management Model for five constant flow restoration scenarios is described in **Chapter 7**.

CHAPTER 7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONSTANT FLOW SCENARIOS	6
CONSTANT FLOW SIMULATIONS	6
Scenario 1: LD65	6
Scenario 2: LD65TB65	7
Scenario 3: LD90TB110	7
Scenario 4: LD200	7
Scenario 5: LD200TB200	7
SALINITY SIMULATIONS	8
ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF CONSTANT FLOW SCENARIOS	9
EVALUATION OF RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN	9
Evaluation Methods	9
Results and Discussion	13
Dry Season Evaluation	13
Wet Season Evaluation	18
EVALUATION OF TIDAL FLOODPLAIN	22
Evaluation Methods	22
Results and Discussion	23
EVALUATION OF LOW SALINITY ZONE: FISH LARVAE	29
Evaluation Methods	29
Results and Discussion	29
EVALUATION OF MESOHALINE ZONE: OYSTERS	31
Evaluation Methods	31
Results and Discussion	32
EVALUATION OF POLYHALINE ZONE: SEAGRASSES	45
Evaluation Methods	45
Results and Discussion	46
Long-term (39-Year) Data Evaluation:	46
Short-term (Wet vs. Dry Year) Data Evaluation:	48
SUMMARY	53

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 7-1. Flow Diagram of the Northwest Fork Ecosystem Restoration Flow Scenario Evaluation.....	5
Figure 7-2. The Relationship of Surface Water Stage and Flow over Lainhart Dam at Transect #1.....	10
Figure 7-3. The Relationship of Surface Water Stage and Flow over Lainhart Dam at Transect #3.....	10
Figure 7-4. Surface Water Stage at Transect #1 and Corresponding Flows Over Lainhart Dam.	12
Figure 7-5. Surface Water Stage Across Transect #3 and Corresponding Flows Over Lainhart Dam.	12
Figure 7-6. Reference “Healthy” Floodplain Swamp Community from the SAVELOX Model.	23
Figure 7-7. SAVELOX Model Analysis of Site RM 9.12: A. BASE, B. LD65, C. LD65TB65, D. LD90TB110, E. LD200, and F. LD200TB200.....	25
Figure 7-8. SAVELOX Model analysis of Kitching Creek Site (RM 8.13): A. BASE, B. LD65, C. LD65TB65, D. LD90TB110, E. LD200, and F. LD200TB200.	26
Figure 7-9. Modeled Salinity Time Series at the Kitching Creek Site for Constant Flow Scenarios LD65 and LD65TB65.....	27
Figure 7-10. RMA Model Output of Salinity at Kitching Creek Station (KC at RM 8.13) Over a Lunar Month with Total Freshwater Flow to the Northwest Fork of 130 cfs (LD65TB65).	28
Figure 7-11. Location (in River Miles) of Low Salinity Zone (LSZ) with Varying Freshwater Flows. Red Bars Represent 2 ppt to 8 ppt Salinity Range. Red Shaded Rectangle Represents Largest Ichthyoplankton Captures During June-July 2004. Yellow Shaded Rectangle Represents Largest Ichthyoplankton Captures During 1986-1988.	31
Figure 7-12. Oyster Evaluation Stations in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The Oyster Beds Surveyed in 2003 Are Shown in Yellow. Red Dots Are Monitoring Sites.....	33
Figure 7-13. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the BASE Case.	34
Figure 7-14. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the LD90TB110 Scenario.....	34
Figure 7-15. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the LD200 Scenario.	35
Figure 7-16. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Seven Constant Flow Scenarios at Boy Scout Dock (Station BS, RM 5.92).....	36

Figure 7-17. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Seven Constant Flow Scenarios at Boy Scout Dock (Station BS, RM 5.92).....	37
Figure 7-18. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 6, RM 5.45.....	38
Figure 7-19. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 6, RM 5.45.....	39
Figure 7-20. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 5, RM 4.93.....	40
Figure 7-21. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 5, RM 4.93.....	41
Figure 7-22. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 4, RM 4.13.....	42
Figure 7-23. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 4, RM 4.13.....	43
Figure 7-24. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.	46
Figure 7-25. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.	47
Figure 7-26. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).	49
Figure 7-27. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).	51
Figure 7-28. Comparison of Daily Average Salinity Conditions at Three Seagrass Locations for a Recent Wet Year (1995) and a Recent Dry Year (2000).	52

LIST OF TABLES

Table 7-1. Summary of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios.....	6
Table 7-2. Long-Term Salinity Management Model Simulation of Five SConstant Flow Restoration Scenarios.	8
Table 7-3. Average Salinity (in ppt) at 15 Salinity Study Sites for the Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios Over the 39-Year Simulation Period.	9
Table 7-4. Examination of Flow of the BASE Condition for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (cfs).	14
Table 7-5. Examination of Flow Conditions of the LD65 Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (cfs).	15
Table 7-6. Examination of Flow Conditions of the LD90TB110 Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (cfs).	16
Table 7-7. Examination of Flow Conditions of the LD200 Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (cfs).	17
Table 7-8. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for BASE Condition: Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.	18
Table 7-9. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for LD65 and LD65TB65 : Number of Day in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.	19
Table 7-10. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for LD90TB110 : Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.	20
Table 7-11. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for LD200 and LD200TB200 : Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.	21
Table 7-12. Abundance Index Definitions.	22
Table 7-13. An Analysis of a 1 ppt Salinity Threshold at 4 Sites Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River: Ratio of Salinity Event Duration (<i>Ds</i> , days) and Time Between Events (<i>Db</i> , days).	24
Table 7-14. Summary of Oyster Death and Harm Stress Categories for Each Growth Stage at the Four Oyster Sites.	44
Table 7-15. Number of Stress Events per Model Run Based on Daily Average Salinity from 1/1/1965 – 12/30/2003.	48
Table 7-16. Overall Summary of the Evaluation of Northwest Fork Ecosystem Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios.	54

Chapter 7

Northwest Fork Ecosystems Constant Flow Restoration Scenario Evaluation

Initially, five constant flow restoration scenarios for the Northwest Fork ecosystem were developed and modeled. The evaluations of the results of the five constant flow scenarios are offered in this chapter. The modeling tools used for flow scenario evaluation are described in **Chapter 6**. The Loxahatchee Watershed Model (WaSh) simulated flow from all tributaries to the Northwest Fork. These included flows from the southern watershed areas that provide flows over Lainhart Dam, and flows from other tributary areas north of Lainhart Dam including Cypress Creek, Kitching Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch. To model realistic hydrologic conditions, the simulated flows were based on a 39-year period of record (POR) from 1965 to 2003. These data were used to establish the base condition for scenario evaluation. The Loxahatchee Long-term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) was then used to predict daily salinity under the five scenario conditions at 15 locations (**Figure 6-14**). The ecological benefits from the resulting flow and salinity conditions are evaluated with respect to each of the VECs described in **Chapter 4**. **Figure 7-1** provides an overview of the Northwest Fork restoration scenario evaluation process.

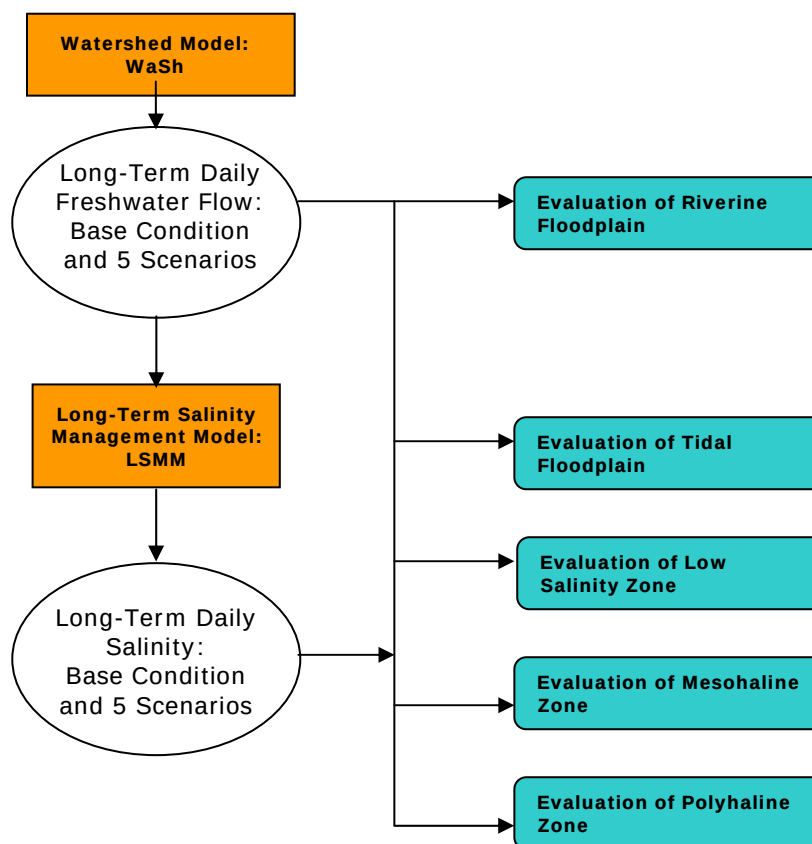


Figure 7-1. Flow Diagram of the Northwest Fork Ecosystem Restoration Flow Scenario Evaluation.

The five constant flow restoration scenarios were designed to represent different levels of flows from a tributary or a combination of tributaries to the Northwest Fork. The scenarios were selected based on information provided by members of the public and agency representatives at meetings held over the past several years to discuss the restoration of the Northwest Fork. For example, a flow of 65 cfs had been used as a flow target in the model for the development of the *Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan* (SFWMD, 2002). **Table 7-1** summarizes the flow component(s) of each scenario. The next section of this chapter describes and discusses the five constant flow scenarios in detail.

Table 7-1. Summary of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios.

Northwest Fork Tributaries	BASE condition	LD65	LD65TB65	LD90TB110	LD 200	LD200TB200
Lainhart Dam (LD)	39-year POR	65 cfs	65 cfs	90 cfs	200 cfs	200 cfs
Other tributaries (TB) ^a	39-year POR	39-year POR - 30 cfs	65 cfs	110 cfs	39-year POR – 30 cfs	200 cfs
Total Flow ^b	50 cfs	95 cfs	130 cfs	200 cfs	230 cfs	400 cfs

POR = Period of record.

^a Other tributaries include Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek.

^b Total Flow for POR is approximated using the modeled time series data.

CONSTANT FLOW SCENARIOS

The **BASE** simulation represents the existing or current conditions of the Loxahatchee River Watershed and was modeled based on the 39-year POR from 1965 to 2003. Simulations of the five constant flow restoration scenarios were conducted with certain modifications to the **BASE** simulation hydrographs. The modifications represent scenarios that provide additional freshwater flows to the upper Northwest Fork at Lainhart Dam and from the tributaries (Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove, and Kitching Creek) to reduce salinity in the freshwater segments of the Northwest Fork. The results of each simulation are presented and followed with a summary of potential impacts to the previously described VEC species (riverine and tidal floodplains, larval fishes, oysters and seagrasses) in **Chapter 4**. Adult fish and other wildlife will be mentioned although their specific biological/hydrological requirements are unknown.

CONSTANT FLOW SIMULATIONS

Scenario 1: LD65

In this scenario, the hydrograph of **BASE** was modified by increasing flows at the Lainhart Dam. Whenever flow at Lainhart Dam was below 65 cfs under the BASE condition, water was added to raise the Lainhart Dam flow to 65 cfs. Therefore in this simulation, freshwater flow from the Lainhart Dam was never less than 65 cfs. In this simulation, no change was made to flows from the tributaries Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove, and Kitching Creek. Flow from these three tributaries was the same as the BASE case, which is cumulative total of 30 cfs.

With a constant flow of 65 cfs or greater at Lainhart Dam, this simulation located the saltwater front (>2 ppt) approximately at RM 8.5.

Scenario 2: LD65TB65

In Scenario 2, the hydrograph of **BASE** was modified at both the Lainhart Dam and the tributaries. Whenever flow at Lainhart Dam was below 65 cfs, water was added to raise the Lainhart Dam flow to 65 cfs. Whenever total flow from the tributaries was below 65 cfs, water was added to raise the total flow from the tributaries to 65 cfs. Therefore in this simulation, freshwater flow from the Lainhart Dam was never less than 65 cfs, and total flow from the tributaries was never less than 65 cfs. The combined flow from both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries was 130 cfs in this simulation.

With the increased flows at both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries, this simulation located the saltwater front (>2 ppt) approximately at RM 8.0.

Scenario 3: LD90TB110

In Scenario 3, the hydrograph of **BASE** was modified at both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries. In this simulation, whenever flow at Lainhart Dam was below 90 cfs, water was added to raise the flow at Lainhart Dam to 90 cfs. Whenever total flow from the tributaries was below 110 cfs, water was added to raise the total flow from the tributaries to 110 cfs. Therefore, in this simulation, freshwater flow from the Lainhart Dam was never less than 90 cfs, and total flow from the tributaries was never less than 110 cfs. The combined flow from both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries was 200 cfs in this simulation.

With the increased flows at both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries, this simulation located the saltwater front (>2 ppt) approximately at RM 7.5.

Scenario 4: LD200

In Scenario 4, the hydrograph of **BASE** was modified at Lainhart Dam. Whenever flow at Lainhart Dam was below 200 cfs, water was added to raise the flow over Lainhart Dam to 200 cfs. Therefore, freshwater flow from the Lainhart Dam was never less than 200 cfs. In this simulation, no change was made to flows from the tributaries Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove, and Kitching Creek. Flow from these three tributaries was the same as the **BASE** case.

With the increased flow at Lainhart Dam, this simulation located the saltwater front (>2 ppt) approximately at RM 7.0

Scenario 5: LD200TB200

In Scenario 5, the hydrograph of **BASE** was modified at both the Lainhart Dam and the tributaries. Whenever flow at Lainhart Dam was below 200 cfs, water was added to raise the Lainhart Dam flow to 200 cfs. Whenever total flow from the tributaries was below 200 cfs, water was added to raise the total flow from the tributaries to 200 cfs. Therefore, freshwater flow from the Lainhart Dam was never less than 200 cfs, and flow from the tributaries was never less than 200 cfs. The combined flow from both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries was 400 cfs in this simulation.

With the increased flows at both Lainhart Dam and the tributaries, this simulation located the saltwater front (>2 ppt) approximately at RM 6.0. The flows and salinity conditions of the base and the five constant flow scenarios are summarized in **Table 7-2**.

Table 7-2. Long-Term Salinity Management Model Simulation of Five SConstant Flow Restoration Scenarios.

Scenario	Base Condition Hydrograph	Added Flows From Lainhart Dam	Added Flows From Tributaries	Total Added Flows	Approximate Saltwater Front Position
Base	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	No additional flows	No additional flows	No additional flows from Lainhart Dam or tributaries	RM 9.5
LD65	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 65 cfs at all times	No additional flows	Additional flows only from Lainhart Dam for a minimum of 65 cfs; No additional flows from tributaries	RM 8.5
LD65TB65	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 65 cfs at all times	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 65 cfs at all times	Additional flows from Lainhart Dam and tributaries. Total flow is a minimum of 130 cfs at all times.	RM 8.0
LD90TB110	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 90 cfs at all times	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 110 cfs at all times	Additional flows from Lainhart Dam and tributaries. Total flow is a minimum of 200 cfs at all times	RM 7.5
LD200	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 200 cfs at all times	No additional flows	Additional flows only from Lainhart Dam for a minimum of 200 cfs; No additional flows from tributaries	RM 7.0
LD200TB200	1965-2003 base condition generated by watershed model	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 200 cfs at all times	Water added as needed so flow is a minimum of 200 cfs at all times	Additional flows from Lainhart Dam and tributaries. Total flow is a minimum of 400 cfs at all times	RM 6.0

SALINITY SIMULATIONS

The salinity values for each constant flow simulation scenario was averaged over the entire 39-year POR to provide an overview of differences in salinity between the scenarios. **Table 7-3** lists the average salinity for the 15 salinity study sites (**Chapter 6, Figure 6-14**).

Table 7-3. Average Salinity (in ppt) at 15 Salinity Study Sites for the Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios Over the 39-Year Simulation Period.

Salinity Study Site*		Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios					
Site ID	River Mile	BASE	LD65	LD65TB65	LD90TB110	LD200	LD200TB200
CG	0.70	33.0	32.8	32.6	32.2	31.8	30.7
SGNB	1.48	32.0	31.6	31.3	30.4	29.6	27.6
SGSB	1.74	31.3	30.8	30.3	29.3	28.4	26.0
PD	1.77	31.2	30.6	30.2	29.2	28.3	25.8
SGPP	2.44	29.2	28.5	27.9	26.5	25.2	22.0
O1	2.70	26.9	26.1	25.4	23.7	22.3	18.7
O2	3.26	24.6	23.5	22.5	20.4	18.7	14.5
O3	3.74	22.5	21.0	19.9	17.4	15.5	11.0
O4	4.13	21.0	19.4	18.1	15.4	13.4	8.9
O5	4.93	16.2	13.9	12.2	9.1	7.2	3.5
O6	5.45	13.5	10.7	8.9	5.9	4.3	1.6
BD	5.92	10.9	7.9	6.2	3.7	2.5	0.7
VT9	6.46	5.8	3.0	1.8	0.7	0.4	0.2
KC	8.13	2.7	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
RM9	9.12	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

^a Additional study site information is presented in **Chapter 6, Table 6-8**.

Table 7-3 presents the salinity gradient of each scenario for the 15 study sites. Salinity ranges from near ocean conditions at the U.S. Coast Guard Station (RM 0.7; CG) near Jupiter Inlet to freshwater conditions at River Mile 9 (RM 9.12) in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The five scenarios that increase freshwater flows also lower the salinity throughout the river and the estuary.

It is important to point out that the salinity condition in the Northwest Fork is extremely sensitive to the amount of freshwater flow. A small change in freshwater flow of less than 10 cfs can cause changes in salinity as high as several ppt in the upper Northwest Fork. **Table 7-3** only provides the average salinity for each site. A complete assessment of the salinity condition under each scenario is provided in greater detail in the following sections.

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF CONSTANT FLOW SCENARIOS

EVALUATION OF RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN

Evaluation Methods

With the establishment of river flow and stage relationships (**Chapter 5**), it is possible to evaluate predicted floodplain inundation characteristics on the riverine freshwater floodplain reach of the Northwest Fork. **Figures 7-2** and **7-3** illustrate the relationship between flows over Lainhart Dam and river stage levels at Transect #1 (RM 14.50) and Transect #3 (RM 12.07). The range and average ground elevations for hydric hammock and swamp forest types were determined from transect vegetation and survey data. In Transect #3 the distribution of hydric hammock community was not surveyed, and thus only floodplain swamp elevations are shown in **Figure 7-3**.

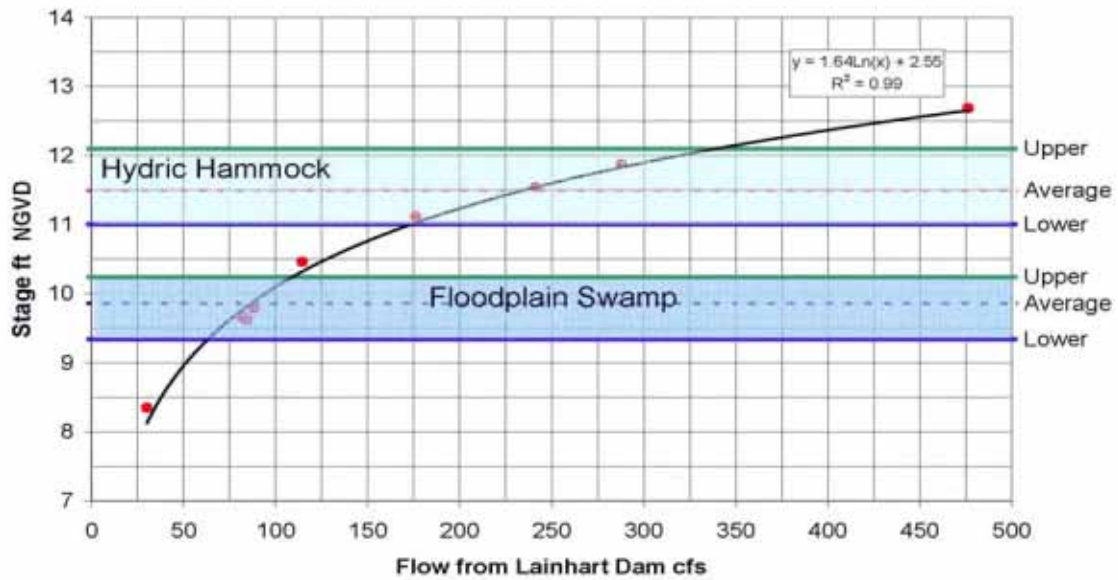


Figure 7-2. The Relationship of Surface Water Stage and Flow over Lainhart Dam at Transect #1.

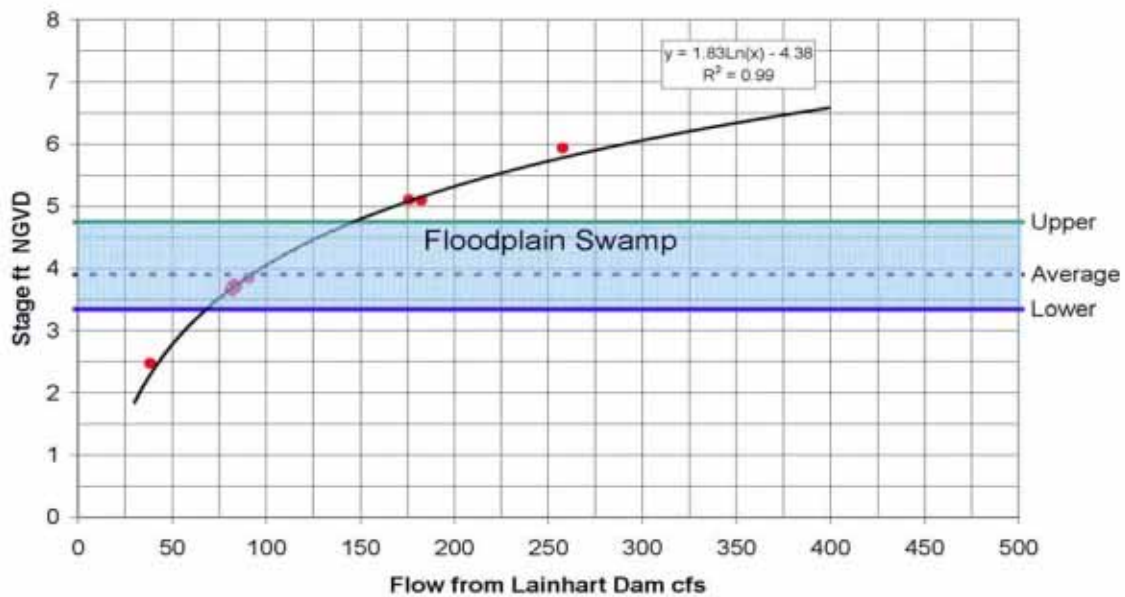


Figure 7-3. The Relationship of Surface Water Stage and Flow over Lainhart Dam at Transect #3.

Figures 7-4 and **7-5** show the approximate surface water stages at Transect #1 (RM 14.50) and Transect #3 (RM 12.07), respectively, for five Lainhart Dam flows. The transect profiles are shown to illustrate the variable topography along each of the two transects and to illustrate the average ground elevation of hydric hammock and swamp communities. At 65 cfs (solid blue line), the river stage at Transect #1 corresponds to the bottom elevation of the swamp community, and at Transect #3 this line is at the bottom elevations of most of the swamp community, and flow is contained within the banks of the river. At 90 cfs (dashed orange line), the river stage at Transect #1 and Transect #3 is at the average elevation of the swamp community, and flow is still contained within the banks of the river. At 110 cfs (dashed blue line) the flow is out of its banks at Transect #1 and the floodplain is inundated to the upper level of the swamp community; at Transect #3 the flow is in the banks within the main channel and out of the bank of the braided channel in the swamp area. At 180 cfs (dashed green line) the river stage is at the lower elevation of the hydric hammock community. At flows of 340 cfs (dashed green line) the river stage is at the upper elevation of the hydric hammock community.

The **BASE** Case and five scenarios were evaluated with performance measures defined in **Chapter 4** to determine the impact on vegetation from the hydroperiods associated with each scenario. To evaluate the dry season performance in the riverine freshwater floodplain reach of the Northwest Fork, the **BASE** condition and the five constant flow scenarios were examined for monthly average flow conditions within the 39-year modeled dataset. For the analysis, the months of December through May, inclusive, were considered the dry season, whereas the months of June through November, inclusive, were considered the wet season.

To evaluate the performance in the wet season for each scenario on floodplain swamp communities, the total number of days was counted where the 20-day rolling average flow of 110 cfs was exceeded. A 20-day moving average is used to reflect the days after a storm when the flow in the river is lower than 110 cfs but the swamp may remain inundated by water ponded in the low areas. To examine the performance of wet season flows for each scenario for hydric hammock, the 39-year modeled dataset was used to establish days of inundation. The number of days of inundation was counted if the flow was greater than 180 cfs, 240 cfs, and 340 cfs, which correspond to the low, median and high elevation occurrences of hydric hammock at Transects #1.

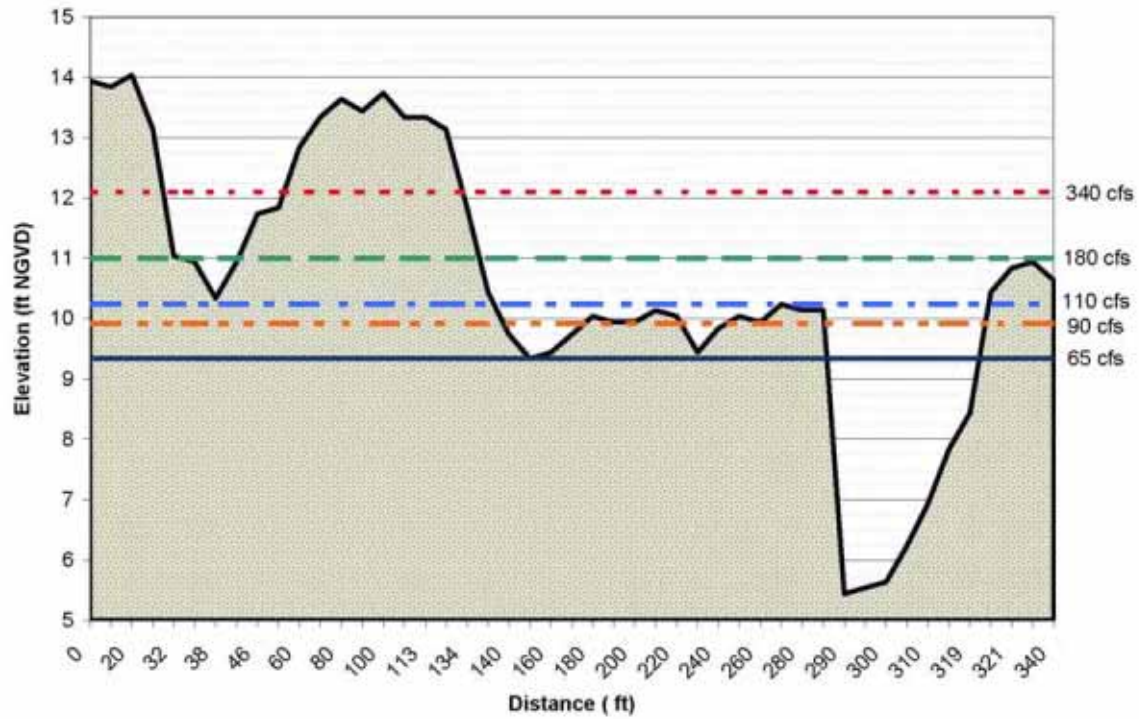


Figure 7-4. Surface Water Stage at Transect #1 and Corresponding Flows Over Lainhart Dam.

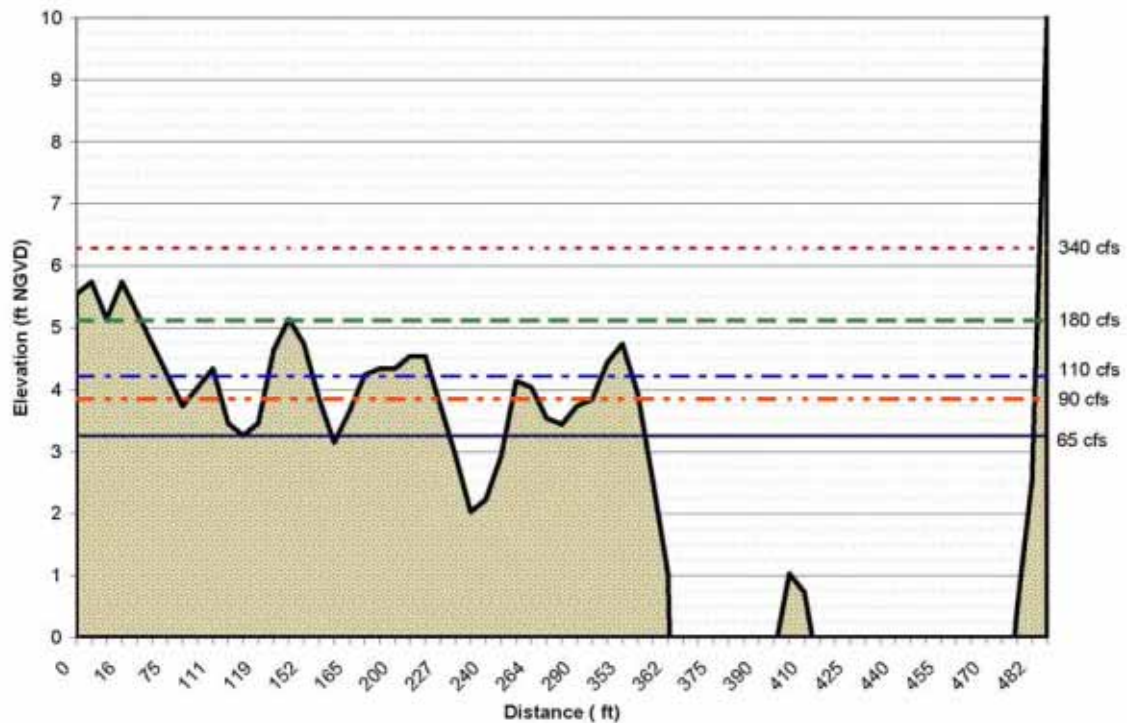


Figure 7-5. Surface Water Stage Across Transect #3 and Corresponding Flows Over Lainhart Dam.

Results and Discussion

Dry Season Evaluation

A monthly mean was determined for each month of the year and a yearly mean was determined for each year. The results are shown in **Tables 7-4** through **7-7**. Color codes were used to identify monthly average flow between 0-35 cfs (red), and 35-65 cfs (orange). Dry season flows were also evaluated for unseasonably high contributions to the Northwest Fork. The months highlighted in dark blue indicate the mean monthly flow was greater than 90 cfs during the dry season.

The **BASE** condition shows a large percentage of months when the mean monthly flows were below 35 cfs during the dry season (December to May) (**Table 7-4**). For the dry seasons of 1989 and 1990, mean monthly flows ranged from 2 to 16 cfs which may represent a stressed condition. The lowest average yearly flows occurred in 1989 (25 cfs), 1965 (34 cfs) and 1990 (36 cfs) while the highest average yearly flows occurred in 1995 (166 cfs), 1994 (165 cfs), and 1993 (150 cfs). The years 1970 and 1993 exhibited the highest dry season flows (highlighted in dark blue) with mean monthly flows ranging from 92 cfs to 237 cfs. The average dry season flow for the 39-year period was 66 cfs. High flows during the dry season would not harm the swamp communities but may impact deciduous seed germination and seedling/sapling growth, which is needed periodically to encourage new recruits to the communities. Also, the table illustrates how a lack of rain during the wet season can add to the low flow conditions on the Northwest Fork (i.e., 1988-1989).

Table 7-4. Examination of Flow of the **BASE** Condition for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (Dry Season: December through May, Wet Season: June through November).

Dry Season	Wet Season
< 35	< 35
< 65	< 65
>= 65 & <=90	>= 65
> 90	

LNHRT-Base

	Date												
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average
1965	39	35	14	2	1	14	29	45	10	136	71	10	34
1966	90	76	34	22	53	211	220	127	88	203	63	37	102
1967	22	40	37	18	5	52	89	114	67	193	79	26	62
1968	14	13	7	2	19	302	173	136	197	274	147	62	112
1969	71	45	116	35	154	120	79	131	135	269	173	86	119
1970	113	104	208	237	97	155	112	64	56	71	29	18	105
1971	16	18	12	3	47	19	38	46	136	79	194	73	57
1972	44	39	21	41	191	204	85	50	33	33	68	28	70
1973	28	36	14	9	13	80	66	124	134	168	41	39	63
1974	150	39	45	14	8	131	151	156	54	134	57	63	84
1975	27	30	20	7	33	104	141	31	85	108	39	15	54
1976	9	20	27	5	106	114	30	67	182	72	72	28	61
1977	60	19	10	2	25	33	11	24	271	42	24	139	55
1978	72	30	32	6	14	145	140	145	88	168	263	190	108
1979	193	79	56	47	61	51	31	19	161	146	113	66	85
1980	47	58	39	20	33	29	86	34	32	80	26	17	42
1981	7	9	3	1	2	6	6	152	176	46	53	9	39
1982	12	26	150	200	166	241	124	93	110	145	302	182	146
1983	143	200	172	108	76	141	77	135	268	342	198	157	168
1984	123	86	127	84	102	124	65	48	179	120	196	150	117
1985	72	43	28	61	21	25	65	40	144	110	53	71	61
1986	125	42	102	82	14	93	112	72	76	80	92	99	83
1987	112	36	69	25	15	24	43	30	39	137	234	34	67
1988	57	47	42	14	29	91	116	184	75	18	14	7	58
1989	4	2	17	8	7	8	30	85	25	79	14	15	25
1990	11	6	7	10	7	15	17	77	93	151	22	16	36
1991	142	118	53	141	119	160	128	86	134	192	92	83	121
1992	49	117	66	56	20	122	125	188	217	164	198	95	118
1993	231	204	200	122	92	104	87	85	164	281	149	89	150
1994	96	142	84	82	70	143	114	223	273	209	278	285	166
1995	140	96	98	85	69	101	131	288	186	352	271	153	165
1996	82	73	156	116	137	140	176	96	128	163	123	78	123
1997	81	104	84	121	93	214	109	200	222	105	83	149	130
1998	148	204	161	88	106	53	84	66	208	133	289	102	136
1999	227	89	70	39	30	172	122	109	198	335	206	109	142
2000	81	74	62	91	34	19	40	18	52	174	29	23	58
2001	16	9	46	24	8	43	197	260	254	236	145	78	110
2002	69	125	60	44	15	116	185	57	40	51	43	36	70
2003	22	14	62	46	119	137	48	149	90	73	146	75	82
Average	78	65	67	54	57	104	94	104	130	151	120	77	92

In the **LD65** scenario, dry season monthly flows were improved (greater than 65 cfs and less than 90 cfs) (**Table 7-5**). **LD65TB65** scenario used the same Lainhart Dam flows as the **LD65** scenario (see **Table 7-2**); therefore, the **LD65TB65** figure was not included. Similar to the base condition, 20 percent (8 of 39 years) had more than 3 months of average monthly flow greater than 90 cfs (dark blue).

Table 7-5. Examination of Flow Conditions of the **LD65** Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (Dry Season: December through May, Wet Season: June through November).

Years	Date												Average
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1965	65	70	66	65	65	66	71	79	65	160	96	65	78
1966	101	107	68	67	88	211	220	133	95	203	72	65	119
1967	65	72	71	65	65	78	109	125	81	194	92	65	90
1968	65	65	65	65	67	303	174	137	200	274	147	68	136
1969	79	67	123	65	157	121	88	134	138	269	173	86	126
1970	113	104	209	237	102	155	112	70	75	77	65	65	115
1971	65	65	65	65	87	67	69	71	143	97	196	95	90
1972	66	66	66	72	193	204	87	72	65	65	86	65	92
1973	66	68	65	65	65	97	96	125	134	170	67	66	91
1974	162	65	75	65	65	136	151	156	69	135	80	70	103
1975	65	65	65	65	70	109	141	65	106	113	65	65	83
1976	65	72	67	65	132	118	65	94	182	85	91	66	92
1977	85	65	65	65	77	68	65	69	271	72	68	142	93
1978	89	65	67	65	66	161	140	147	89	168	263	190	126
1979	193	79	67	79	74	71	65	65	170	149	116	75	100
1980	76	74	68	65	77	65	99	66	69	100	65	65	74
1981	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	177	176	70	79	65	85
1982	65	66	162	200	172	241	124	93	125	145	302	182	156
1983	143	200	172	108	76	141	77	135	268	342	198	157	168
1984	123	86	127	84	106	124	69	67	186	120	197	150	120
1985	73	65	65	85	65	71	80	70	157	112	68	85	83
1986	133	66	116	100	65	117	113	77	85	101	94	105	98
1987	114	65	87	65	65	70	77	67	75	150	234	65	95
1988	74	68	70	65	71	107	127	193	89	65	65	65	88
1989	65	65	65	65	65	65	67	100	65	99	65	65	71
1990	65	65	65	65	66	67	65	93	113	157	65	65	79
1991	161	124	77	141	125	160	128	93	134	192	93	84	126
1992	65	121	77	75	65	143	127	189	217	164	198	95	128
1993	231	204	200	122	92	104	87	86	164	281	149	89	150
1994	96	142	84	88	75	144	114	223	273	209	278	285	167
1995	140	96	98	85	70	102	131	288	186	352	271	153	165
1996	82	73	156	116	137	140	176	96	128	163	123	78	123
1997	81	104	84	123	94	214	109	200	222	105	83	149	131
1998	148	204	161	88	108	71	92	73	209	133	289	102	139
1999	227	89	71	65	65	178	123	112	198	335	206	109	148
2000	81	74	68	99	66	65	68	65	83	179	66	65	82
2001	65	65	83	66	65	86	198	260	254	236	145	78	134
2002	71	126	70	73	65	132	185	73	68	73	67	65	89
2003	65	65	85	70	140	137	68	149	93	81	147	76	98
Average	99	89	92	86	88	122	108	118	142	159	134	96	111

However, the mean monthly flows for the **LD90TB110** scenario (Table 7-6) have 23 of 39 years (59%) that had more than 3 months of average monthly flow greater than 90 cfs (dark blue).

Table 7-6. Examination of Flow Conditions of the **LD90TB110** Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (Dry Season: December through May, Wet Season: June through November).

Dry Season	Wet Season
< 35	< 35
< 65	< 65
>= 65 & <=90	>= 65
> 90	

LNHRT-LD90TB110

	Date												
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average
1965	90	92	90	90	90	90	93	99	90	171	114	90	100
1966	115	126	91	90	106	212	220	143	105	204	91	90	133
1967	90	93	94	90	90	98	126	136	101	198	107	90	110
1968	90	90	90	90	91	304	178	142	206	274	148	90	149
1969	97	91	136	90	161	126	105	144	147	269	173	93	136
1970	122	112	216	237	117	157	118	91	97	96	90	90	128
1971	90	90	90	90	107	91	91	92	151	112	200	113	110
1972	90	90	90	94	197	204	100	93	90	90	104	90	111
1973	90	91	90	90	90	113	113	131	138	177	90	90	109
1974	173	90	96	90	90	144	152	159	91	144	101	91	119
1975	90	90	90	90	92	120	145	90	120	123	90	90	103
1976	90	95	90	90	143	127	90	109	184	103	109	90	110
1977	103	90	90	90	98	90	90	91	271	92	91	149	112
1978	108	90	91	90	90	173	144	155	99	168	263	190	139
1979	193	92	90	100	94	92	90	90	176	155	126	94	116
1980	97	96	91	90	98	90	113	90	92	116	90	90	96
1981	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	189	176	91	98	90	106
1982	90	90	173	203	180	241	125	100	143	146	302	182	164
1983	143	200	172	109	92	143	93	142	268	342	198	157	171
1984	124	91	131	94	125	128	90	91	197	125	209	153	130
1985	91	90	90	104	90	93	99	92	170	120	90	104	103
1986	144	90	133	115	90	129	121	94	101	115	105	122	113
1987	123	90	106	90	90	92	96	91	96	160	234	90	113
1988	94	90	92	90	93	121	138	202	103	90	90	90	108
1989	90	90	90	90	90	90	91	114	90	115	90	90	94
1990	90	90	90	90	90	91	90	106	129	164	90	90	101
1991	173	136	97	144	138	161	131	107	136	192	103	96	135
1992	90	130	95	96	90	158	135	191	217	166	199	99	139
1993	231	204	201	124	101	107	94	102	164	281	149	94	154
1994	99	142	92	105	92	146	121	223	273	209	278	285	172
1995	140	96	101	95	90	116	133	288	186	352	271	154	169
1996	91	90	163	126	148	140	177	105	134	163	127	92	130
1997	95	111	94	133	103	214	110	200	222	108	91	149	136
1998	149	204	161	96	121	93	105	93	213	133	289	103	146
1999	227	94	90	90	90	183	130	121	198	335	206	111	157
2000	92	90	91	115	90	90	92	90	102	186	90	90	102
2001	90	90	101	90	90	108	203	260	257	236	146	92	147
2002	90	133	90	95	90	144	188	93	91	95	91	90	107
2003	90	90	102	91	156	140	90	149	106	98	154	92	113
Average	114	106	109	105	107	135	121	131	152	167	146	111	125

The **LD200** (included as **Table 7-7**) and **LD200TB200** scenarios showed 100% inundation during the dry season. Vegetation reproduction in the swamp communities may be impacted by prolonged flooding. Additionally, flooding will present a problem in the lower segments of the hydric hammock and bottomland hardwood communities, which may cause significant declines in the target species in these communities. The **LD200TB200** scenario provides a 200 cfs flow from Lainhart Dam and an additional 200 cfs in the riverine reach for a total flow of 400 cfs in the tidal reaches of the river. Changes in the width of the river channel were evident in historical aerial photographs that were examined for 1940 and 1995 (SFWMD 2002b). The tidal Northwest Fork is now much wider than it appeared in 1940.

The scenarios were not analyzed for all fish and wildlife impacts. The necessity for base line information on these ecological communities is addressed in **Chapter 10**. Data are needed on the general distribution, abundance, and reproductive cycles of native amphibians and floodplain fish species. These data will establish correlations between wet and dry season hydrological conditions and distribution and abundance of species for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Table 7-7. Examination of Flow Conditions of the **LD200** Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (Dry Season: December through May, Wet Season: June through November).

Dry Season	Wet Season
< 35	< 35
< 65	< 65
>= 65 & <=90	>= 65
> 90	

LNHRT-LD200

	Date												
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average
1965	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	233	209	200	204
1966	205	214	200	200	200	242	248	213	200	243	200	200	214
1967	200	200	200	200	200	200	211	209	200	244	200	200	205
1968	200	200	200	200	200	309	226	215	253	274	206	200	224
1969	200	200	219	200	215	203	200	217	214	285	217	200	214
1970	209	201	274	258	204	219	207	200	201	200	200	200	214
1971	200	200	200	200	202	200	200	200	213	200	249	208	206
1972	200	200	200	200	241	237	200	200	200	200	201	200	207
1973	200	200	200	200	200	203	202	205	204	232	200	200	204
1974	244	200	200	200	200	208	201	219	200	220	200	200	208
1975	200	200	200	200	200	203	204	200	205	205	200	200	201
1976	200	200	200	200	215	202	200	201	233	200	205	200	205
1977	202	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	282	200	200	212	208
1978	203	200	200	200	200	239	204	221	200	218	276	233	216
1979	224	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	227	228	211	200	208
1980	200	200	200	200	200	200	203	200	200	206	200	200	201
1981	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	246	217	200	201	200	205
1982	200	200	244	239	236	252	204	200	223	215	307	206	227
1983	206	241	217	201	200	221	200	206	295	342	227	217	231
1984	209	200	214	200	219	207	200	200	260	204	281	218	218
1985	200	200	200	202	200	200	201	200	235	200	200	202	203
1986	223	200	220	203	200	204	202	200	200	203	200	209	205
1987	207	200	203	200	200	200	200	200	200	230	261	200	208
1988	200	200	200	200	200	204	218	247	200	200	200	200	206
1989	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	201	200	207	200	200	201
1990	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	216	218	200	200	203
1991	246	218	200	207	215	210	202	201	202	234	201	200	211
1992	200	204	200	200	200	241	213	242	241	220	240	200	217
1993	260	223	253	203	200	200	200	202	208	282	211	200	220
1994	200	211	200	200	200	207	204	243	300	236	307	294	233
1995	205	200	201	200	200	206	202	307	232	375	271	203	234
1996	200	200	230	207	219	204	234	200	213	218	213	200	212
1997	200	203	200	216	200	242	200	227	247	200	200	223	213
1998	223	240	217	201	212	200	201	200	262	203	306	200	222
1999	258	200	200	200	200	223	209	200	224	351	235	205	226
2000	200	200	200	208	200	200	200	200	200	249	200	200	205
2001	200	200	201	200	200	207	246	276	291	242	218	200	223
2002	200	210	200	200	200	219	233	200	200	200	200	200	205
2003	200	200	200	200	234	203	200	207	200	200	229	200	206
Average	208	204	207	204	205	213	207	213	223	231	223	206	212

Wet Season Evaluation

Tables 7-8, 7-9, 7-10, and 7-11 show the number of days with a 20-day moving average flow over Lainhart Dam greater than 110 cfs (which represents inundation). Months with flows greater than 110 cfs for 20 days or more are considered to be an inundation month and are highlighted in green. Those years with at least 120 days (4 or more months) of flows greater than 110 cfs are highlighted in dark green in the Grand Total column and would be considered optimum conditions. Those years with less than 4 months of flows greater than 110 cfs are considered a dry year.

Table 7-8. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for **BASE** Condition: Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.

Base Flow over 110

Years	Date													Grand Total	Months with over 20 days
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
1965	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	16	0	28	0	
1966	4	0	8	0	0	23	31	27	0	22	11	0	126	4	
1967	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	15	0	24	18	0	75	1	
1968	0	0	0	0	0	25	31	27	18	31	30	1	163	5	
1969	0	0	18	0	22	21	11	16	17	31	30	5	171	4	
1970	14	23	19	30	9	30	20	0	0	0	0	0	145	4	
1971	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	2	29	1	50	1	
1972	0	0	0	0	18	30	11	0	0	0	0	0	59	1	
1973	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	26	28	29	5	0	90	3	
1974	15	8	0	0	0	13	31	31	1	21	0	0	120	3	
1975	0	0	0	0	0	11	24	9	1	19	0	0	64	1	
1976	0	0	0	0	4	21	0	0	26	7	0	0	58	2	
1977	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	13	0	16	55	1	
1978	5	0	0	0	0	6	31	26	0	20	30	31	149	5	
1979	31	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	31	22	3	114	3	
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	
1981	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	30	14	0	0	55	1	
1982	0	0	16	30	25	30	26	0	3	27	29	31	217	7	
1983	31	28	31	28	1	21	1	9	30	31	30	31	272	9	
1984	23	0	8	14	1	23	0	0	10	24	8	28	139	4	
1985	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	19	0	0	29	0	
1986	20	0	3	19	0	5	16	12	0	0	9	1	85	1	
1987	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	30	7	77	2	
1988	0	0	0	0	0	10	15	16	18	0	0	0	59	0	
1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	7	0	
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	30	0	0	31	1	
1991	13	23	0	15	15	30	31	5	21	31	5	6	195	5	
1992	0	7	14	0	0	3	24	22	30	31	20	18	169	5	
1993	27	28	31	25	0	0	0	0	25	31	30	16	213	7	
1994	0	26	10	0	0	19	14	31	30	31	30	31	222	6	
1995	31	5	0	0	0	3	26	31	30	31	30	31	218	7	
1996	2	0	19	23	7	30	31	3	18	25	26	0	184	5	
1997	0	5	7	14	6	29	28	29	30	21	0	17	186	5	
1998	15	28	31	10	20	0	0	0	14	31	30	17	196	5	
1999	29	13	0	0	0	14	22	7	30	31	30	22	198	6	
2000	6	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	39	1	
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	31	30	31	28	0	141	5	
2002	0	15	5	0	0	8	31	4	0	0	0	0	63	1	
2003	0	0	0	0	4	30	0	21	18	0	23	0	96	3	
Grand Total	289	222	220	212	135	437	494	414	527	750	549	313	4,562	124	

Table 7-9. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for **LD65** and **LD65TB65**: Number of Day in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.**LD65 Flow over 110**

Years	Date												Grand Total	Months with over 20 days
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
1965	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	20	0	35	1
1966	11	3	15	0	0	25	31	27	0	22	11	0	145	4
1967	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	21	0	25	19	0	85	3
1968	0	0	0	0	0	26	31	28	18	31	30	1	165	5
1969	0	0	20	0	25	23	11	17	18	31	30	5	180	5
1970	14	23	19	30	11	30	20	0	0	0	0	0	147	4
1971	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	5	30	4	58	1
1972	10	0	0	0	19	30	11	0	0	0	0	0	70	1
1973	0	0	0	0	0	11	1	30	29	30	5	0	106	3
1974	16	8	0	0	0	15	31	31	2	22	0	0	125	3
1975	0	0	0	0	0	13	24	10	5	19	0	0	71	1
1976	0	0	0	0	8	25	0	0	30	10	0	0	73	2
1977	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	14	0	17	58	1
1978	6	0	0	0	0	7	31	27	0	20	30	31	152	5
1979	31	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	31	22	3	116	3
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	15	0
1981	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	30	14	0	0	57	1
1982	0	0	22	30	27	30	26	0	4	27	29	31	226	8
1983	31	28	31	28	1	21	1	9	30	31	30	31	272	9
1984	23	0	8	14	2	23	0	0	11	24	8	28	141	4
1985	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	20	0	0	31	1
1986	21	0	3	20	0	9	16	12	0	6	9	1	97	2
1987	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	30	8	79	2
1988	0	0	0	0	0	16	17	19	18	0	0	0	70	0
1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	15	0	0	28	0
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	31	0	0	33	1
1991	15	23	0	23	16	30	31	5	21	31	5	6	206	6
1992	0	7	14	0	0	4	24	23	30	31	20	18	171	5
1993	27	28	31	25	0	0	0	0	26	31	30	16	214	7
1994	0	26	10	0	0	20	14	31	30	31	30	31	223	7
1995	31	5	0	0	0	3	26	31	30	31	30	31	218	7
1996	2	0	19	23	7	30	31	3	18	25	26	0	184	5
1997	0	5	7	14	6	29	28	29	30	21	0	17	186	5
1998	15	28	31	10	20	0	0	0	14	31	30	17	196	5
1999	29	13	0	0	0	18	22	8	30	31	30	22	203	6
2000	6	0	0	11	4	0	0	0	0	26	0	0	47	1
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	31	30	31	28	0	150	5
2002	0	15	5	0	0	9	31	4	0	0	0	0	64	1
2003	0	0	0	0	6	30	0	22	18	0	23	0	99	3
Grand Total	311	225	235	228	152	477	508	444	547	796	555	318	4,796	133

Table 7-10. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for **LD90TB110**: Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.**LD90 Flow over 110**

Years	Date												Grand Total	Months with over 20 days
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
1965	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	21	0	38	1
1966	19	6	16	0	1	30	31	28	16	23	12	0	182	4
1967	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	25	3	28	20	0	99	4
1968	0	0	0	0	0	27	31	31	21	31	30	1	172	6
1969	0	0	22	0	27	27	21	18	22	31	30	5	203	7
1970	15	24	22	30	15	30	23	0	0	0	0	0	159	5
1971	0	0	0	0	13	5	0	0	22	12	30	11	93	2
1972	12	0	0	0	20	30	12	0	0	0	5	0	79	2
1973	0	0	0	0	0	19	4	31	30	31	7	0	122	3
1974	17	9	0	0	0	18	31	31	5	24	0	0	135	3
1975	0	0	0	0	0	20	26	11	11	26	0	0	94	3
1976	0	0	0	0	9	26	0	3	30	20	19	0	107	3
1977	13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	16	0	20	80	2
1978	17	9	0	0	0	24	31	30	10	24	30	31	206	6
1979	31	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	31	24	4	121	3
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	13	0	20	0	0	39	1
1981	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	30	16	0	0	60	1
1982	0	0	25	30	31	30	27	0	6	28	29	31	237	8
1983	31	28	31	28	4	22	2	15	30	31	30	31	283	9
1984	23	0	8	14	3	24	0	0	11	25	9	29	146	4
1985	0	0	0	13	4	0	0	0	12	23	0	17	69	1
1986	22	1	4	22	0	11	21	13	0	9	17	6	126	3
1987	24	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	30	10	101	2
1988	0	0	0	0	0	24	18	22	19	0	0	0	83	2
1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	19	0	0	38	0
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	14	31	1	0	52	1
1991	16	25	0	26	20	30	31	19	25	31	5	10	238	7
1992	0	8	15	0	0	5	26	25	30	31	22	18	180	5
1993	27	28	31	25	0	14	0	0	30	31	30	17	233	7
1994	0	26	10	3	13	22	17	31	30	31	30	31	244	7
1995	31	5	0	0	0	5	28	31	30	31	30	31	222	7
1996	2	0	20	24	9	30	31	13	19	26	27	0	201	6
1997	0	11	8	16	13	30	30	30	30	21	0	18	207	5
1998	15	28	31	10	22	0	16	1	14	31	30	17	215	5
1999	29	13	0	0	0	21	24	11	30	31	30	22	211	7
2000	6	0	0	15	5	0	0	0	0	29	0	0	55	1
2001	0	0	0	0	0	1	31	31	30	31	28	0	152	5
2002	0	17	5	0	0	10	31	5	0	0	0	0	68	1
2003	0	0	0	0	7	30	1	24	22	0	25	0	109	4
Grand Total	350	255	266	256	216	565	573	531	627	859	601	360	5,459	153

Table 7-11. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for **LD200** and **LD200TB200**: Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater Than 110 cfs.**LD200 Flow over 110**

	Date													Months with
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total	over 20 days
1965	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1966	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1967	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1968	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1969	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1970	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1971	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1972	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1973	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1974	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1975	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1976	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1977	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1978	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1979	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1980	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1981	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1982	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1983	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1984	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1985	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1986	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1987	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1988	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1989	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1990	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1991	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1992	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1993	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1994	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1995	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1996	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
1997	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1998	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
1999	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
2000	31	29	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	366	12
2001	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
2002	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
2003	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31	365	12
Grand Total	1,209	1,101	1,209	1,170	1,209	1,170	1,209	1,209	1,170	1,209	1,170	1,209	14,244	468

In the **BASE** condition scenario (**Table 7-8**), there are 18 years during the 39-year period of record that had four or more months with a 20-day moving average daily flow greater than 110 cfs. The **LD65** and **LD65TB65** scenarios improved this by just one more year as shown in **Table 7-9**. Scenario **LD90TB110** resulted in 5 additional years (**Table 7-10**). The **LD200** and **LD200TB200** scenarios provided floodplain inundation year around, which is not a healthy condition for the floodplain vegetation.

To examine the performance of wet season flows for each scenario on hydric hammock communities, the number of days of inundation was counted if the flow was greater than 180 cfs, 240 cfs, and 340 cfs, which correspond to the low, median and high elevation occurrences of the hydric hammock areas at Transect #1 for the **BASE** condition. The results for the **BASE** condition, **LD65**, **LD65TB65**, and **LD90TB110** scenarios were the same because the added flow did not reach 180 cfs. Each scenario experienced 29 years of the 39-year POR when daily flow was over 180 cfs for more than 30 days in a year, 18 years when daily flow was over 240 cfs for more than 30 days in a year, and 3 years when daily flow was over 340 cfs for more than 30 days in a year. Both **LD200** and **LD200TB200** scenarios produced flows that resulted in prolonged periods of inundation and therefore would be detrimental to the hydric hammock communities.

These results also suggest that the frequency distribution of flows larger than 180 cfs under these conditions should be sufficient to meet the inundation requirements of the hydric hammock communities.

EVALUATION OF TIDAL FLOODPLAIN

Evaluation Methods

In **Chapter 4**, a salinity regimen defined by the *Ds/Db* ratio as a performance measure to evaluate the Northwest Fork restoration scenarios was described. A quantitative tool was developed by SFWMD staff. It is based on the correlation of a measured vegetation abundance index and the *Ds/Db* ratio along the Northwest Fork (Zahina 2004). Definitions for the abundance index values are provided in **Table 7-12**. The vegetation abundance index at RM 10.6 is used as a “reference” freshwater floodplain community to characterize a “healthy” community of the floodplain swamp (**Figure 7-6**). Two vertical dashed lines are shown on each graphic dividing the species into three general groups. The left-most group contains red mangrove, which is a species characteristic of saltwater communities. The middle species group contains pond apple, cabbage palm, and bald cypress, which are freshwater swamp tree species that exhibit some tolerance for saltwater (Zahina 2004). The right-hand group contains red maple, Virginia willow, dahoon holly and pop ash, which are species that are sensitive to saltwater exposure and are expected to be the first to show stress from saltwater intrusion. The right-hand group is stressed when the abundance index for all species is below 2 and when a *Ds/Db* ratio nears 0.3. A *Ds/Db* ratio of 1 almost eliminates all four salinity sensitive species. This tool, called Salinity-Vegetation Model for the Loxahatchee River (SAVELOX; Zahina 2004) is used for rapid analyses of long-term salinity time-series data for sites along the near shore areas of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Table 7-12. Abundance Index Definitions.

Description of Species Population Density	Abundance Index
1a. Species not present.....	0
1b. Species present.	
2a. Two or less individuals; rare.....	1
2b. More than two individuals.	
3a. Highly abundant or dense population (>75% cover), a dominant component of the plant community.....	4
3b. Species not a dominant component of the plant community.	
4a. Sparse; widespread and of low density or restricted to localized populations.....	2
4b. Common; widespread and of moderate density but not a dominant component of the plant community (<50% cover).....	3

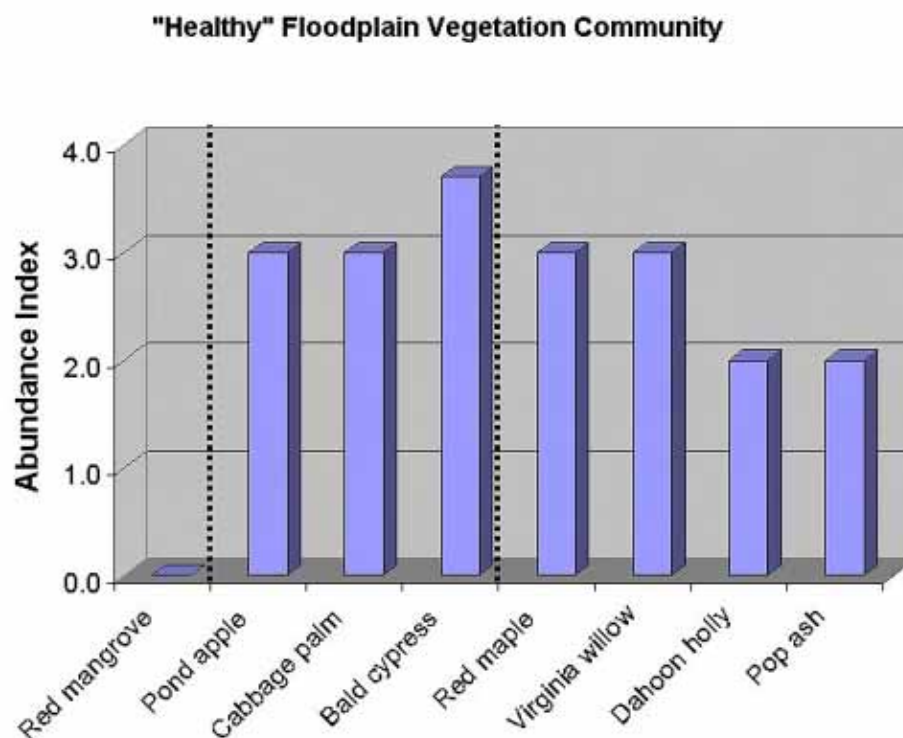


Figure 7-6. Reference “Healthy” Floodplain Swamp Community from the SAVELOX Model.

Four upstream sites that lie within Jonathan Dickinson State Park and along the “Wild and Scenic” River Corridor were included in this analysis: RM 9.12, KC at RM 8.13, VT9 at RM 7.06 and Boy Scout Dock at RM 5.92. For each of the restoration scenarios, the *Ds/Db* ratios at these four sites were calculated and the resulting salinity regimes in relationship to the vegetation abundance index were simulated with SAVELOX.

Results and Discussion

Table 7-13 presents the *Ds/Db* ratios for the base condition and the five constant flow scenarios. Salinity-exposure events increased in magnitude and frequently from RM 9.12 to Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) for all flow conditions. A *Ds/Db* value over 0.3 indicates salinity stress for the salinity sensitive species. It should be noted that as with any model, caution needs to be taken when interpreting SAVELOX modeling results. In this case, other important environmental factors that play significant roles in shaping the composition of plant communities (such as elevation and logging) are not considered. These environmental factors were considered separately and those results, with a consideration of site salinity, will provide a better indication of appropriate conditions for restoration.

Table 7-13. An Analysis of a **1 ppt Salinity Threshold** at 4 Sites Along the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River: Ratio of Salinity Event Duration (*Ds*, days) and Time Between Events (*Db*, days).

Station	Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios					
	BASE	LD65	LD65TB65	LD90TB110	LD200	LD200TB200
Boy Scout Dock RM 5.92	57.64	54.49	54.49	46.79	32.32	17.73
VT9 RM 7.06	5.92	5.40	5.11	3.76	0.85	0.00
KC RM 8.13	1.71	1.47	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
RM 9.12	0.62	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

The resulting vegetation community simulated with the SAVELOX site at RM 9.12 is shown in **Figure 7-7**. Examination of the **BASE** indicates that a mix of saltwater-tolerant and freshwater species is present at this site. The predicted vegetation composition shows a habitat that is fresher than what is observed under current conditions. This appears to be justified because the **BASE** assumes that G-92 operates under the current operation scheme throughout the entire 39-year POR. However, adverse impacts occurred in the floodplain prior to the construction of G-92. In conclusion, a flow of 65 cfs or higher provides sufficient freshwater to support a freshwater floodplain community at this site. The abundance index of bald cypress and other freshwater species are all above 2.

The SAVELOX Model analyses of site KC (RM 8.13) salinity time series are shown in **Figure 7-8**. The **BASE** floodplain community at this site is dominated by red mangrove with remnants of freshwater vegetation (pond apple, cabbage palm and bald cypress). The model results, however, predict little change at this site between the **LD65** and **LD65TB65** scenarios. Upon examination of the salinity time series, it was noted that the magnitude and duration of salinity events above 1 ppt had been significantly reduced in the **LD65TB65** scenario as compared to the LD65 scenario (**Figure 7-9**). When calculating the *Ds/Db* ratio with the long-term salinity time series data, all values were rounded to whole numbers to be conservative. A close examination of the long-term salinity data for the LD65TB65 scenario indicates that the salinity during the dry season is usually between 0.5 ppt to 0.7 ppt (**Figure 7-9**). The method of rounding the salinity data up yielded a *Ds/Db* ratio close to 1.0 at site KC (RM 8.13), which would otherwise be close to 0. To better understand tidal influence on salinity fluctuation on this site, a model run using the hydrodynamic and salinity model (RMA) was conducted to examine salinity during a lunar month (28 days) with a constant flow of 130 cfs distributed accordingly in all tributaries of the Northwest Fork. The result is presented in **Figure 7-10** which indicates that the salinity was above 1 ppt only briefly at high tides during the spring tide (7 out of 28 days). The daily average salinity is still well below 1 ppt. This confirms that a *Ds/Db* ratio of 1.0 is not a true reflection of salinity regimen at this site, but an artifact of rounding up the salinity data. Thus, recovery of the freshwater vegetation at the Kitching Creek site is likely to occur with the **LD65TB65** scenario. In this case, the SAVELOX Model produced an output that is more conservative on the side of restoration than was expected to occur.

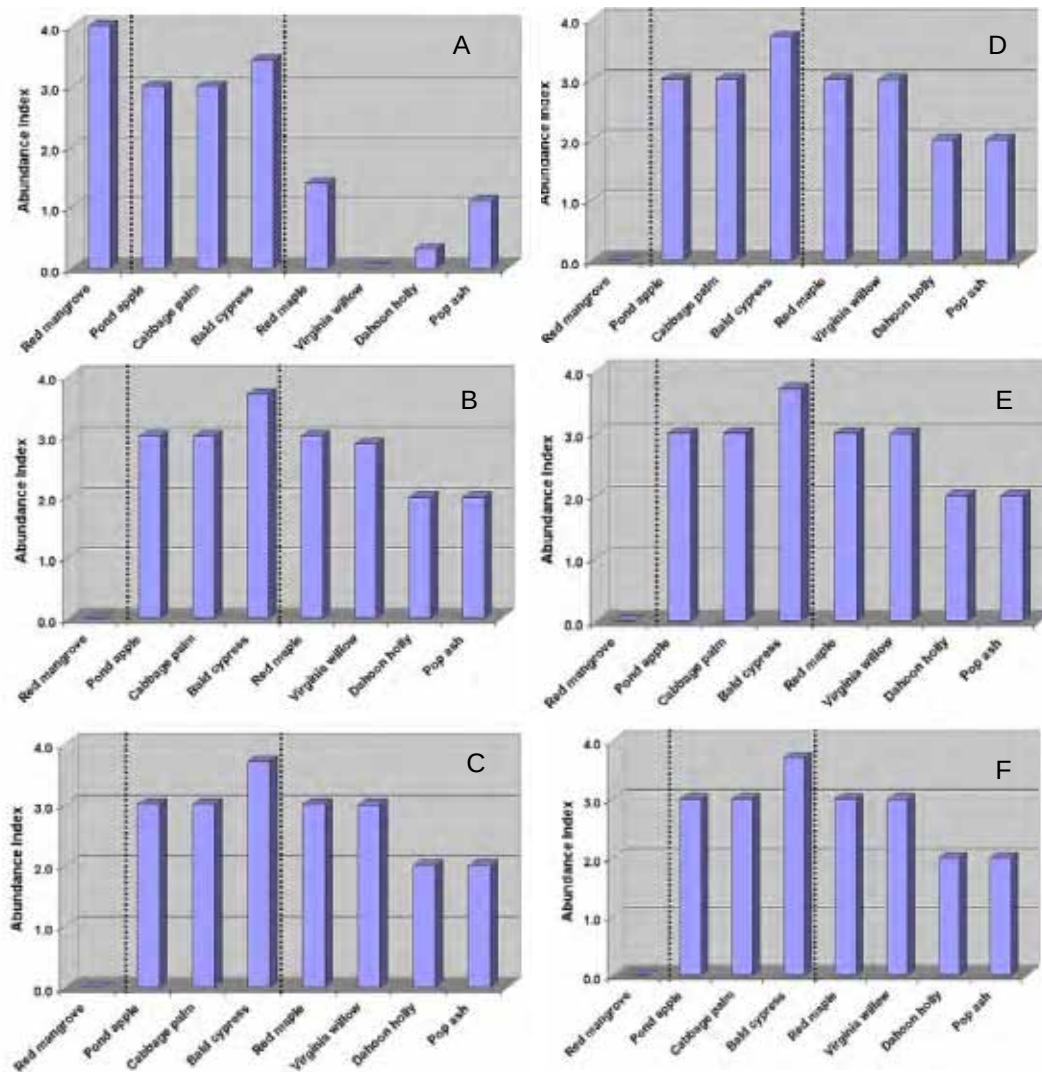


Figure 7-7. SAVELOX Model Analysis of Site RM 9.12: A. BASE, B. LD65, C. LD65TB65, D. LD90TB110, E. LD200, and F. LD200TB200.

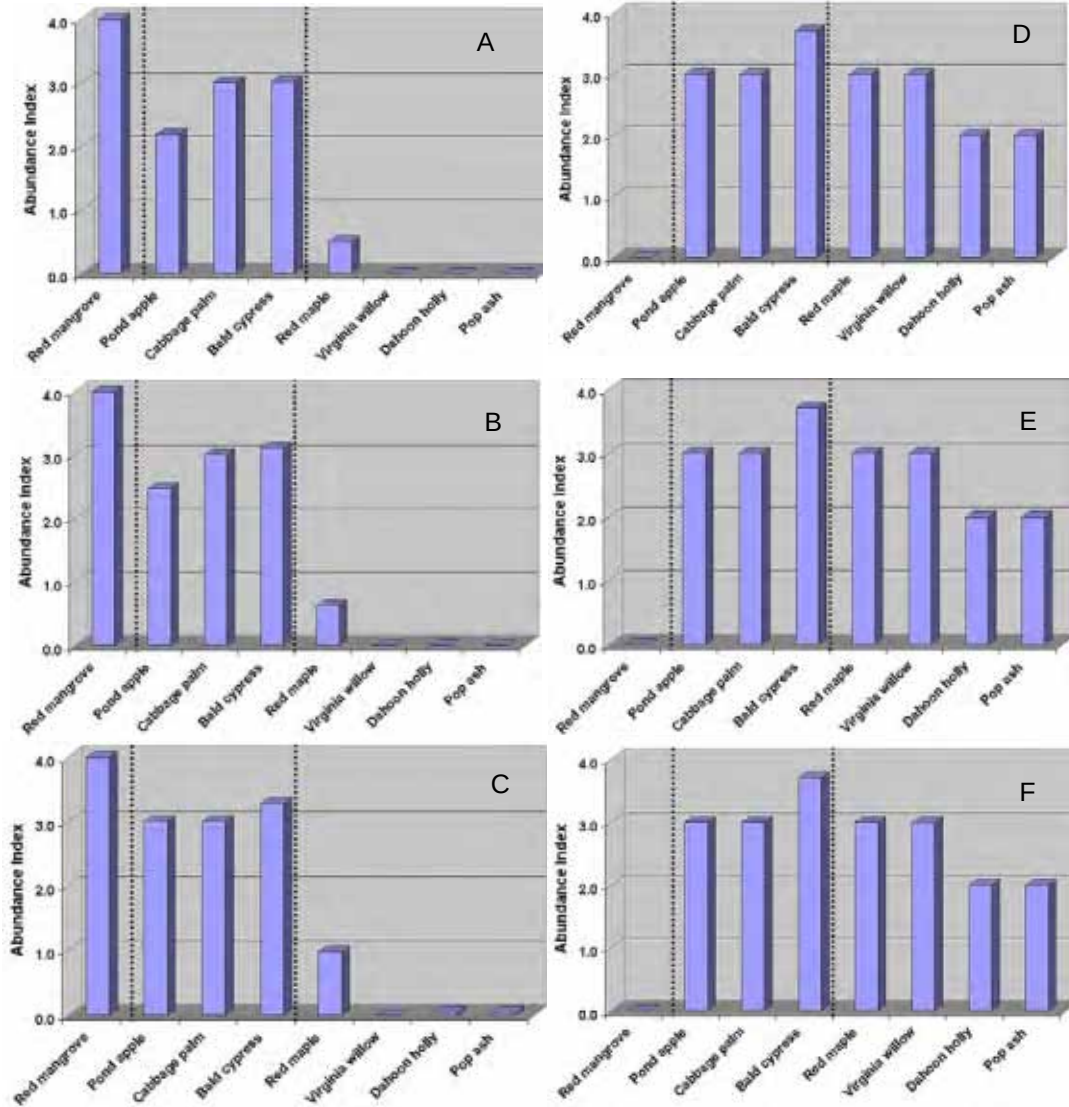


Figure 7-8. SAVELOX Model analysis of Kitching Creek Site (RM 8.13): A. BASE, B. LD65, C. LD65TB65, D. LD90TB110, E. LD200, and F. LD200TB200.

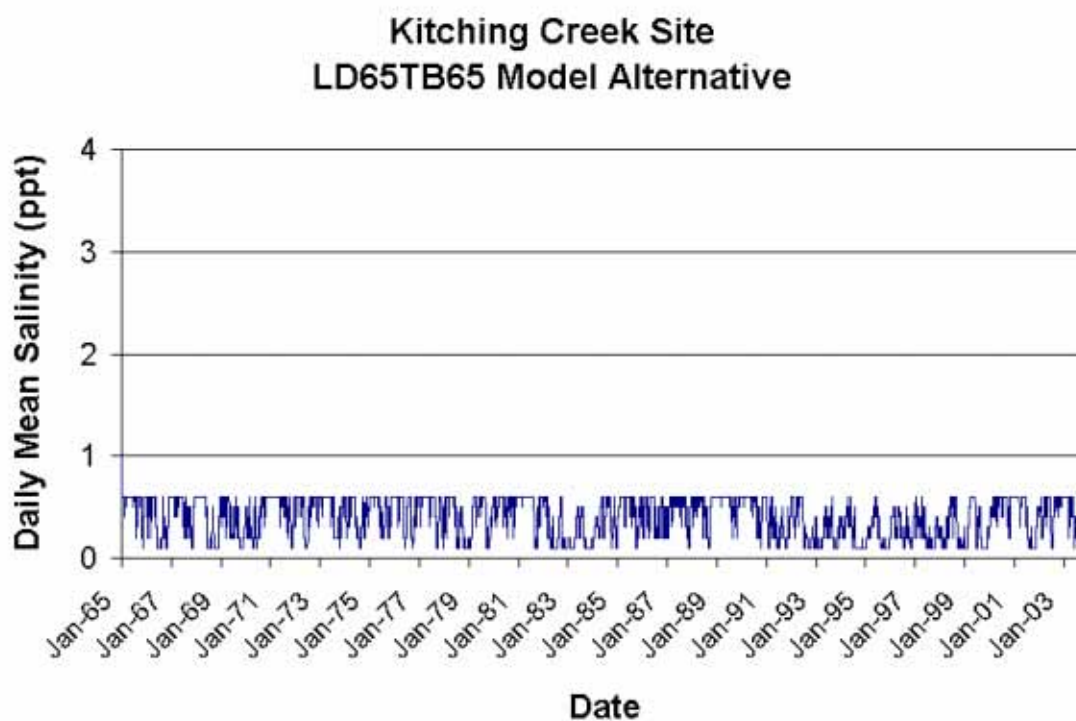
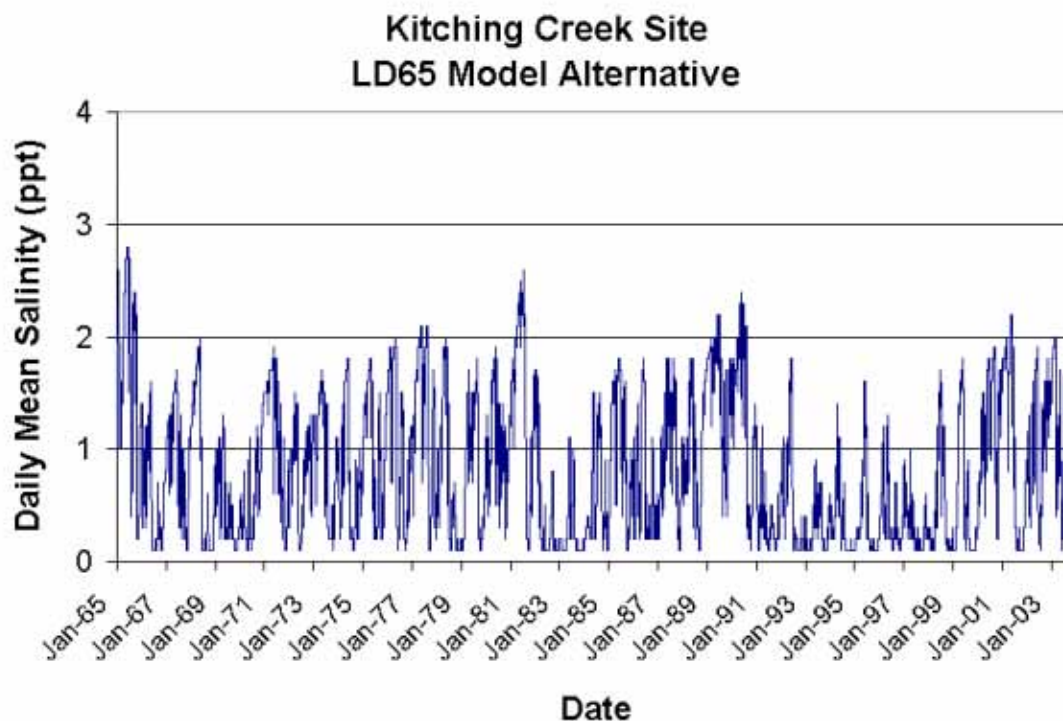


Figure 7-9. Modeled Salinity Time Series at the Kitching Creek Site for Constant Flow Scenarios **LD65** and **LD65TB65**.

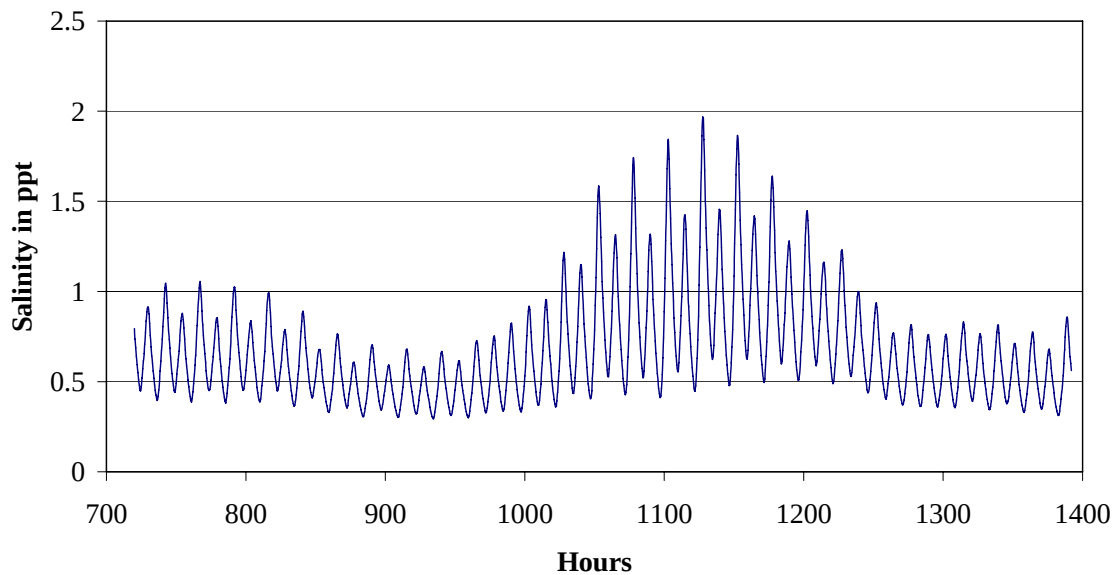


Figure 7-10. RMA Model Output of Salinity at Kitching Creek Station (KC at RM 8.13) Over a Lunar Month with Total Freshwater Flow to the Northwest Fork of 130 cfs (**LD65TB65**).

In the tidal reaches, it is anticipated that additional freshwater flows will flush salt from surface, groundwater and soils. Also, with increased freshwater flows more nutrients may be delivered across the floodplains during the growing season. Additional nutrients may improve the production of target species seeds or sapling production. Furthermore, the additional freshwater flows may discourage the further spread of upland and transitional species, assist in the control of some exotics, and encourage the growth of freshwater deciduous tree and understory species within the floodplains. The evaluation shows that a combined flow in the range of 130 cfs to 200 cfs from Lainhart Dam and the other tributaries is required to provide sufficient freshwater to support freshwater riverine floodplain vegetation down to the mouth of Kitching Creek. It is recognized that the occasional very dry season will provide good conditions for freshwater tree seedling and sapling production and germination to rebuild the forest communities as they age.

A combined flow of greater than 400 cfs would be required to provide freshwater conditions to the edge of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. However, sustaining a flow of 400 cfs would result in a significant change to the present river flow patterns. Large increases in flows have the potential to: 1) increase the elevation of surface water across the floodplain; 2) produce large increases in hydroperiods within the floodplain; 3) increase the potential for scouring and deepening of the river channel; 4) increase the potential for bank erosion and shifts in the course of the river channel; 5) transport of sediment and silt to the downstream estuary and 6) substantially reduce or eliminate low water (dry down) events in the floodplain swamp. All of these factors can have significant adverse impacts to existing floodplain vegetation. These additional issues (besides salinity) need to be considered when examining the desirability of a restoration flow scenario for enhancing freshwater floodplain vegetation. An example of these concerns is that high flows during the dry season would impede germination of bald cypress and hinder seedling/sapling growth due to over inundation. Operational modifications will be required for the selected scenario to create an occasional dry season exclusively for bald cypress germination, and seedling/sapling production, to increase new recruits into the floodplain swamp community.

In the restored floodplain communities, once salinity levels are reduced or eliminated, freshwater plant species are expected to return to the desired distribution over time. Again,

elevation appears to be the major factor in the distribution of forest types. In the upper tidal reach, the restored freshwater floodplain swamp communities would be represented predominantly by bald cypress and pond apple communities. The few mangroves in the upper tidal section should revert to sub-canopy level within the vegetative swamp communities with the growth of freshwater canopy trees over time. Hydric hammocks would be dominated by cabbage palm in both reaches. However, due to the dominance of swamp communities and the narrow transitional area between uplands and swamp communities in the tidal floodplain, true hydric hammock communities would be rare. A mixed forest type of swamp and hydric hammock species may prevail. Other freshwater plant species (pop ash, red maple, Carolina willow, etc.) are expected to be present in lower numbers. Additionally, increases in light availability (due to historic logging activities, hurricane impacts, or exotic removal or treatment) in the riverine and upper tidal reaches may improve recruitment of other freshwater target species and keep species diversity high.

In the lower tidal reach where mangrove swamps are the dominant feature, the recruitment of freshwater seedlings and saplings would be hindered by the thickness of the mangrove root systems, persistent tidal inundation due to low elevations, and low levels of light reaching the forest floor. Thus, in spite of the anticipated changes in the tidal floodplain vegetation community, the canopy and shrub-size mangroves are expected to remain in areas where mangroves are the predominant species, such as at VT9 (RM 7.06) and the JDSP boundary (RM 6). The presence of mangroves in this limited segment can be viewed as beneficial since it is a buffer between the saline and fresh water environment and it provides essential habitat for tidal wetland and estuarine ecosystems for benthic organisms, juvenile fish, and wading birds.

EVALUATION OF LOW SALINITY ZONE: FISH LARVAE

Evaluation Methods

During the dry season when freshwater flows are minimal, there is a major influx of tropical fish larvae (Gilbert and Kelso 1971; Nordlie 1979, 1981; Gilmore 1993). Many of these fish larvae species utilize the Low Salinity Zone (LSZ) of the Loxahatchee estuary from 2 ppt to 8 ppt as critical larval nursery habitat. When larvae develop into juveniles they seek the shallow waters and vegetated shorelines for protection from predation and an abundant food supply. This essential juvenile habitat is readily available between about RM 10 and RM 6 where numerous shallow tidal creeks and vegetated shorelines exist. A preferred dry season flow would allow an overlapping of essential larvae and juvenile habitats. This can be accomplished by avoiding salinities lower than 8 ppt during the dry season at the most downstream location of essential juvenile habitat near RM 5.5.

In order to characterize the relationship between salinity and flows to the Northwest Fork, hydrodynamic/salinity modeling determined a family of curves that shows the expected average daily salinity at any River Mile while constant flows are introduced to the system (**Figure 7-11**). These curves best represent salinity conditions when low variable flows occur mostly during the dry season. Since supplemental flows under consideration were going to be introduced at a constant rate during the dry season, the family of curves which represents steady state equilibriums can be used to assess the affects of various flows on salinity near RM 5.5.

Results and Discussion

Two studies were conducted to determine the species composition and distribution of fish larvae and other zooplankton in the Loxahatchee estuary. Details of these studies are in **Chapter 4** and **Appendix H**. The first study occurred during 1986-1988 and the second in the 2004 dry season. These studies revealed the highest densities of fish larvae were found within the

LSZ where salinity levels ranged from 2 ppt to 8 ppt. Specifically, the greatest concentration of fish larvae within this salinity range occurred near RM 7 during 1986-1988 and between RM 8 and RM 9 in 2004 (**Figure 7-11**), with most larvae being captured in the vicinity of the mouth of Kitching Creek at RM 8. The highest density of fish larvae captured in the Pautuxent River (Shenker et al. 1984) were captured between salinities of 2 ppt to 3 ppt. Similar salinity association patterns were observed in the San Francisco Estuary (Dege and Brown 2004). Apparently, fish larvae concentrate in the Low Salinity Zone of estuarine systems; however, since each system has unique characteristics, these field investigations needed to document the unique low salinity range for the Loxahatchee estuary.

The preferred salinity range for larval fish in the Loxahatchee should not advance downstream of about RM 5.5 for several reasons. The quality and area of nursery habitat may be significantly reduced downstream from RM 5.5 due to physical changes in the waterway (see **Chapter 3, Table 3-5**) and the impact of human influences such as artificial lighting, hardening of shorelines (seawalls) and loss of shallow shoreline transitional habitat. Additionally, the natural concentration of fish larvae, due to many physiochemical parameters, will not likely occur further downstream than about RM 5.5 due to the change in physical characteristics in this area. Therefore, analysis is necessary to determine the maximum amount of base flow that can be delivered to the system while minimizing the number of occurrences of salinities below 8 ppt near RM 5.5.

Figure 7-11 shows a family of curves relating salinity and flows from about RM 1 to RM 9 with the preferred fish larval salinity range of 2 ppt to 8 ppt delineated. These curves are the results of multiple simulations by the RMA model (see **Chapter 6**). Upon inspection of the figure, the predicted salinity at RM 5.5 will generally be 8 ppt when combined flows are about half way between 159 cfs and 238 cfs or near 170 cfs. According to the criteria established, scenario **LD65TB65**, with a combined flow of 130 cfs, would conservatively be the scenario protecting the fish larvae habitat. Scenarios with combined flows greater than 170 cfs (**LD90TB110, LD200, LD200TB200**) would increase the frequency of undesirable low salinities upstream RM 6 and therefore cause a reduction of essential habitat for fish larvae.

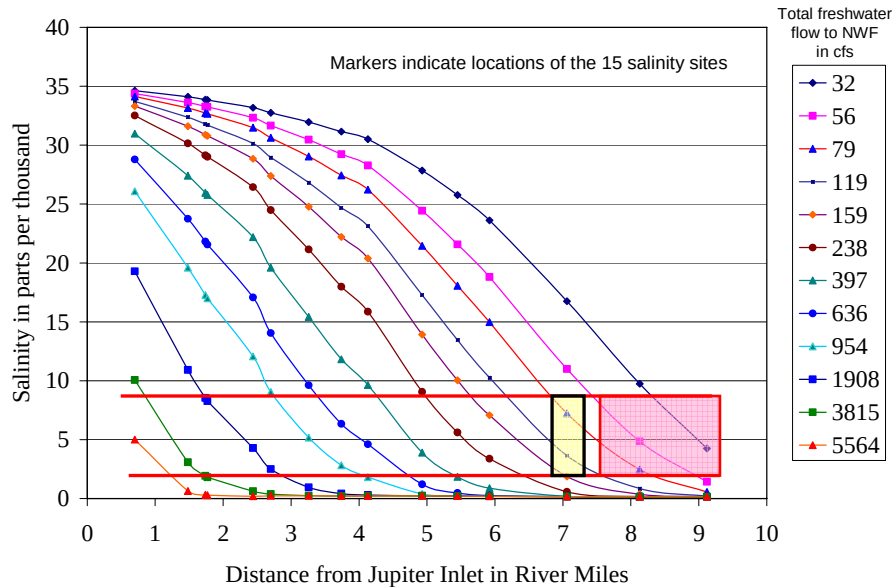


Figure 7-11. Location (in River Miles) of Low Salinity Zone (LSZ) with Varying Freshwater Flows. Red Bars Represent 2 ppt to 8 ppt Salinity Range. Red Shaded Rectangle Represents Largest Ichthyoplankton Captures During June-July 2004. Yellow Shaded Rectangle Represents Largest Ichthyoplankton Captures During 1986-1988.

EVALUATION OF MESOHALINE ZONE: OYSTERS

Evaluation Methods

Favorable estuarine habitat conditions for the eastern oyster are predominately determined by salinity, quality and quantity of food, available substrate (cultch), water flow, presence of disease organisms, and predation. Low densities (167 oysters/m² at RM 5.9) manifest poor oyster habitat conditions in the upstream portion of the Northwest Fork primarily due to frequent exposures to unfavorable low salinities while low densities in the outer estuary (downstream of RM 4.2) may result from disease (*Perkinsus marinus*), predation, limited food supply, and lack of appropriate substrate. Suitable oyster habitat exists in the middle portion of the Northwest Fork from where yearly salinity averages are approximately between 10 ppt to 20 ppt. As yearly average salinity increases in from RM 6 to RM 4, the density of oysters also increases to a maximum of 901 oysters/m² at RM 4.5 (see **Chapter 4, Figure 4-12**). The increase in oyster density is indicative of more favorable habitat conditions, with the existing hydrology, for reproduction, growth, and reduced influence of disease and predators. The restoration flow scenario evaluation for oysters is limited to this area where disease and predation are minimized. Oyster life history and salinity thresholds to address stress are used as the controlling factors of oyster presence, even though other factors are undoubtedly important, they are difficult to quantify and beyond the scope of this evaluation.

To describe the relative suitability of habitat within the area of interest, salinity tolerance thresholds for each life stage were established. Although overlapping life stages were observed throughout the year, major spring spawning usually occurs in March and April when water temperatures are rising. Any protracted spawning during the year is considered insignificant even

though other Florida estuaries appear to experience a minor fall spawn (Volety et al. 2003). Therefore, salinity concentrations and duration thresholds for oyster life stages (eggs, larvae, spat, and adult) that cause stress, harm, and mortality were introduced as the oyster Performance Measures where larval presence from March to May follows egg development from January to April (**Chapter 4, Table 4-3**). Spat and juvenile oysters are present from April through July while year class adults are present from June to December.

This salinity tolerance and life stage information were used to develop a Loxahatchee Oyster Stress Model (LOSM) that determines the number of days of “no salinity stress” (good conditions), stress (mixed conditions), and mortality (unhealthy conditions) for each life stage during the year throughout the oyster bars distributed in the middle of Northwest Fork (RM 4.1 to RM 5.9). The percent of time within one year for each level of stress is obtained from the LOSM model. To reduce the variability of salinity, a daily mean salinity value is used as input to the model. Long-term daily salinities (from 1965 to 2003) at four locations near oyster beds documented in a November 2003 survey (Bachman et al. 2004) were simulated using the LSMM. In addition to the **BASE** case and the five flow restoration scenarios, two additional scenarios were evaluated. These two scenarios are, **LD60TB40** representing a flow of 60 cfs from Lainhart Dam and 40 cfs from the other tributaries, creating a combined flow of 100 cfs into the Northwest Fork, and **LD80TB80** representing a flow of 80 cfs from Lainhart Dam and 80 cfs from the other tributaries, creating a total of 160 cfs into the Northwest Fork. All scenarios were compared and contrasted with the **BASE** to determine the maximum flow to the Northwest Fork without significantly harming oyster resources. To visualize how levels of oysters stress varied among years, an EXCEL stackable bar chart was utilized. Box and whisker plots (Sokal 1965) were generated, with the statistical software SYSTAT 10.2. This was done to visually depict the distribution of 39 years of oyster salinity stress levels for all salinity time series by revealing the median percent of days per year of stress and harm as well as death conditions, 95% confidence limits, and range of data.

Major assumptions of this assessment are 1) most of the variability associated with the success of a year class of oysters can be explained by exposure to daily mean salinities (or salinity as a surrogate) during four life stages; 2) the life history of oysters in the Northwest Fork estuarine area emulates that in St. Lucie estuary oysters; and 3) a long-term evaluation of oyster habitat suitability can be determined by assessing salinity conditions for each year class.

Results and Discussion

The LOSM model used 39 years of modeled, daily estuarine flows to predict average daily salinities at four locations in the Northwest Fork (**Chapter 6, Figure 6-15**). Levels of stress for up to eight flow scenarios were determined. These four stations are BD (Boy Scout Dock at RM 5.92), Oyster Station 6 (RM 5.45), Oyster Station 5 (RM 4.93), and Oyster Station 4 (RM 4.13) as shown in **Figure 7-12**.



Figure 7-12. Oyster Evaluation Stations in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The Oyster Beds Surveyed in 2003 Are Shown in Yellow. Red Dots Are Monitoring Sites.

For each constant flow scenario, the level of stress on the oyster year class (four life stages) was determined by comparing these salinities with salinity stress thresholds. **Figures 7-13, 7-14, and 7-15** provide an example of how the output from the model was used to visualize affects of all scenarios flows on the year class life stages. These figures show the percent of time each year class experienced one of three levels of stress for the **BASE** case and two scenarios. The **BASE** case (**Figure 7-13**) reveals that good conditions existed for egg development at RM 4.93 (Station 5) during most years. As flows increased with successive scenarios and were compared to the **BASE** case, more oyster stress was observed. For example, **Figure 7-14** shows scenario **LD90TB110**, (combined flow of 200 cfs) increased the percent of time oyster egg development was exposed to mixed (harmful) and bad (mortality) salinity conditions. However, a dramatic increase in harm and mortality was evident for scenario **LD200** with a total flow of about 230 cfs (**Figure 7-15**). Therefore, the maximum base flow before major adverse salinity conditions occur for oyster eggs at RM 4.93 is about 200 cfs. A total of 128 plots were visually inspected to select the preferred flow scenario for all life stages as demonstrated with these figures for egg development. All of these results were compiled for comparison and validation with the results from the following analysis.

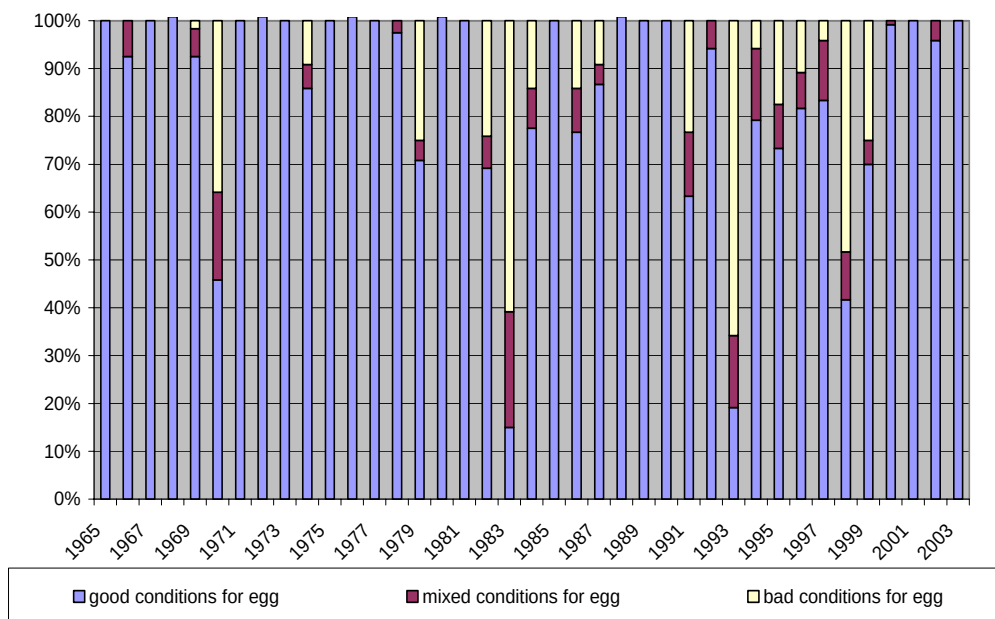


Figure 7-13. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the **BASE** Case.

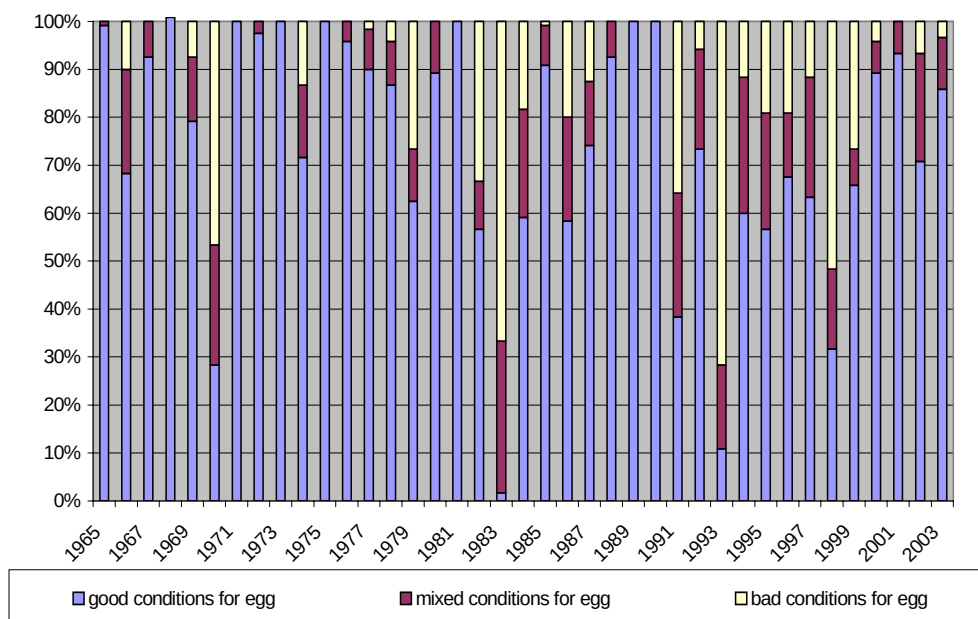


Figure 7-14. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the **LD90TB110** Scenario.

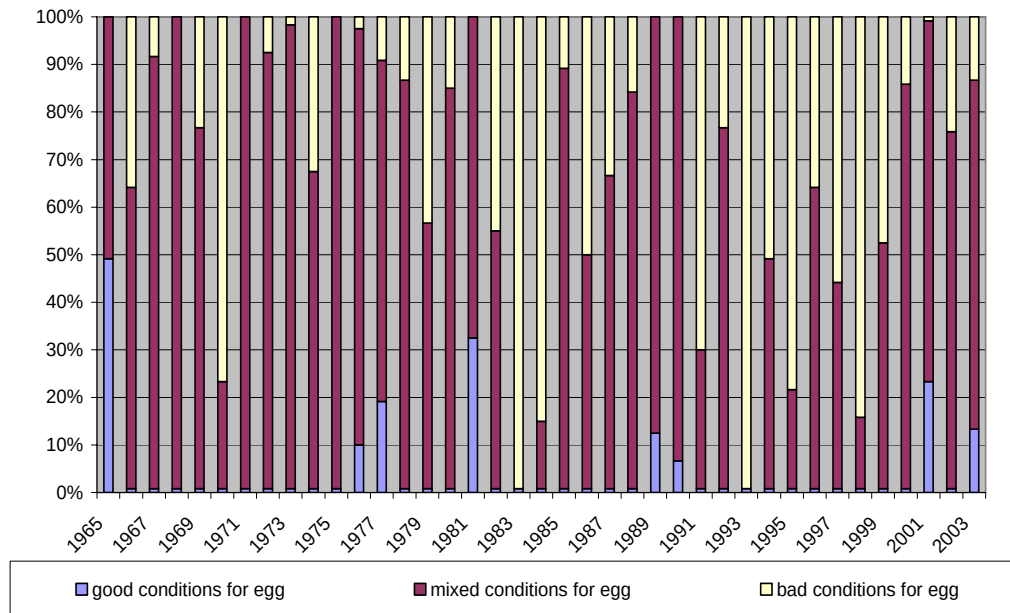


Figure 7-15. Percent of Time for Three Levels of Salinity Stress on Oyster Eggs at Station 5 (RM 4.93) for the **LD200** Scenario.

In addition to the visual analysis graphs, individual year class evaluation for each life stage, the median, 95% confidence limits and range of the 39-year distribution of percent of time for death and harm/stress conditions were depicted with box and whisker plots (BWP) for all life stages at four stations in **Figures 7-16** through **7-23**. As an example of the linkage between the visual analysis (**Figures 7-13**, **7-14** and **7-15**) and the BWP (**Figures 7-20** and **7-21**) for Station 5, depicts information in which the visual analysis concluded significant harm condition for eggs occurring with flows greater than scenario **LD90TB110**. It is apparent that the 39-year distribution data for scenarios validate the visual analysis.

As a performance measure, the existing oyster resources, and the flow scenarios for each station are those that avoid stress to the most salinity sensitive life stage; oyster larvae. These larvae are present in the system during the late dry season (March, April, and May; see **Chapter 4, Table 4-3**) which is the time period the evaluation was conducted for this life stage and when problems with saltwater intrusion historically occur. Oyster larvae at the most upstream station (Boy Scout Dock at RM 5.92) are the most sensitive to increased flows. Flows greater than scenario **LD65** (combined flow of 95 cfs) will result in a significant increase in stress (**Figure 7-16**) and a significant increase in unhealthy conditions in this area may occur with flow scenario **LD60TB40** (100 cfs, **Figure 7-17**).

Additional results for downstream Oyster Station 6 at RM 5.45, are shown in **Figures 7-18** and **7-19** and indicate that the flows in scenario **LD65TB65** (130 cfs) causes stress to the larvae. Using the same logic for larvae at Oyster Station 5 at RM 4.93, **Figures 7-18** and **7-19** reveal that flow scenario **LD80TB80** (160 cfs) is the flow which causes stress and flow scenario **LD90TB110** (200 cfs) for death. A dramatic increase in stress occurs from flow scenarios **LD80TB80** to **LD90TB110** (**Figure 7-20**). However, it dramatically decreases from flow scenarios **LD90TB110** to **LD200** due to the increase in death occurring with scenario **LD200**. This decrease in stress/harm with increasing flows can be observed at other stations. The least impact on oyster larvae by increases in flows is the most downstream Station 4 (RM 4.13). **Figures 7-22** and **7-23** show that Station 4 can tolerate scenario **LD 200** (230 cfs) before significant stress/harm occurs with **LD200TB200** (400 cfs). Therefore, any restoration flow scenario that increases the flow greater than 90 cfs to 100 cfs will adversely impact the existing

upstream oyster bars. However, if flows greater than 90 cfs to 100 cfs are needed to restore other important upstream habitats, the loss of the most upstream highly stressed oysters at RM 5.92 can be mitigated by providing additional substrate (cultch) in downstream areas near RM 4.5 that would be experiencing favorable salinities.

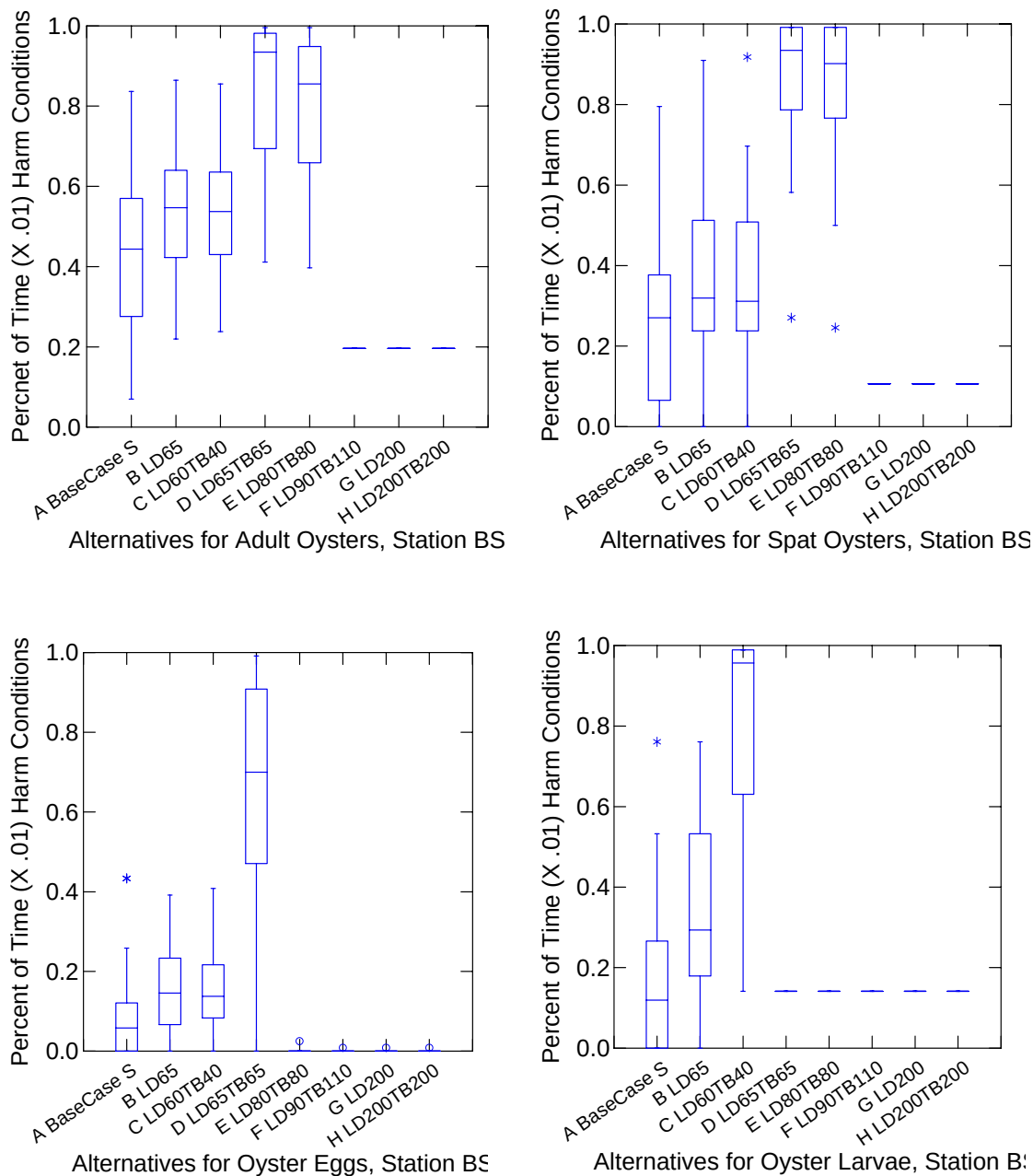


Figure 7-16. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Seven Constant Flow Scenarios at Boy Scout Dock (Station BS, RM 5.92).

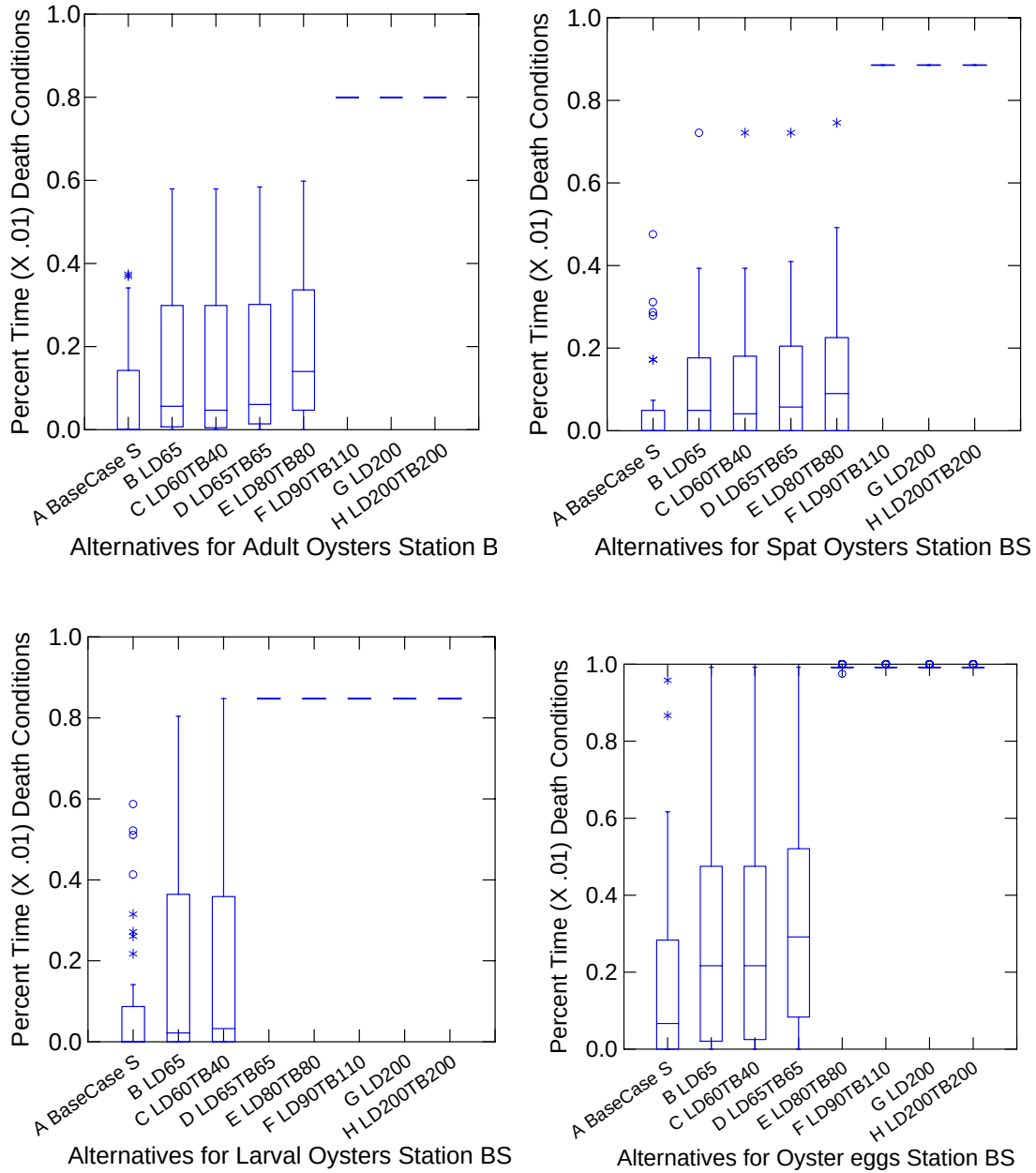


Figure 7-17. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Seven Constant Flow Scenarios at Boy Scout Dock (Station BS, RM 5.92).

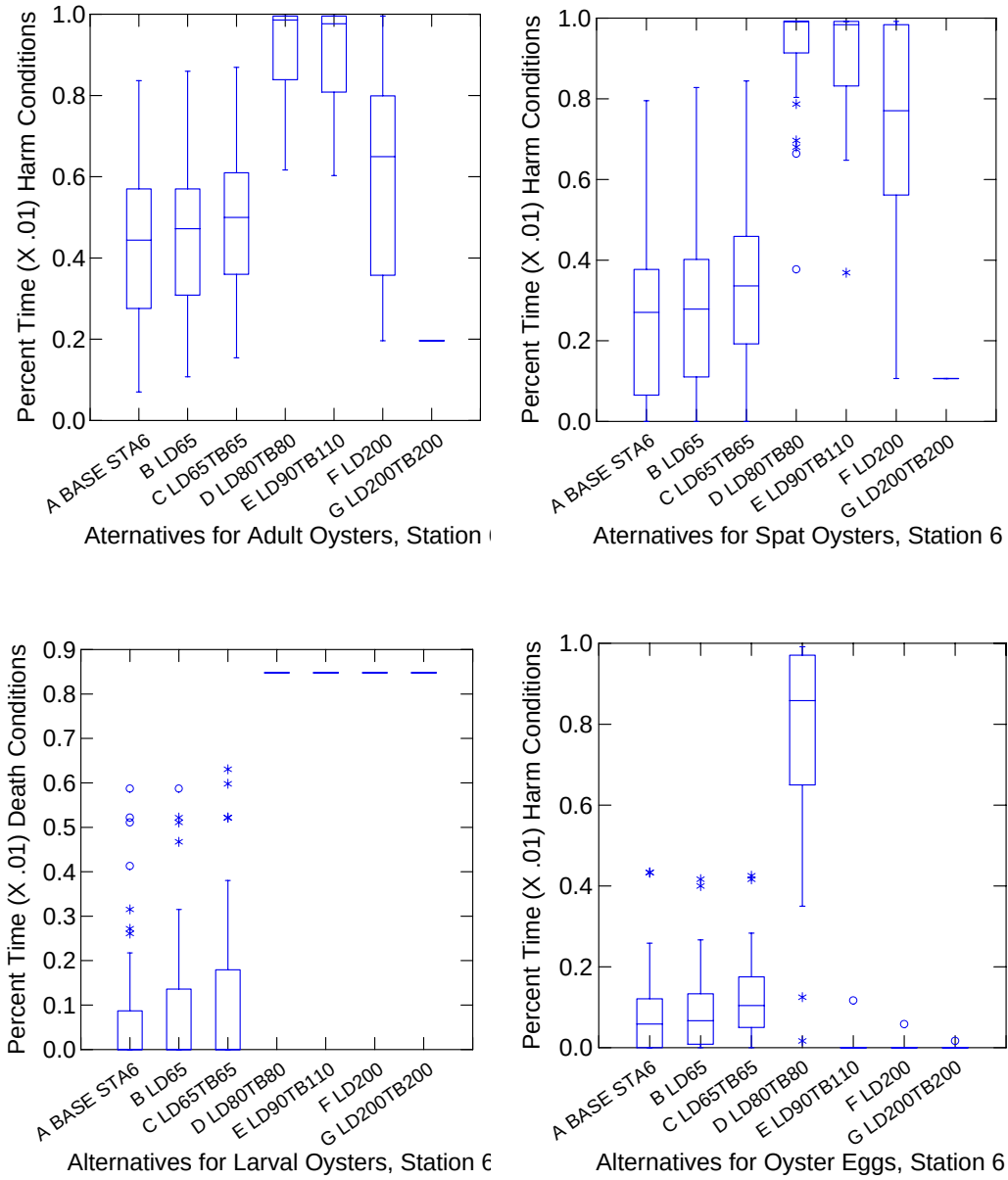


Figure 7-18. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 6, RM 5.45.

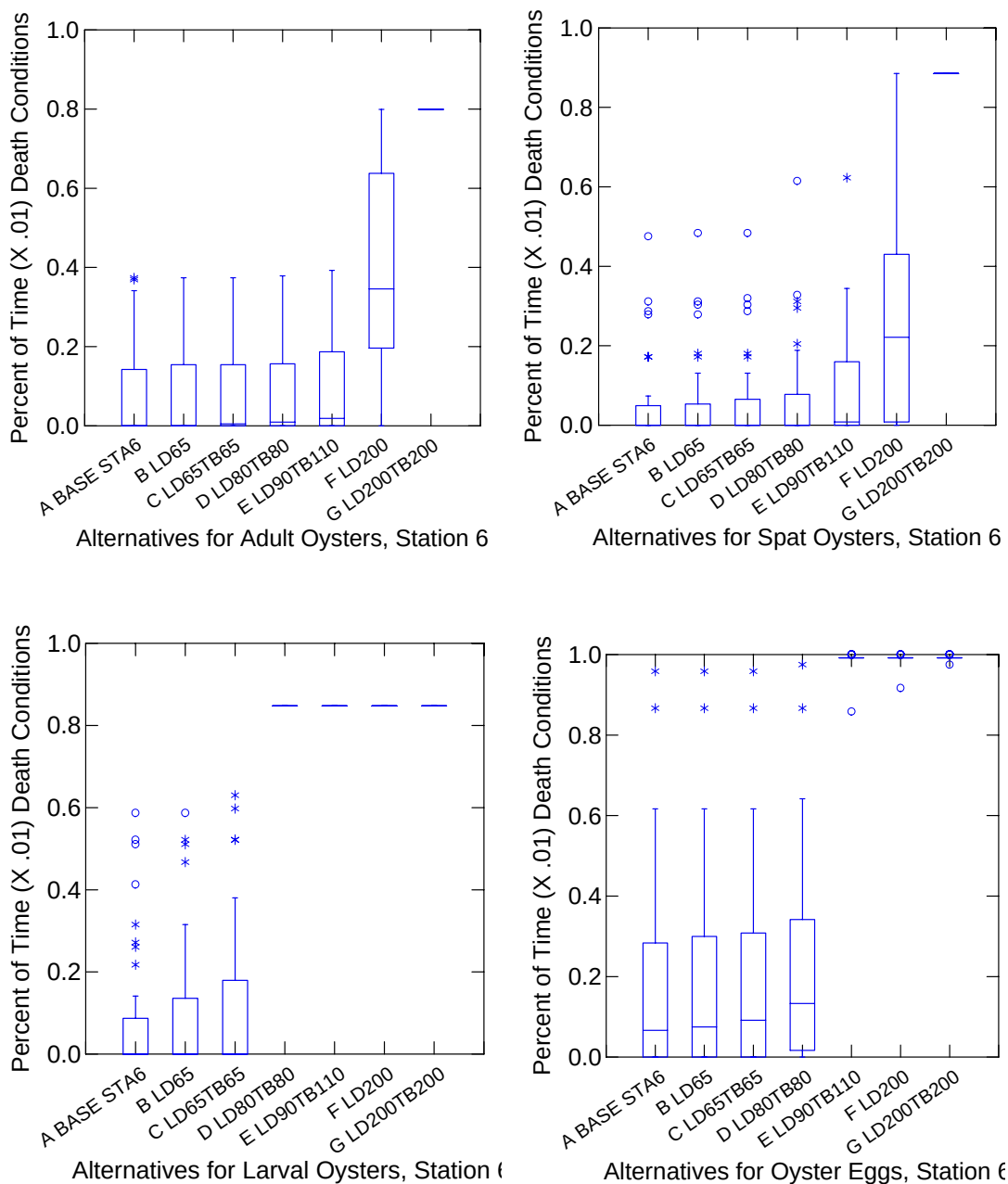


Figure 7-19. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 6, RM 5.45.

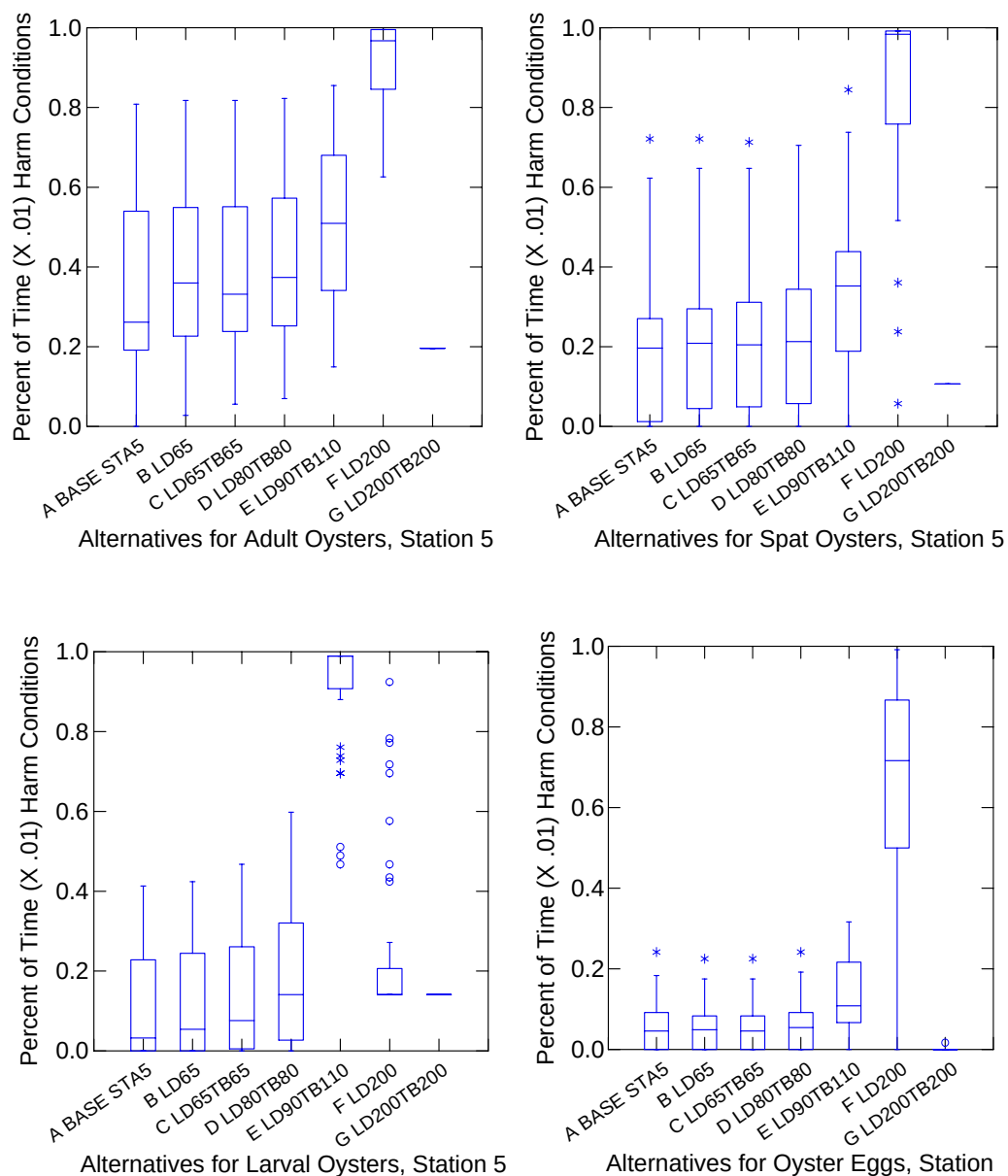


Figure 7-20. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 5, RM 4.93.

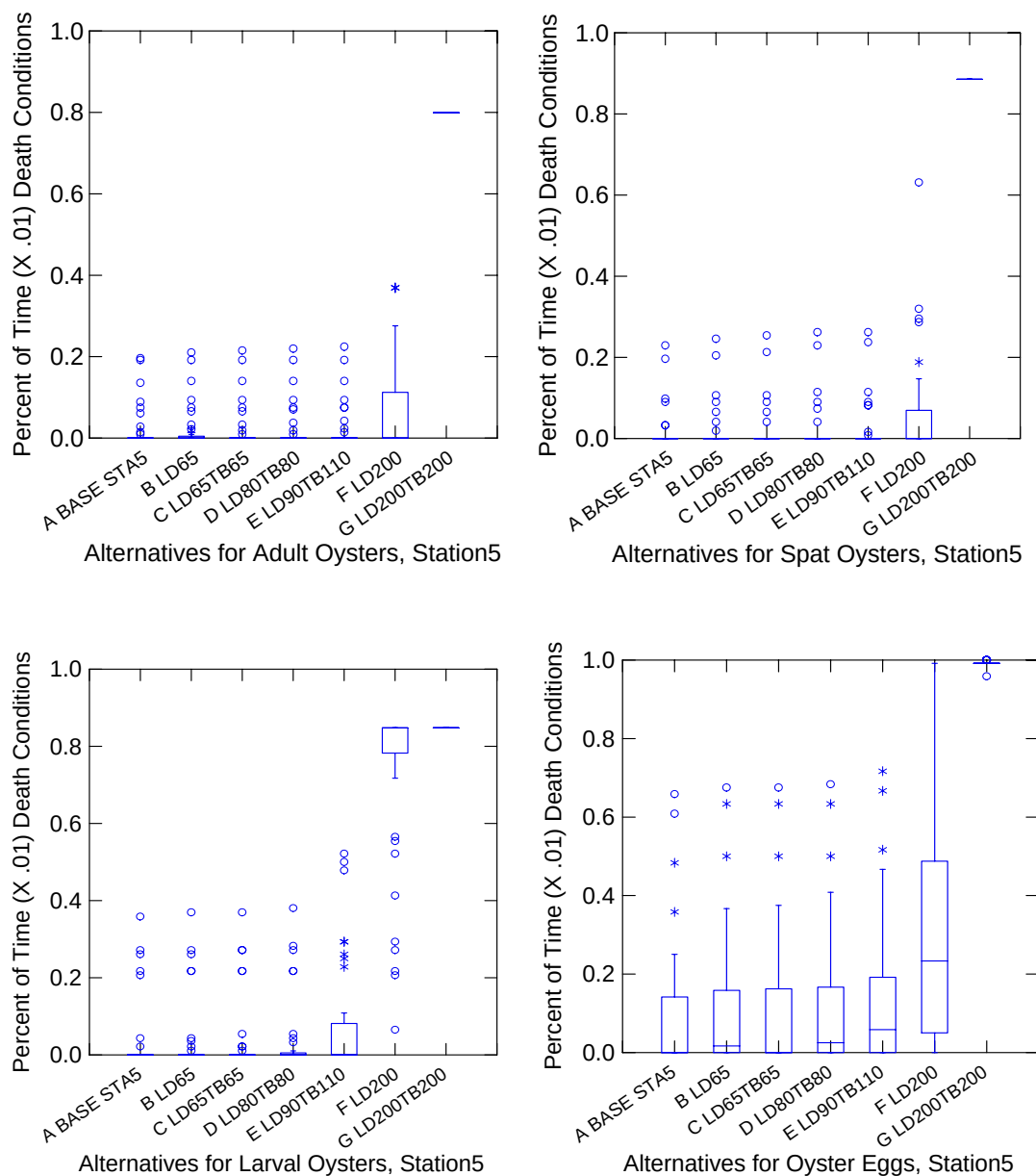


Figure 7-21. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 5, RM 4.93.

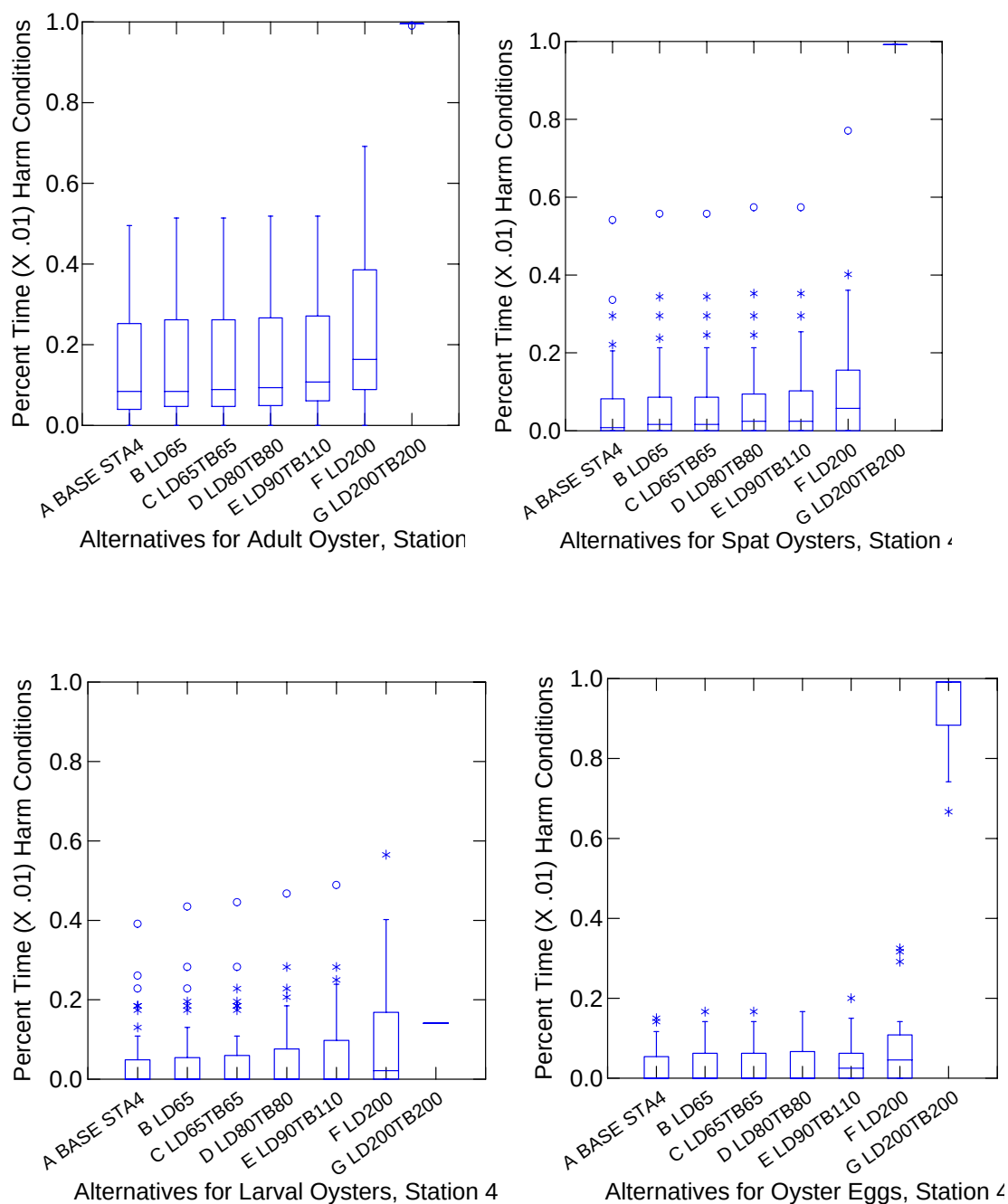


Figure 7-22. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 4, RM 4.13.

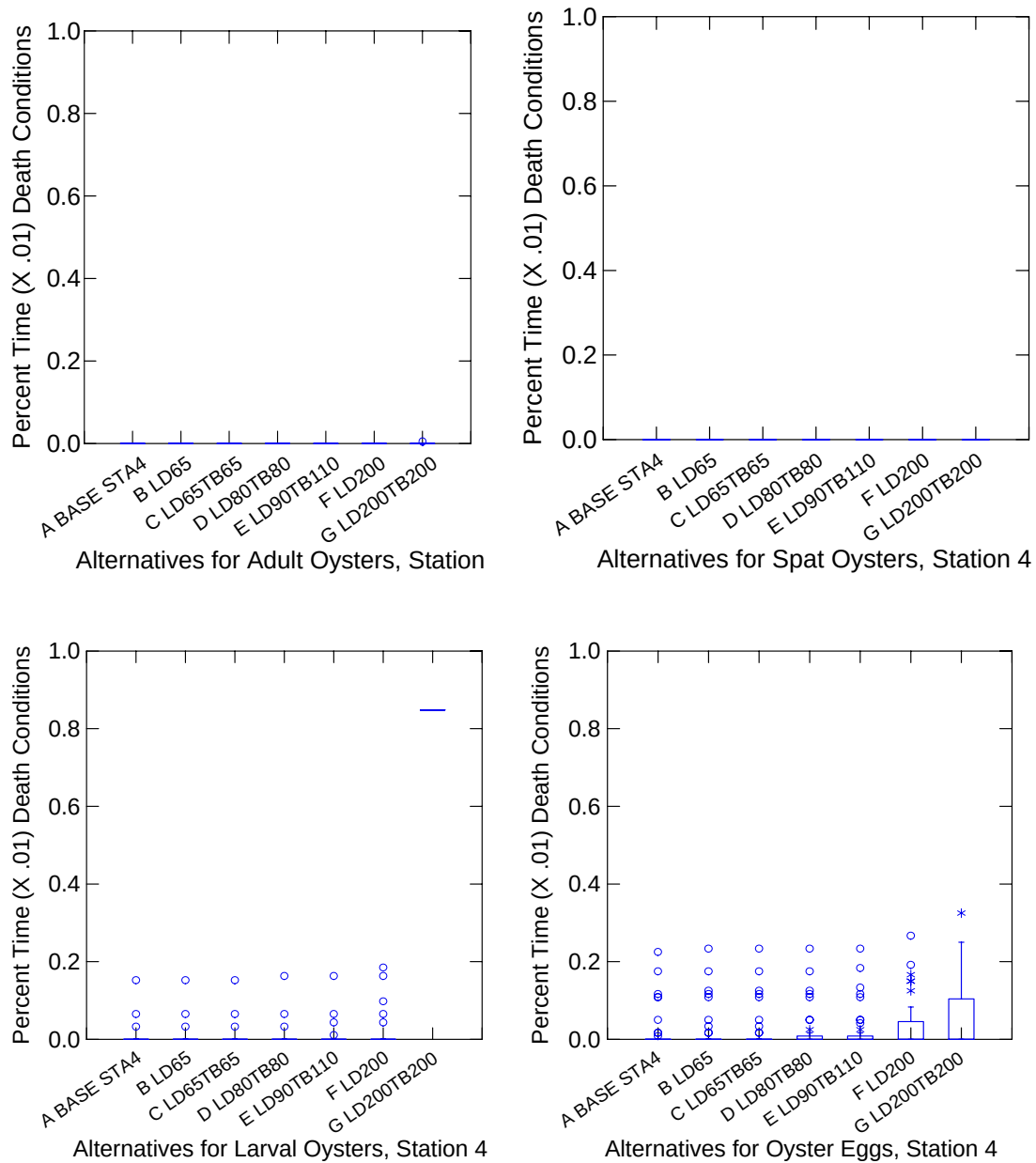


Figure 7-23. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Death Conditions Existed for Adults, Spat, Larvae, and Eggs in the BASE Case and Six Constant Flow Scenarios at Station 4, RM 4.13.

The overall results of both the visual and BWP analyses of the four oyster growth stages in terms of “Death” and “Harm” stress categories are summarized in **Table 7-14**. The “Harm” category in the table is “bolded” to highlight the critical flow scenarios. The critical constant flow (combined flows from Lainhart Dam and other tributaries) to avoid significant stress and harm to oyster resources is 90 cfs for Boy Scout station (RM 5.92), 130 cfs for Station 6 (RM 5.45), 160 cfs for Station 5 (RM 4.93) and 230 cfs for Station 4 (RM 4.13).

Table 7-14. Summary of Oyster Death and Harm Stress Categories for Each Growth Stage at the Four Oyster Sites.

Station (River Mile)	Adult Death	Spat Death	Larvae Death	Egg Death	Recommended Scenario (Maximum Flow)
BS (RM 5.92)	LD65LD65	LD65LD65	LD60TB40	LD60TB40	LD60TB40 (~100 cfs)
Station 6 (RM 5.45)	LD90TB110	LD80TB80	LD65TB65	LD80TB80	LD65TB65 (~130 cfs)
Station 5 (RM 4.93)	LD90TB110	LD90TB110	LD90TB110	LD90TB110	LD90TB110 (~200 cfs)
Station 4 (RM 4.25)	LD200TB200	LD200TB200	LD200	LD200	LD200 (~230 cfs)
	Adult Stress/Harm	Spat Harm	Larvae Harm	Egg Harm	
BS (RM 5.92)	LD60TB40	LD60TB40	LD65	LD60TB40	LD65 (~90 cfs)
Station 6 (RM 5.45)	LD65TB65	LD65TB65	LD65TB65	LD65TB65	LD65TB65 (~130 cfs)
Station 5 (RM 4.93)	LD80TB80	LD80TB80	LD80TB80	LD80TB80	LD80TB80 (~160 cfs)
Station 4 (RM 4.25)	LD200	LD200	LD200	LD200	LD200 (~230 cfs)

EVALUATION OF POLYHALINE ZONE: SEAGRASSES

Evaluation Methods

The purpose of this section is to describe methods used to evaluate whether increases in upstream flows could impact downstream seagrass resources. This evaluation is based on the results of salinity model runs and the seagrass salinity performance measures presented in **Chapter 4**. This evaluation focuses only on potential impacts on seagrasses from changes in salinity. However, other factors (particularly water quality parameters which impact light availability) are clearly important in understanding potential impacts to seagrasses. As restoration efforts move from the planning stage to more specific design phases it may be necessary to develop more comprehensive methods for evaluating potential impacts to seagrasses.

The first step in this preliminary evaluation of potential impacts to seagrasses was to identify areas of the estuary where seagrasses occur and should be protected. Based on the data presented in **Chapter 4**, seagrass beds extend upstream to approximately RM 3.4. Accordingly, the “seagrass protection zone” for this plan includes all areas of the estuary downstream of approximately RM 3.4. The next step in the evaluation was to identify modeled salinity sites that would represent the range of salinity within the “seagrass protection zone.” Five modeled salinity sites were identified: 1) Coast Guard Station (RM 0.70); 2) North Bay (RM 1.48); 3) Sand Bar (RM 1.74); 4) Pennock Point (RM 2.44); and 5) Site O2 (RM 3.26, nearest station to RM 3.4).

At each of the five sites, results of six constant flow model runs (**BASE**, **LD65**, **LD65TB65**, **LD90TB110**, **LD200**, and **LD200TB200**) were compared by determining the total number of days within the 39-year modeling period (January 1, 1965 – December 30, 2003) that fell within each of the seagrass performance measure “stress” categories presented in **Table 4-5, Chapter 4**. Model runs that simulated the “base” conditions indicated no impacts to seagrass resources beyond those experienced under existing salinity conditions. Model runs that had more days that fell within the “potential stress” and “stress” categories than existing conditions were considered less desirable than existing conditions and potentially detrimental to the seagrass resources.

To determine appropriate performance measures to use for each site, the seagrass species map (see **Chapter 4, Figure 4-10**) was used to identify one key seagrass species for each modeled salinity site. Since turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) is found upstream to the North Bay site, salinity performance measures for this species were used for the Coast Guard and North Bay sites. The upstream limit of manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) is currently the Sand Bar location, so manatee grass salinity performance measures were used for this site. For the remaining two locations, shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), the dominant species at these sites, was used as the key species. Because Johnson’s seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*), a threatened species, was found at all five locations during the summer of 2004, a second evaluation of the data was conducted using the salinity performance measures for Johnson’s seagrass at all five locations.

These evaluations were also conducted on data sets for a recent wet year (1995) and a recent dry year (2000). This evaluation was geared toward understanding the shorter term impacts associated with wet or dry conditions. The same key species used for the 39-year evaluation were also used for this analysis. As for the 39-year evaluation, the performance measures for Johnson’s seagrass were also evaluated at all five sites.

Another analysis was conducted using the performance measures presented in **Table 4-6, Chapter 4**. These performance measures were based on literature salinity tolerance values that included duration of a salinity threshold associated with a severe stress event (such as blade mortality). The data were evaluated for each site and each model run to determine how many “stress” events occurred over the 39-year period of record. Model runs with more stress events

than existing conditions were considered less desirable than existing conditions and potentially detrimental to the seagrass resources. The same key species used for the above evaluations were used for this evaluation. The “stress” performance measures for Johnson’s seagrass were also evaluated at all five sites.

The results of these evaluations were compared to identify which model runs produced salinity conditions similar to existing conditions and which runs resulted in more seagrass “potential stress” and “stress” than existing conditions.

Results and Discussion

Long-term (39-Year) Data Evaluation:

Predicted salinities for six model runs, for a 39-year period, were compared to the salinity tolerances of key seagrass species (see **Chapter 4, Table 4-5**) at five locations along a salinity gradient in the Loxahatchee Estuary. The results are summarized in **Figure 7-24**. At the three downstream locations (Coast Guard at RM 0.70, North Bay at RM 1.48 and Sand Bar at RM 1.74), model results were similar per site; conditions were optimal for the key seagrass species all or most of the time for all model runs. When conditions were not optimal, these less desirable conditions were experienced similarly across model runs.

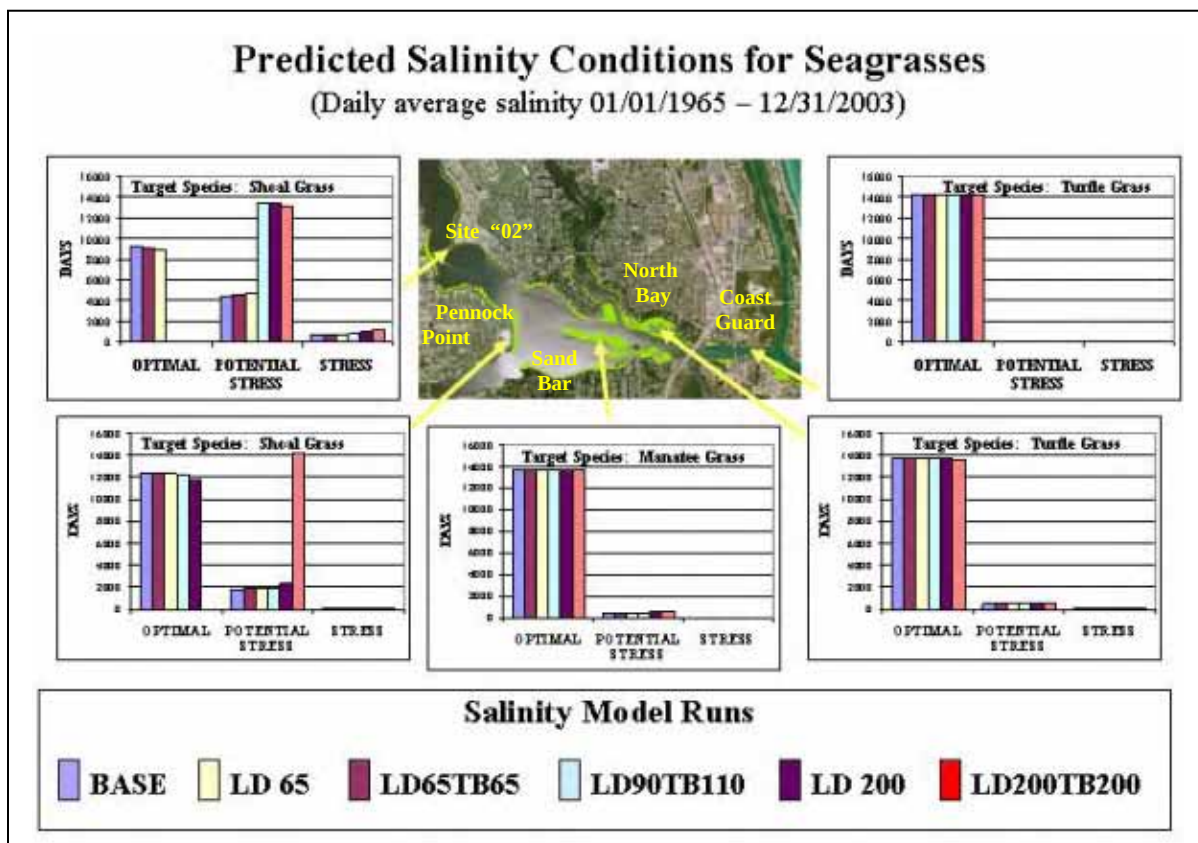


Figure 7-24. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.

At the Pennock Point (RM 2.44) location, results of the highest flow model run (LD200TB200) differed from all other model runs. There were no “optimal” days for shoal grass

and the number of “potential stress” days was substantially higher than for all other model runs. At the most upstream seagrass location (Site O2 at RM 3.26), results of the three highest flow model runs (**LD90TB110**, **LD200**, and **LD200TB200**) had considerably more “potential stress” days for shoal grass than all other model results. Additionally, no “optimal” days occurred for these three model runs. Model runs **LD65** and **LD65TB65** were similar to base conditions at all five locations.

Since Johnson’s seagrass was found throughout the estuary in 2004, the same evaluation was done for this threatened species at all five locations. Results (**Figure 7-25**) were similar to those observed in **Figure 7-24**. The **BASE**, **LD65**, and **LD65TB65** model results were similar at all five locations. The highest flow model run, **LD200TB200**, was different from all other model runs at the Pennock Point (RM 2.44) location; with no “optimal days” for Johnson’s seagrass and substantially more “potential stress” days than all other model runs. Additionally, the **LD90TB110**, **LD200**, and **LD200TB200** had considerably more “potential stress” days at Site O2 than all other model runs.

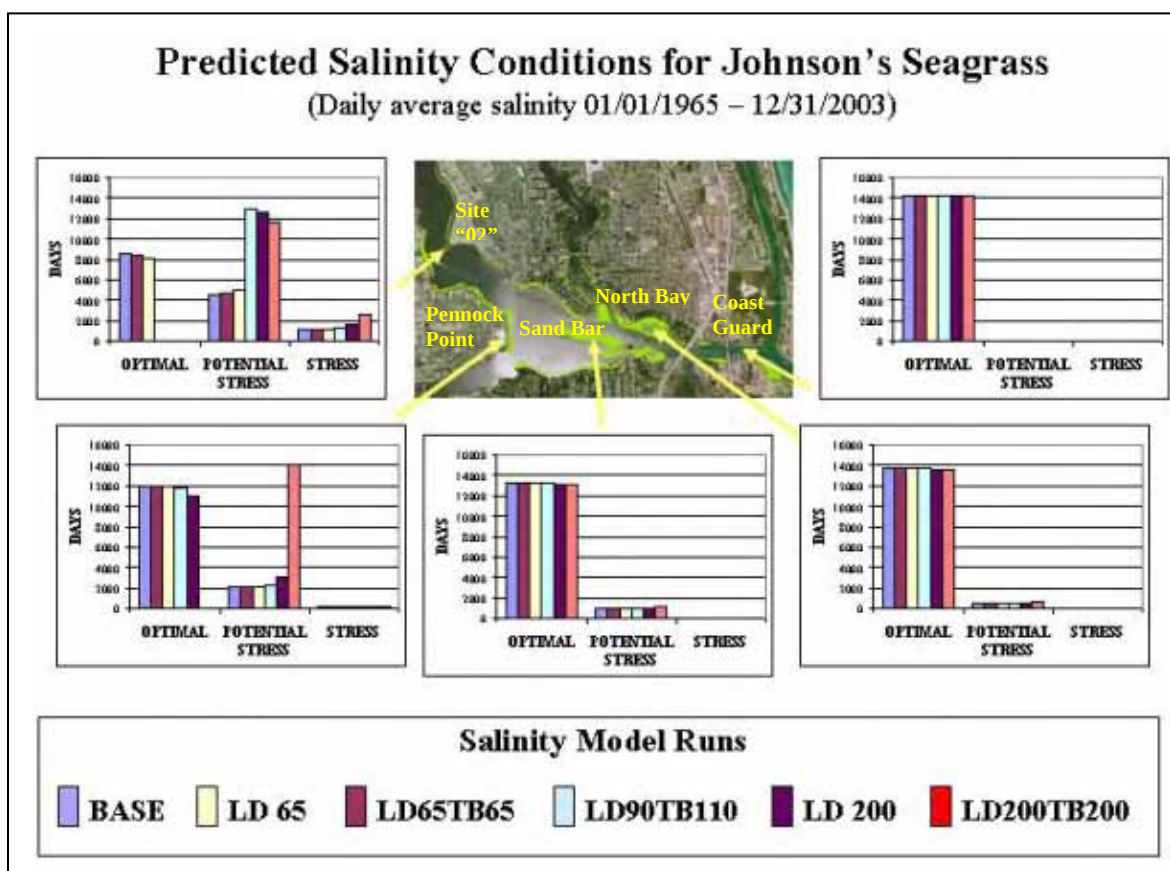


Figure 7-25. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson’s Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.

Despite clear differences in model runs at the upstream locations, the number of “stress” days for all model runs at all sites were similar, with a small increase above the base run for model

runs **LD200** and **LD200TB200** at Site O2 (RM 3.26). These differences were more pronounced for Johnson's seagrass than for shoal grass, but were still relatively small.

The 39-year data set was further evaluated for each location and each model run using the performance measures presented in **Table 4-6** for "stress events". These performance measures were based on limited literature salinity tolerance values that included duration of a salinity threshold associated with a stress event (such as blade mortality). The total numbers of stress events per model run per location are summarized in **Table 7-15**. There were no differences between the numbers of "stress events" for any of the model runs at any of the sites. Only one stress event was noted and it occurred at Site O2 for Johnson's seagrass for all model in October 1995. This result is consistent with **Figures 7-24** and **7-25** which indicate the number of "stress" days are similar and rare for all model runs.

Table 7-15. Number of Stress Events per Model Run Based on Daily Average Salinity from 1/1/1965 – 12/30/2003.

Location	Target Seagrass Species	Stress Event (Salinity/Duration ^a Threshold)*	Number of Stress Events Per Model Run					
			BASE	LD 65	LD65TB65	LD90TB110	LD 200	LD200TB200
Coast Guard RM 0.70	Turtle grass	≤ 4 ppt for 7 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Bay RM 1.48	Turtle grass	≤ 4 ppt for 7 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sand Bar RM 1.74	Manatee grass	≤ 15 ppt for 26 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pennock Point RM 2.44	Shoal grass	≤ 5 ppt for 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Shoal grass	≤ 3.5 ppt for 21 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
Site O2 RM 3.26	Shoal grass	≤ 5 ppt for 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Shoal grass	≤ 3.5 ppt for 21 days	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	1	1	1	1	1	1

^a The duration in this evaluation is in consecutive days.

Short-term (Wet vs. Dry Year) Data Evaluation:

Shorter term data sets were also evaluated. One recent wet year and one recent dry year were selected for this evaluation. The wet year selected was 1995 (the year when all model results showed a "stress event" at Site O2, RM 3.26) and the recent dry year selected was 2000 (**Figure 7-26**).

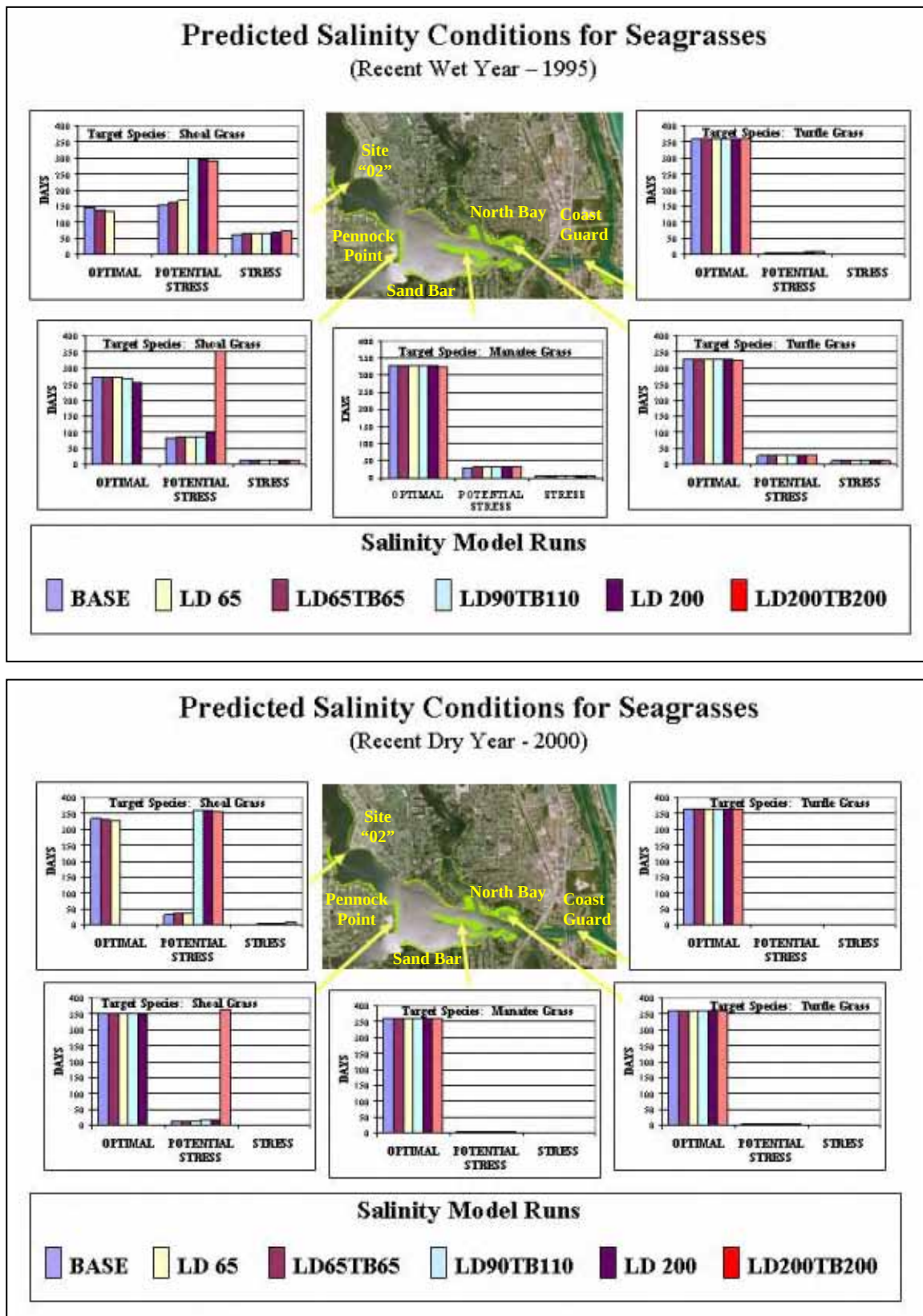


Figure 7-26. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).

More “potential stress” and “stress” days were noted in the wet year than in the dry year (**Figure 7-26**). However, as observed for the 39-year data set, the number of “stress” days was similar across model runs at all sites for both wet and dry years. The general trends discussed above, were also observed in both wet and dry years. Model runs at the three downstream stations were similar per site in both the wet and dry year. At Pennock Point (RM 2.44) the highest flow model run became distinctly different from all other model runs in both the wet and dry years. No “optimal” days occurred and the number of “potential stress” days was greater than for all other model runs. At Site O2, the three highest flow model results were distinctly different from the base, **LD65**, and **LD65TB65** model results for both the wet and dry year (just as observed for the 39-year data set). Similar results were observed when the wet/dry year evaluation was conducted for Johnson’s seagrass (**Figure 7-27**).

To further evaluate the wet/dry year data, daily average salinities were plotted for three of the seagrass stations Coast Guard (RM 0.70), Sand Bar (RM 1.74), and Site O2 (RM 3.26); **Figure 7-28**). In general, greater differences between model run results at a given location occurred during the dry year than during the wet year. As expected, there were more days of salinities below “optimal” conditions for seagrasses in the wet year than during the dry year. Additionally, periods of lowest salinities were similar for all model runs in both the wet and dry years.

At the Coast Guard Station (RM 0.70), salinities were optimal for seagrasses the entire dry year and much of the wet year (salinities never fell below 20 ppt in the wet year for any model run). This supports above results that indicate salinity conditions are good for seagrasses under all model scenarios at the Coast Guard Station. This area includes the “critical habitat” for Johnson’s seagrass.

At the Sand Bar (RM 1.74) location, all model runs were similar during the wet year. During the dry year, **LD200TB200** results were different (lower salinities) than all other model runs, but the results remained within optimal conditions for approximately the same number of days as all other runs. These results indicate that existing seagrass resources at the Sand Bar location would experience significant changes in salinity regime in any of the proposed flows.

At Site O2 (RM 3.26), model run **LD200TB200** results were distinctly different from all other model runs. In both the wet and dry years salinities produced by this model run were near or within stressful salinity ranges for seagrass most of the time. This supports previous results that this flow level would be unlikely to support healthy seagrass beds at Site O2. Results of model runs **LD90TB110** and **LD200** were more similar to the base run in the wet year than in the dry year. Although these two runs produce “potential stress” day counts similar to **LD200TB200** (**Figures 7-26** and **7-27**), salinities were often 8 ppt or higher than **LD200TB200** results. Due to the higher salinities associated with model runs **LD90TB110** and **LD200**, seagrass impacts should not be as great under these scenarios as they would be for the **LD200TB200** flows.

In summary, flows associated with **LD200TB200** are substantially different from the base case conditions at Pennock Point (RM 2.44). This difference is even greater at Site O2 (RM 3.26). Model runs **LD65** and **LD65TB65** produce results similar to base conditions at all seagrass locations and are not expected to impact seagrasses beyond impacts currently experienced. Model runs **LD90TB110** and **LD200** are similar to base conditions at the four downstream locations, but begin to diverge from base conditions at Site O2. These differences could potentially impact seagrass resources.

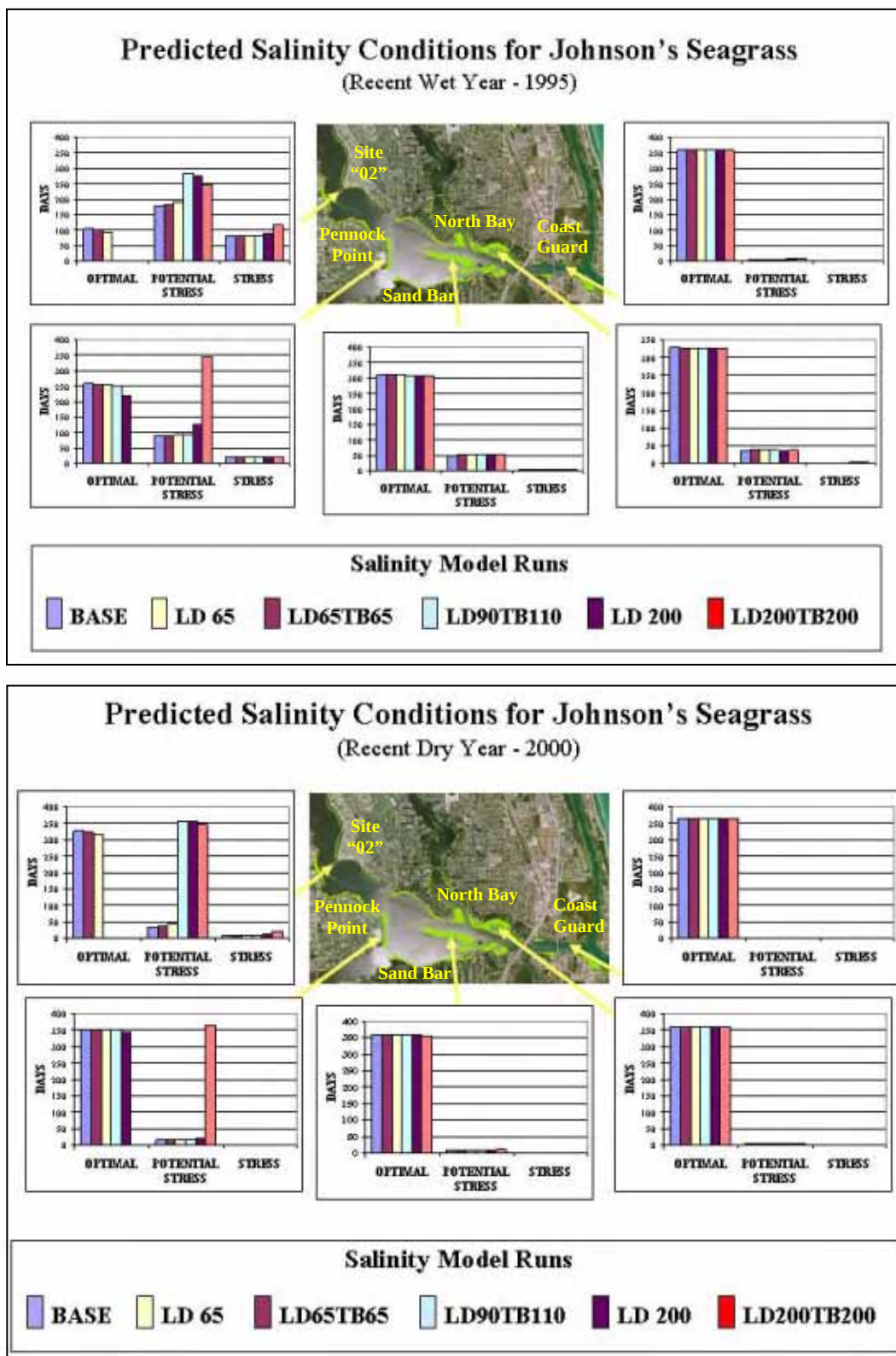


Figure 7-27. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).

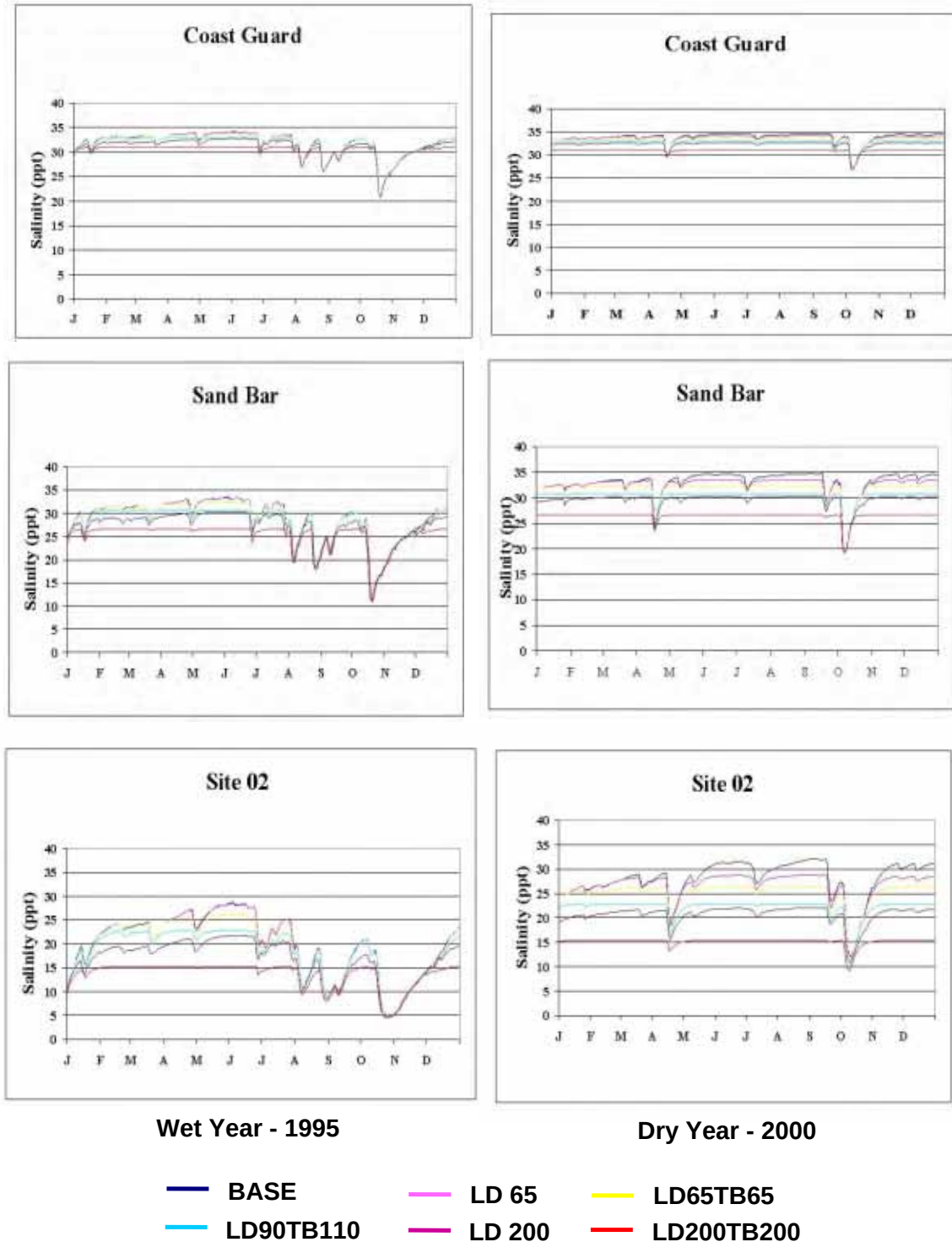


Figure 7-28. Comparison of Daily Average Salinity Conditions at Three Seagrass Locations for a Recent Wet Year (1995) and a Recent Dry Year (2000).

SUMMARY

The Loxahatchee Watershed Model (WaSh) and the Loxahatchee Long-Term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) were used to simulate a 39-year (from 1965 through 2003) flow and salinity for the **BASE** condition and five flow scenarios, representing different flow augmentations for restoration. For each segment of the ecosystem including the riverine freshwater floodplain, tidal floodplain, low salinity zone, mesohaline zone, and polyhaline zone, the ecological benefit or impact is evaluated according to the VECs and PMs established in **Chapter 4**. An overall summary of the evaluation is presented in **Table 7-16** which considers all the VEC components in the Northwest Fork and the Loxahatchee Estuary. A semi-quantitative score system consisting of “+”, “-”, and “0” signs is assigned. A “+” sign represents a positive habitat benefit while the “-” sign indicates that the scenario will result in a negative impact for a particular VEC. The **BASE** case is represented with the “0” sign. The relative significance of an impact or benefit within an eco-zone is represented by the number of “-” or “+” signs. Note that such comparisons are valid only within a component of VECs, and one should not equate a benefit or impact of a VEC with that of another.

In the riverine freshwater floodplain, the relationship between flow from the Lainhart Dam and the stage in the river and floodplain were established through survey and field measurements. Transects 1 (RM 14.50) and 3 (RM 12.07) were selected for evaluation in this chapter. The elevation of swamp and hydric hammock in these transects were surveyed in the field, and their hydroperiod requirements were compared with each of the flow scenarios. The scenarios of **LD65**, **LD65TB65**, and **LD90TB110** provide a flow significantly higher than for the **BASE** condition, particularly in the dry season. Improvement in the wet season inundation requirement of **LD65** and **LD65TB65** is not as significant as for **LD90TB110**. The hydroperiod of the hydric hammock areas is provided by severe storms with a flow from the Lainhart Dam ranging from about 190 cfs to over 300 cfs. Thus, none of the three previously described scenarios influence the hydroperiod of the hydric hammock areas. However, the scenarios of **LD200** and **LD200TB200** would impose significant adverse impacts on the hydroperiod requirements for both the riverine freshwater swamp and hydric hammock areas.

The characteristic salinity regime as defined by Ds/Db ratio using 1 ppt as the critical salinity standard is calculated using salinity data at four locations in the tidal floodplain of the Northwest Fork for all scenarios. Our evaluation shows that a restoration flow (Lainhart Dam plus other tributaries) in the range of 130 cfs (**LD65TB65**) to 200 cfs (**LD90TB110**) is required to provide sufficient freshwater to support riverine freshwater floodplain vegetation down to the mouth of Kitching Creek (RM 8.13). A combined flow of greater than 400 cfs would be required to provide freshwater conditions to the edge of Jonathan Dickinson State Park (RM 6). However, a flow at this high level may likely impose significant adverse impacts such as over-extended hydroperiod for the riverine freshwater floodplain and an erosion hazard in riverbed.

Evaluation of the LSZ employs a different methodology from the other VECs because a mobile organism (zooplankton) is being used as the indicator in contrast to all the other VECs that are sessile. A field study was conducted along with an examination of a family of salinity curves and the simulated salinity data at a fixed location close to the JDSP boundary to evaluate the scenarios. A salinity range from 2 to 8 ppt during the months between December and July when fish reproduction is active provides the highest density of fish larvae within the reach of the river upstream of the JDSP boundary (RM 6.0). An examination of the family of salinity curves and our long-term salinity data indicates that a flow about 140 cfs (slightly higher than **LD65TB65**) provides a salinity of 2 ppt at RM 7.2 and 8 ppt at RM 6. Flows higher than 140 cfs may likely results in alteration of the conditions favorable to fish larvae habitat in the Northwest Fork.

Table 7-16. Overall Summary of the Evaluation of Northwest Fork Ecosystem Constant Flow Restoration Scenarios.

Eco-Zone	VEC Component	Constant Flow Restoration Scenario					
		BASE	LD65	LD65TB65	LD90TB110	LD200	LD200TB200
Riverine Floodplain	Swamp	0	+	+	++	---	---
	Hydric Hammock	0	0	0	0	---	---
Tidal Floodplain	Swamp upstream RM 9	0	++	++	++	-	--
	Swamp upstream RM 8 (Kitching Creek Station)	0	0	++	++	++	--
	Swamp upstream RM 6.14 (VT9 Station)	0	0	0	0	+	--
	Swamp upstream RM 5.92 (Boy Scout Dock)	0	0	0	0	0	--
Low Salinity Zone	Fish Larvae	0	0	0	-	-	--
Mesohaline Zone	Oysters upstream RM 5.92 (Boy Scout Dock)	0	-	--	---	---	---
	Oysters upstream RM 5.45 (Station O6)	0	0	-	--	---	---
	Oysters upstream RM 4.93 (Station O5)	0	0	0	--	--	---
	Oysters upstream RM 4.13 (Station O4)	0	0	0	-	--	---
Polyhaline Zone	Seagrasses upstream RM 3.26 (Site O2)	0	0	0	--	--	---
	Seagrasses upstream RM 2.44 (Pennock Point)	0	0	0	-	-	--
	Seagrasses upstream RM 1.74 (Sand Bar)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Seagrasses upstream RM 1.48 (North Bay)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Seagrasses upstream RM 0.70 (Coast Guard)	0	0	0	0	0	0

0 = No change; +, ++ = Beneficial impact; -, --, --- = Negative impact.

An oyster stress model was used to evaluate how the restoration scenarios influence the existing oyster bed between RM 6.0 and RM 4.0. The analysis concluded that a critical flow exists for each of the four locations evaluated to protect the downstream oyster bed. The critical flow (combined flows from Lainhart Dam and other tributaries) is 90 cfs (**LD65**) for the Boy Scout station (RM 5.92), 130 cfs (**LD65TB65**) for Station 6 (RM 5.45), 160 cfs (**LD80TB80**) for Oyster Station 5 (RM 4.93), and 230 cfs (**LD200**) for Oyster Station 4 (RM 4.13). Since one of the governing principles for the Northwest Fork restoration is that restoring one component of the ecosystem should not damage or destroy any other component, it is necessary to consider “relocating” some of the existing oyster beds to a down stream location in selecting the final restoration scheme (refer to **Figure 4-6** for the acreage of oyster beds from RM 6.0 to RM 3.7).

Potential impacts to seagrasses were evaluated by comparing seagrass salinity tolerances at five locations in the Loxahatchee Estuary with results of salinity model runs for five “restoration” flow scenarios. Scenarios **LD65** and **LD65TB65** produced salinity results similar to existing (“base”) conditions at all seagrass locations and are not expected to impact seagrasses beyond what is currently experienced. Scenarios **LD90TB110** and **LD200** produced salinity conditions similar to base conditions at four downstream locations, but began to diverge from the base conditions at the most upstream location., Site O2. Accordingly, impacts to seagrasses could potentially occur at Site O2 under the **LD90TB110** and **LD200** flow scenarios. The **LD200TB200** scenario is substantially different from existing salinity conditions at the Pennock Point site; this difference is even greater at Site O2. Consequently, impacts to seagrasses could potentially occur at Pennock Point and Site O2 under the **LD200** scenario.

In conclusion, our evaluation did not come up with one scenario that met all the requirements of the VECs in the ecosystem. It needs to be noted that all of the scenarios tend to reduce the variability of flows, and this could favor certain species within the communities and reduce diversity of the ecosystem. A flow pattern capturing the natural dry and wet season variability needs to be considered to maximize the ecologic benefit. **Chapter 8, Development of the Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario**, describes the addition of hydrologic variability in the scenario development and evaluation along with suggestions received during the public meeting process. The saltwater barrier as a restoration alternative is analyzed in **Chapter 9**.

CHAPTER 8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
VARIABLE FLOW SCENARIOS.....	4
ECOLOGICAL EVALUTION OF VARIABLE FLOW SCENARIOS.....	10
EVALUATION OF RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN.....	10
EVALUATION OF TIDAL FLOODPLAIN.....	12
EVALUATION OF ESTUARINE BIOTA	18
Low Salinity Zone Evaluation: Variable Flow scenarios for Fish Larvae.....	18
Mesohaline Zone Evaluation: Variable Flow Scenarios for Oysters	20
Polyhaline Zone Evaluation: Variable flow Scenarios for Seagrasses.....	25
Long-Term (39-Year) Data Evaluation	25
Short-Term (Wet vs. Dry Year) Data Evaluation	25
ANTICIPATED ECOLOGICAL CHANGE	31
SUMMARY.....	32

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 8-1. Flow Diagram to Augment Flow Over Lainhart Dam to Generate the New Variability Time Series of the Restoration Flow.	6
Figure 8-2. A Comparison of a Weekly Pulse and a Biweekly Pulse Used for Flow Augmentation Over Lainhart Dam.	8
Figure 8-3. Comparison of Lainhart Dam Monthly Median Flow Between the Variable Flow Scenario and the Base Condition.	8
Figure 8-4. Tributary Flow Augmentation for TV60, TV90, and TV120 Compared to Base Condition During a Calendar Year.	9
Figure 8-5. Average Salinities of the Base Condition and Three Variable Flow Scenarios at RM 6.0, RM 6.5, RM 7.0, RM 7.5, and RM 8.0.	10
Figure 8-6. A Ranking of Average Daily Salinity by Variable Flow Scenario at RM 7 (1/2 mile upstream of Transect 9), RM 7.5 and RM 8 (adjacent to and downstream of the mouth of Kitching Creek).	13
Figure 8-7. Approximate Locations of Characteristic 1 ppt and 2 ppt Salinity Lines Under Variable Flow Scenarios LV90TV60, LV90TV90 and LV90TB120.	14
Figure 8-8. Water Surface Elevations at Varying Total Freshwater Flows at Two Tidal Floodplain Locations During the Dry Season.	15
Figure 8-9. Tidal Amplitude at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) During April (Wet Season) and November (Dry Season) of 2004 Relative to Transect 6 (RM 8.43) Elevation.	16
Figure 8-10. Tidal Amplitude at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) During April (Wet Season) and November (Dry Season) of 2004 Relative to Transect 9 (RM 6.46) Elevation.	17
Figure 8-11. Vegetation Types and Elevations Along Transect 9, RM 6.46.	18
Figure 8-12. Percent Time and Duration When Salinity Was Below 8 ppt at RM 5.45 for Base (1965-2003) and Variable Flow Scenarios.	20
Figure 8-13. Cumulative Number of Oysters and Acreage between RM 4.0 and RM 6.0.	21
Figure 8-14. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm or Death Conditions Existed for Oyster Eggs and Larvae in the Base Case and LV90TV60 for Oyster Stations BD, 6, 5 and 4.	23
Figure 8-15. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm or Death Conditions Existed for Oyster Spat or Adults in the Base Case and LV90TV60 for Oyster Stations BD, 6, 5 and 4.	24
Figure 8-16. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.	26
Figure 8-17. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.	26
Figure 8-18. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).	28
Figure 8-19. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).	29
Figure 8-20. Comparison of Daily Average Salinity Conditions at Site 02 for Base Conditions and Three Variable Flow Runs.	30
Figure 8-21. Expected Vegetation Changes in Response to the LV90TV60 Variable Flow Scenario.	32

LIST OF TABLES

Table 8-1. Amount of Additional Flow Needed Over Lainhart Dam Based on Monthly Medians.	7
Table 8-2. Examination of Flow Conditions of the LV90 Restoration Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (cfs).	11
Table 8-3. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for LV90 : Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater than 110 cfs.	12
Table 8-4. Number of Stress Events per Model Run Based on Daily Average Salinity from 1/1/1965 – 12/30/2003.	27

Chapter 8

Development of the Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario for the Northwest Fork

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of the initial set of five constant flow scenarios in **Chapter 7** provides a framework to understand the affect of the various flows on downstream conditions. This restoration effort encompasses a spectrum of goals including the recovery of native species and environmental conditions in the riverine floodplain, as well as, the management of dynamic, biologically diverse communities in the tidally influenced ecosystems.

The Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC) provided a forum for a series of public meetings that were held in May and June 2005 to review the results of the constant flow scenarios and the associated benefits or impacts. The SFWMD, the FDEP, FPS and the LRD also met with environmental groups such as the Loxahatchee River Environmental Coalition and Friends of the Loxahatchee River. Through the LRMCC sponsored public review process it became apparent that any single constant flow scenario could not meet all the ecological requirements of the VECs considered. One concern is that augmenting flows to reach a designated level (e.g., 65, 90, 110, or 200 cfs) results in a significant loss of hydrologic variability (the higher the minimum flow the less variability). Because the Northwest Fork ecosystems are dynamic, each VEC requires a different range of natural variation or disturbance to maintain viability or resilience. Water flows that vary both from season to season and from year to year are needed to support plant and animal communities and to maintain natural habitat dynamics that support the survival and reproduction of species. Variability in the timing and rate of water flow strongly influences the size of native plant and animal populations and their age structures, the presence of rare or highly specialized species, the interactions of species with each other and with their environments, and many ecosystem processes. Periodic and episodic water flow patterns also influence water quality, physical habitat conditions and connections, and energy sources in aquatic ecosystems. The objective of this chapter is to incorporate hydrologic variability in the development of the preferred restoration flow scenario.

VARIABLE FLOW SCENARIOS

The following hydrologic variability criteria were considered during the development of the variable flow restoration scenarios:

1. **Base flow:** Base flows and associated water levels in the riverine floodplain between storm events determine the minimum quantity of water in the channel. These flows directly influence the amount of aquatic habitat available and the depth of saturated soil for floodplain vegetation. The goal in developing variable flow scenarios is to increase base flow to limit saltwater intrusion in the tidal floodplain while maintaining the appropriate environmental conditions in the riverine floodplain for

aquatic dependant species (i.e. fish and amphibians), seed germination, vegetation communities, and wildlife.

2. **Seasonal timing of high flows:** High flows during the wet season, particularly the months of August through November, are critical for maintaining the hydroperiod of the cypress swamp in the riverine floodplain and many other native species whose reproductive success is tied to seasonal high flows. High flows can also remove species that are poorly adapted to dynamic river environments such as upland tree species. The goal in developing the variable flow scenarios is to augment flow during the wet season to maintain a minimum of 120 days of inundation for the cypress swamp in the riverine floodplain.
3. **Monthly and short-term variations in flow:** Monthly flow variability is an important factor influencing the ecosystem productivity and foodweb structure of the riverine and estuarine systems. Short-term variable base flows, unlike constant flows, also provide enhanced estuarine water quality and zooplankton communities. The goal in developing the variable flow scenarios is to maintain monthly variability and provide augmented base flows in a fashion that imitates runoff from a small rainfall event.
4. **Frequent and rare floods during the wet season:** To maintain vegetation dynamics in the Northwest Fork, moderately high flows (about 170 ~ 450 cfs over the Lainhart Dam) are needed to inundate adjacent hydric hammock plant communities within the riverine floodplain. These frequent flooding events, which occur typically with a 1- to 2-year return interval, flush fine materials from the streambed, facilitating the dispersal of organisms and promoting higher biological production during low flow periods. The success of non-native invaders is often minimized by such frequent floods. Rare or extreme events, such as 10-year storm events, transfer large amounts of sediment from the main channel to floodplain and disperse seed sources further up in the landscape thereby increasing habitat diversity along the river. The goal in developing the variable flow scenarios is to maintain the frequent and rare high floods with the same periodicity as the base condition during the 39-year period of record.

Based on these four criteria, flow augmentation over Lainhart Dam is performed with a set of logic-based rules that allows for a new times series to be generated based on the flow time series under the base condition. The logic for generating the new time series of the restoration flow is shown in **Figure 8-1**. The logic sequence starts with a series of breakpoint flows for different months of a calendar year. These breakpoint flows are 130 cfs for the months of August through November, representing the wet season, 70 cfs for February through May, representing the dry season, and 80 cfs for June, July, December, and January, which represent the transitional period. These breakpoint flows were identified through an analysis of the flow distribution under the base condition and field observation of floodplain inundation under certain flow regimes. Thus, if the daily flow in the respective month is less than the breakpoint flow for that month, flow augmentation is needed. The restoration flow will then be the same with the base condition flow.

There are two methods to determine the amount of additional flow. The method that provides a larger flow for that particular day has the priority to be applied. The first method is based on the monthly median flows in the base condition. The monthly median flows are derived by ranking all of the flows that occurred during the month throughout the 39 years. The amount of flow that needs to be added is determined by the following formula:

$$(130 \text{ cfs-Monthly Median}) * \text{Monthly Median} / \text{October Median} \quad [8-1]$$

The “October median” is the greatest median value among the 12 months. The “monthly median/October median” component generates a natural proportionality between the median values. The monthly variability concept is shown in the component (130 cfs-Monthly Median) as a multiplier with an emphasis placed on the low flow months. This method creates a transition around the breakpoint, which keeps the variability in the system without creating an artificial level of constant flow during certain conditions. The added flow for each month is shown in **Table 8-1**.

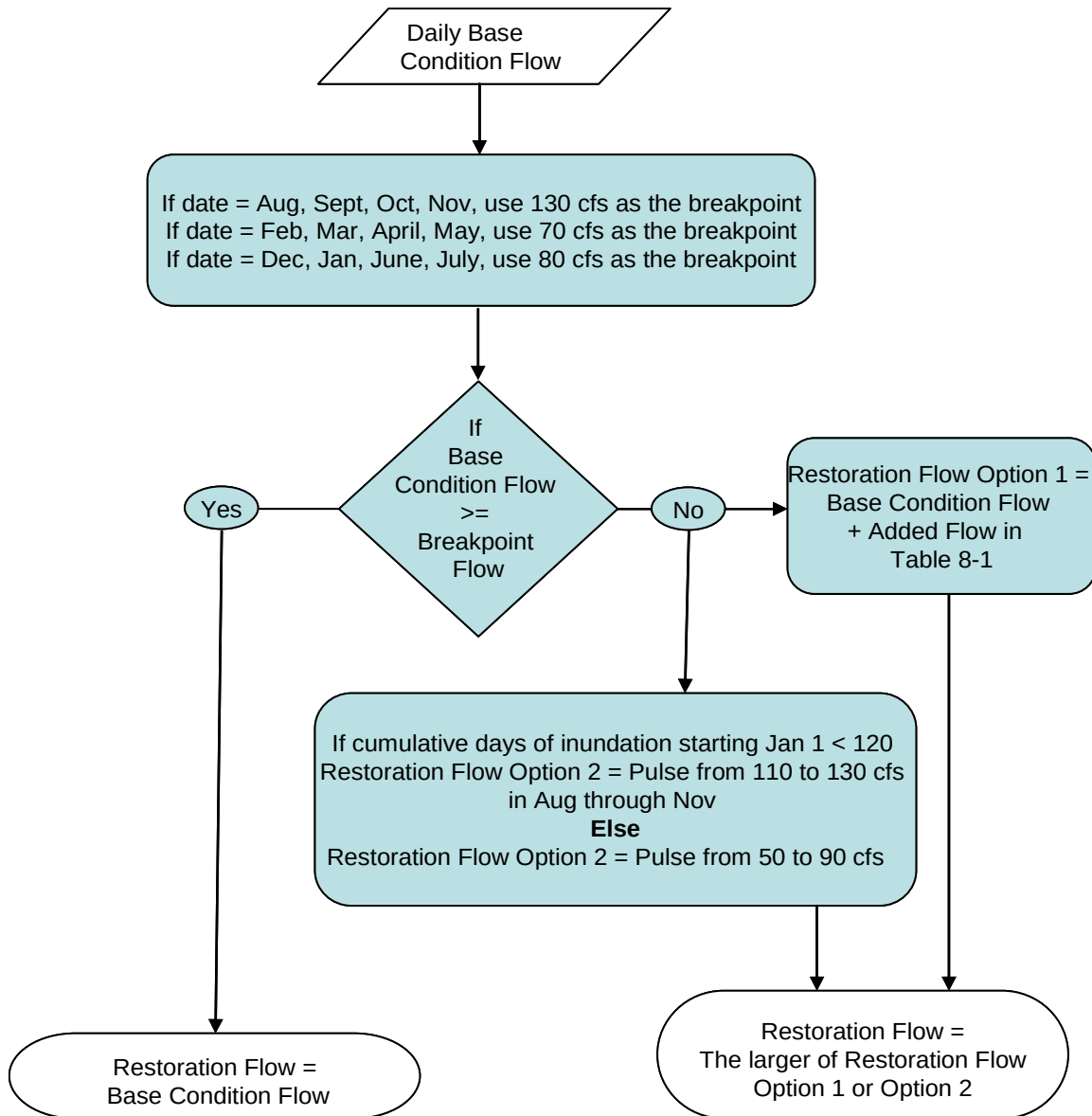


Figure 8-1. Flow Diagram to Augment Flow over Lainhart Dam to Generate the New Variability Time Series of the Restoration Flow.

Table 8-1. Amount of Additional Flow Needed Over Lainhart Dam Based on Monthly Medians.

Month	Monthly Median (cfs)	Added Flow (cfs)
January	57	37
February	44	34
March	43	34
April	28	25
May	25	24
June	80	36
July	78	36
August	73	37
September	95	29
October	112	18
November	82	35
December	61	38

The second method prescribes a pulse to simulate a hydrograph induced by a rainfall event. There are two magnitudes of pulses. The first one has a mean daily flow of 115 cfs with a range from 110 cfs to 130 cfs. This pulse is applied only in the months of August through November when the 120-day floodplain inundation requirement has not been met in the calendar year. The second pulse has a mean daily flow of 68 cfs, ranging from 50 cfs to 90 cfs. A 90 cfs maximum flow is selected to ensure that water will not flow into the floodplain during the dry season as field verified by our observations described in Chapter 5. This pulse is used throughout the year. The duration of a pulse can be variable. An example of a weekly pulse and biweekly pulse is shown in **Figure 8-2**. The amount of water needed per week for the weekly pulse and the biweekly pulse is about the same.

With the flow augmentation rules described above, a variable flow scenario for Lainhart Dam is generated with a weekly pulsing option. The monthly median flow of the new variable flow scenario is compared with that of the base condition in **Figure 8-3**. Note that the monthly variability is carried over in the new scenario as shown by the different medians between months. Since the total amount of water added over Lainhart Dam in the variable flow scenario is similar to that of the scenario of LD90TB100 evaluated in **Chapter 7**, this Lainhart Dam variable flow scenario is abbreviated as LV90 in this document.

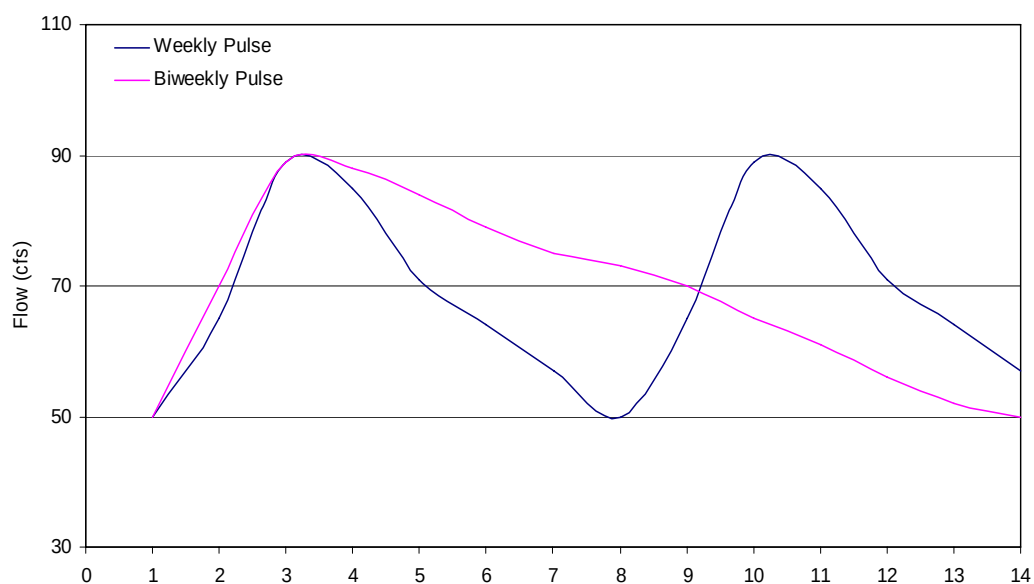


Figure 8-2. A Comparison of a Weekly Pulse and a Biweekly Pulse Used for Flow Augmentation over Lainhart Dam.

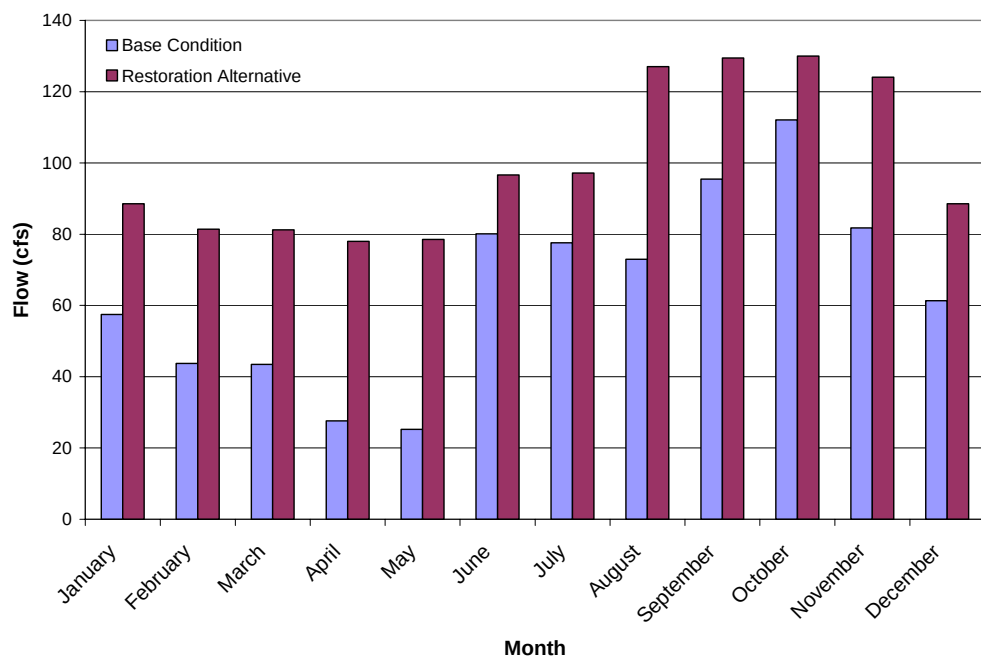


Figure 8-3. Comparison of Lainhart Dam Monthly Median Flow between the Variable Flow Scenario and the Base Condition.

For the other tributaries including Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek, three variable flow scenarios are designed simply to augment the base flow uniformly by 30, 60, and 90 cfs, respectively, if the total Northwest Fork flow with LV90 is less than 300 cfs. Since close to 90% of the daily flow during the 39-year period of record (base condition) is over 30 cfs, the three tributary variable flow scenarios are abbreviated TV60, TV90, and TV120. An example of how flow is added with the three scenarios is shown in **Figure 8-4**.

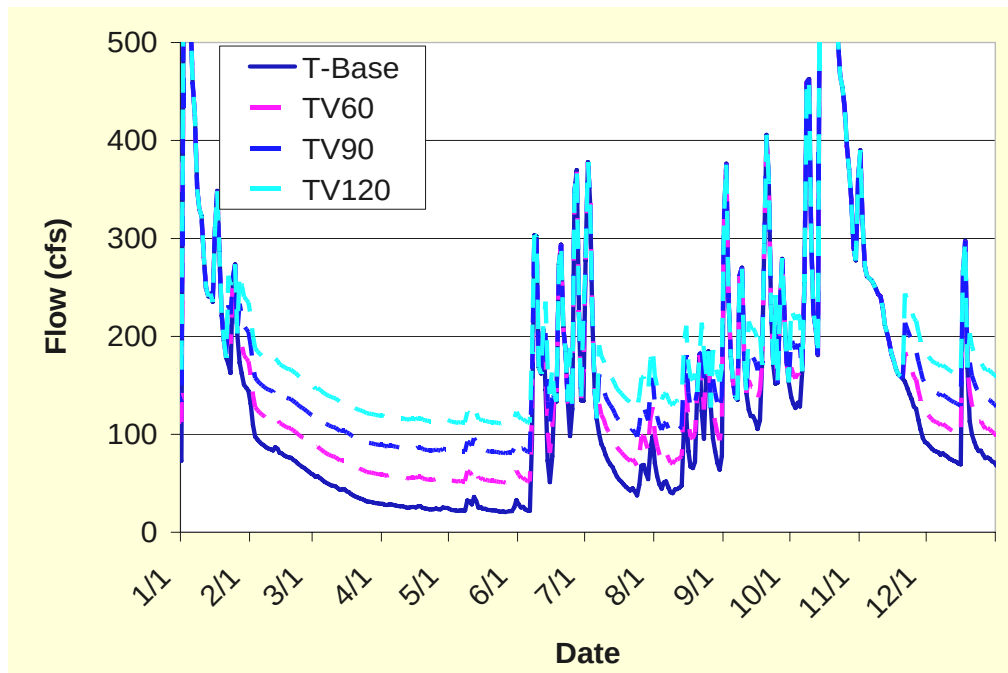


Figure 8-4. Tributary Flow Augmentation for TV60, TV90, and TV120 Compared to Base Condition During a Calendar Year (flows are the total from Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek).

After integrating flows of Lainhart Dam (LV90) and the other tributaries, three Northwest Fork variable flow restoration scenarios were formulated: LV90TV60, LV90TV90, and LV90TV120. Daily salinity at the 15 salinity evaluation sites under each of the variable flow scenarios were simulated using the Long-term Salinity Management Model (LSMM) described in **Chapter 6**. Average salinities of the **Base Condition** and the three variable flow scenarios at RM 6, RM 6.5, RM 7, RM 7.5, and RM 8 are summarized in **Figure 8-5**. Daily flow and salinity data were used for VEC evaluations in the next section.

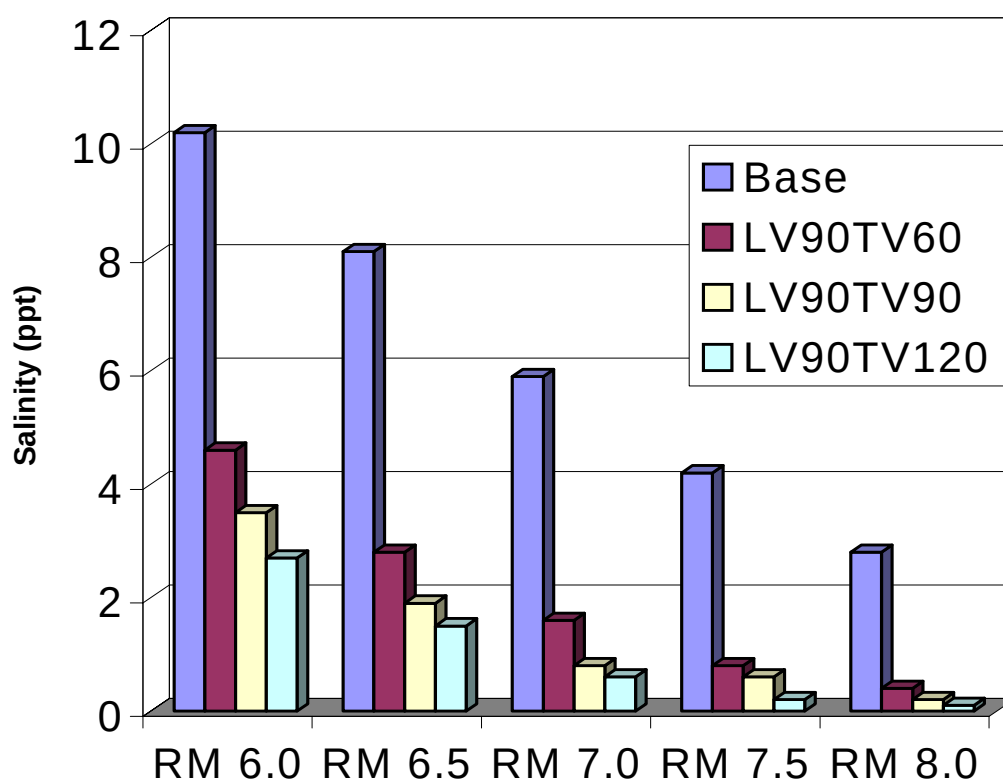


Figure 8-5. Average Salinities of the Base Condition and Three Variable Flow Scenarios at RM 6.0, RM 6.5, RM 7.0, RM 7.5, and RM 8.0.

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF VARIABLE FLOW SCENARIOS

EVALUATION OF RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN

Lainhart Dam flow and river stage relationships were established previously in **Chapter 5** and floodplain inundation characteristics for the riverine reach were illustrated in **Figures 7-2** and **7-3** for Transects 1 and 3, respectively. The floodplain swamp inundation analyses were again conducted using the daily flow of the three variable flow scenarios (**LV90TV60**, **LV90TV90**, and **LV90TV120**). Because the inundation of the riverine floodplain is mostly related to flow over the Lainhart Dam, only the **LV90** component of the variable flow was evaluated.

Since **LV90** was designed to meet the hydroperiod requirements of the riverine swamp, it is anticipated that the performance measures of the riverine floodplain will be fully met by **LV90**. **Table 8-2** is the monthly mean flow of **LV90**. With the **LV90** scenario, dry season mean monthly flows were all greater than 65 cfs. The number of months with a mean flow greater than 90 cfs in **LV90** is also less than that of **LD90TB110**. It shows that **LV90** has a much improved mean monthly flow regime than the **Base Condition** (**Chapter 7, Table 7-4**) and the constant flow scenario, **LD90TB110** (**Chapter 7, Table 7-6**).

Table 8-2. Examination of Flow Conditions of the LV90 Restoration Scenario for the 39-Year Modeled Dataset Using Mean Monthly Flows (Dry Season: December through May, Wet Season: June through November).

Date													
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual Mean
1965	75	77	69	70	69	73	79	124	120	188	131	69	96
1966	114	116	73	71	95	213	221	160	127	208	98	77	131
1967	71	82	79	71	69	92	114	152	126	207	114	72	104
1968	69	71	69	70	75	303	180	161	220	274	163	99	146
1969	101	81	133	71	158	126	106	163	164	271	186	100	139
1970	131	107	216	237	110	159	122	108	89	89	72	70	126
1971	69	74	69	70	93	75	81	123	165	133	209	105	106
1972	82	77	71	78	195	204	105	123	120	76	103	73	109
1973	76	74	70	70	70	109	104	149	155	188	91	82	103
1974	171	74	84	70	70	145	152	173	121	145	94	94	117
1975	71	79	70	70	76	121	146	119	144	144	75	69	99
1976	69	80	71	70	138	128	72	134	196	125	102	72	105
1977	98	72	69	70	83	74	69	120	272	121	113	151	109
1978	104	73	71	70	70	166	147	173	128	177	267	190	137
1979	193	91	85	87	82	90	74	118	189	170	140	97	118
1980	85	89	74	70	84	78	111	120	121	139	93	70	95
1981	69	71	69	70	69	70	69	205	184	120	125	73	100
1982	69	72	168	201	175	241	124	127	135	156	303	182	163
1983	143	200	172	108	85	144	106	161	274	342	206	157	175
1984	123	86	127	87	119	133	100	120	215	131	219	155	135
1985	107	77	73	94	70	78	97	120	188	138	96	102	103
1986	145	78	131	100	69	123	125	124	127	121	121	126	116
1987	126	73	96	71	70	77	86	121	123	177	242	74	111
1988	89	80	81	70	77	111	138	215	128	117	70	69	104
1989	69	71	69	70	69	70	73	135	120	137	120	74	90
1990	70	71	69	70	71	73	69	131	154	174	120	76	96
1991	168	132	81	142	132	162	135	130	149	198	124	102	138
1992	86	128	88	80	69	155	137	206	220	173	208	100	137
1993	231	204	200	122	92	110	99	118	174	281	167	98	158
1994	102	142	84	97	84	147	127	225	281	212	287	285	172
1995	140	96	98	85	84	125	134	292	196	356	271	153	170
1996	103	80	160	122	144	140	176	131	149	171	152	109	137
1997	107	105	84	130	98	214	109	205	227	120	118	149	139
1998	148	204	161	88	115	84	105	121	227	143	293	102	149
1999	227	89	84	71	69	182	134	143	203	337	213	109	155
2000	107	84	90	110	70	71	77	118	128	199	78	71	100
2001	69	71	92	72	70	93	206	265	265	236	166	106	143
2002	104	132	83	78	69	139	189	121	120	90	87	78	107
2003	70	71	96	78	146	141	82	165	129	121	170	103	114
Monthly Mean	109	96	98	90	94	129	117	152	169	177	154	106	124

Table 8-3 is a summary of the number of days with a 20-day moving average flow over 110 cfs. The months which have flow larger than 110 cfs for over 20 days are highlighted green. Note that the highlighted months occur mostly in the wet season from July to November when the floodplain needs to be inundated. Compared with the **Base Condition (Chapter 7, Table 7-8)** and **LD90TB110 (Chapter 7, Table 7-10)**, LV90 is an improvement over the constant flow scenario in terms of meeting the requirement of floodplain inundation.

Table 8-3. Floodplain Swamp Inundation Analysis for **LV90**: Number of Days in a Month with 20-Day Moving Average Flows Greater than 110 cfs.

	Date													Months with
Years	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total	over 20 days
1965	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	30	31	28	0	109	4
1966	18	5	16	0	0	26	31	31	30	31	16	0	204	5
1967	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	23	30	31	24	0	130	5
1968	0	0	0	0	0	26	31	31	30	31	30	14	193	6
1969	0	0	22	0	25	27	21	20	30	31	30	15	221	8
1970	18	23	21	30	14	30	23	15	0	1	0	0	175	5
1971	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	21	30	31	30	12	126	4
1972	12	0	0	0	19	30	17	28	30	8	2	4	150	3
1973	0	0	0	0	0	14	2	31	30	31	17	0	125	3
1974	17	9	0	0	0	15	31	31	30	31	0	4	168	4
1975	0	0	0	0	0	15	26	31	30	31	11	0	144	4
1976	0	0	0	0	8	26	0	14	30	31	22	0	131	4
1977	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	30	31	27	20	122	4
1978	14	9	0	0	0	10	31	31	30	31	30	31	217	6
1979	31	13	0	0	0	0	0	15	30	31	27	15	162	4
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	31	30	31	19	0	115	3
1981	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	30	31	30	5	111	3
1982	0	0	23	30	29	30	26	24	11	31	30	31	265	9
1983	31	28	31	28	1	22	2	24	30	31	30	31	289	10
1984	23	0	8	14	2	25	0	22	30	29	16	29	198	6
1985	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	30	31	18	9	119	3
1986	22	1	4	21	0	10	23	31	30	22	30	15	209	7
1987	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	30	31	30	12	145	4
1988	0	0	0	0	0	17	17	31	30	31	1	0	127	3
1989	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	30	31	30	6	116	3
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	30	31	30	6	112	3
1991	15	24	0	21	19	30	31	31	30	31	28	13	273	8
1992	0	8	15	0	0	5	27	26	30	31	30	18	190	5
1993	27	28	31	25	0	6	0	17	30	31	30	16	241	7
1994	0	26	10	0	0	21	26	31	30	31	30	31	236	8
1995	31	5	0	0	0	6	28	31	30	31	30	31	223	7
1996	3	3	20	23	9	30	31	30	30	31	30	21	261	9
1997	0	6	7	15	6	29	28	29	30	30	30	31	241	7
1998	15	28	31	10	20	0	12	24	30	31	30	17	248	7
1999	29	13	0	0	0	18	25	25	30	31	30	25	226	7
2000	14	0	0	15	4	0	0	15	30	31	8	0	117	2
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	31	30	31	30	12	164	5
2002	0	18	5	0	0	10	31	31	30	8	0	0	133	3
2003	0	0	0	0	6	30	2	23	30	31	30	6	158	5
Grand Total	349	247	244	232	164	508	578	956	1,121	1,121	894	480	6,894	203

EVALUATION OF TIDAL FLOODPLAIN

Figure 8-6 shows the distribution of average daily salinity at RM 7, RM 7.5, and RM 8 during the 39-year simulation period of the variable flow scenarios. For the **LV90TV60**, 95% of the daily salinities were below 1 ppt and 100% were below 2 ppt at RM 8. This is encouraging for restoration of freshwater floodplain communities particularly above RM 8 and includes Kitching Creek, one of the major tributaries in need of protection and restoration in the upper tidal reach.

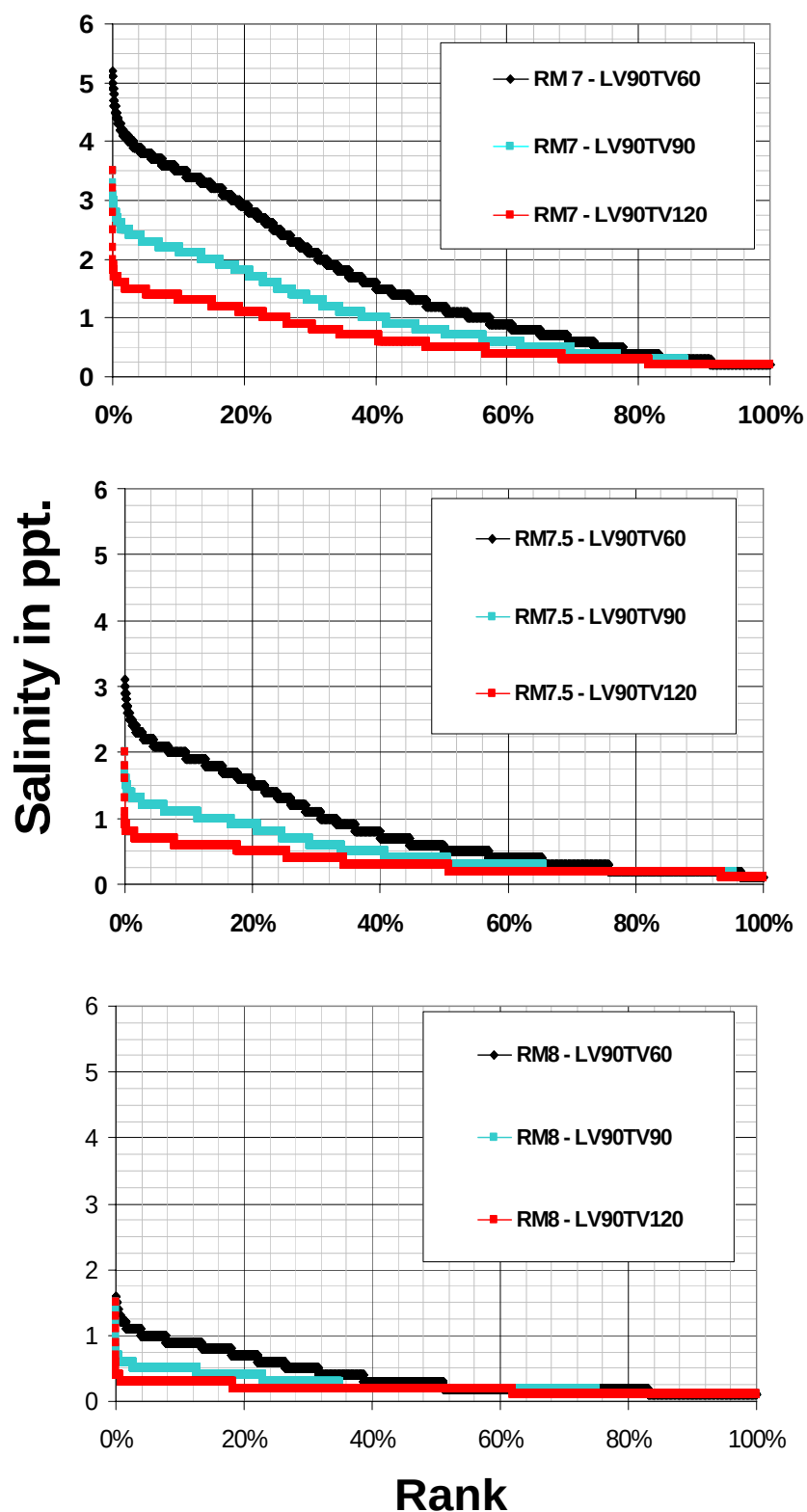


Figure 8-6. A Ranking of Average Daily Salinity by Variable Flow Scenario at RM 7 (1/2 mile upstream of Transect 9), RM 7.5 and RM 8 (adjacent to and downstream of the mouth of Kitching Creek).

In examining the salinity distribution of the variable flow scenarios, one can easily obtain the characteristic salinity regime as defined by the Ds/Db ratio (**Chapters 4 and 7**). **Figure 8-7** depicts the approximate location of the characteristics salinity regime with a Ds/Db ratio smaller than 0.5 (using 1 ppt or 2 ppt as the threshold) for healthy growth of bald cypress and cabbage palm produced by **LV90TV60**, **LV90TV90**, and **LV90TV120**. Note that the characteristic salinity regime using 1 ppt threshold will be roughly at RM 7.5 for **LV90TV60**. Additional flow augmentation with **LV90TV90** and **LV90TV120** resulted in moving the location further downstream. However, the floodplain area from RM 7.5 to RM 6.8 consists of primarily peninsulas and islands, which receive tidal waters from multiple areas of the river channel. Due to the meandering nature of this particular section of the river, the improvement in freshwater environment of **LV90TV90** and **LV90TV120** does not seem to be practical for restoration purposes.

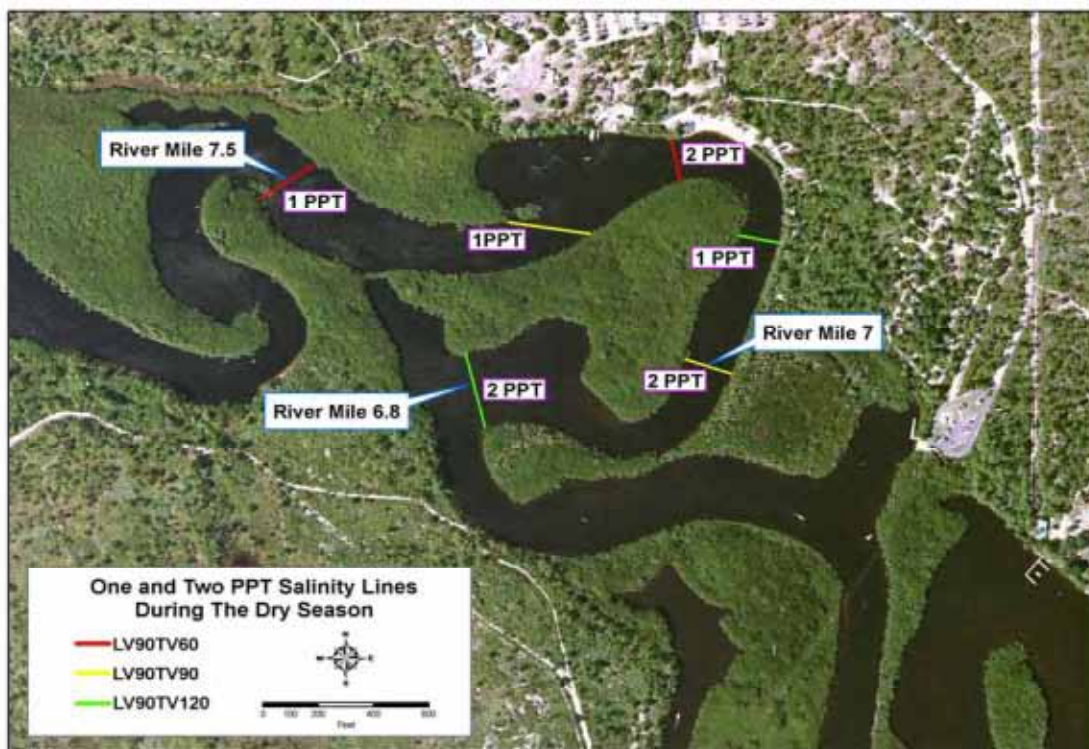


Figure 8-7. Approximate Locations of Characteristic 1 ppt and 2 ppt Salinity Lines Under Variable Flow Scenarios LV90TV60, LV90TV90 and LV90TB120.

The impact of increased dry season flows on floodplain swamp inundation is minimal. The measured daily average water surface elevations at the Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) and Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) stations were plotted against total Northwest Fork flow in **Figure 8-8**. The river stages at both locations are highly variable due to tidal influences; there is no clear relationship between the flow and stage in the tidal reaches of the Northwest Fork.

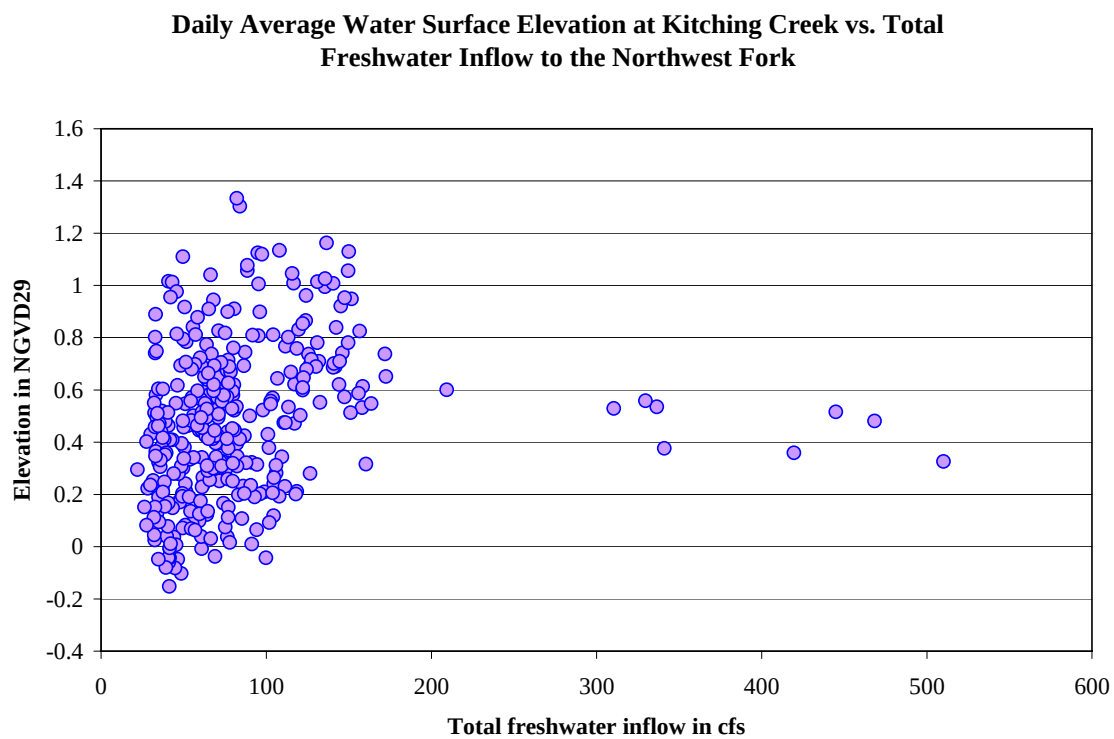
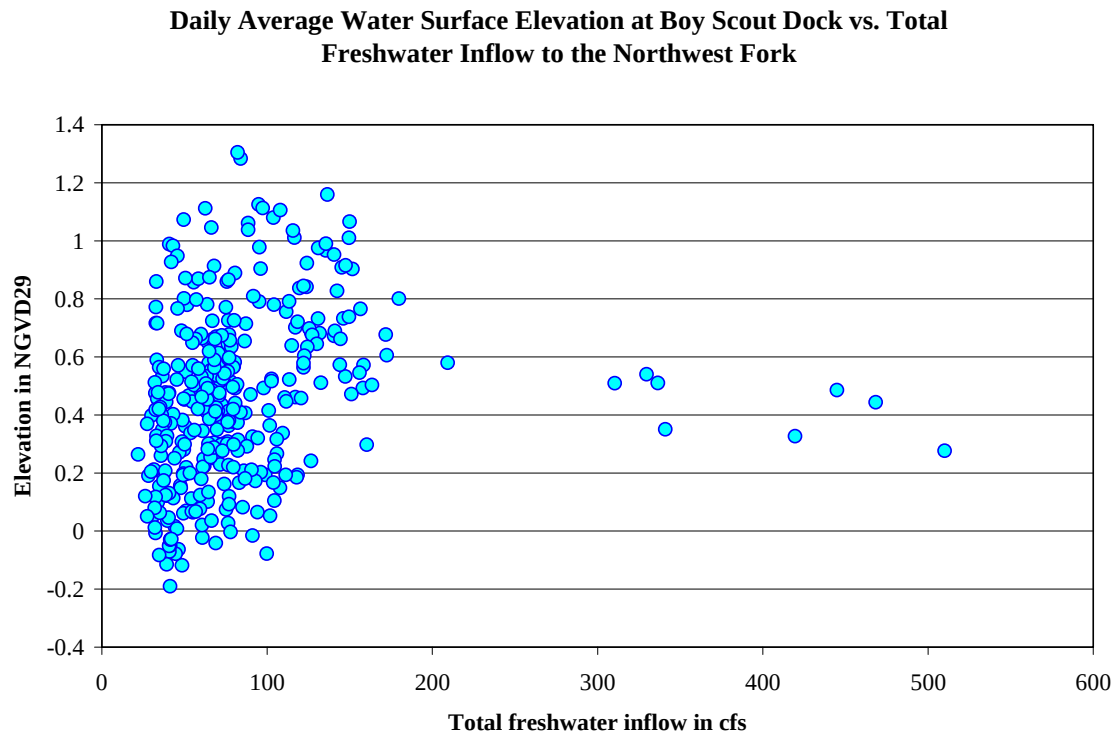


Figure 8-8. Water Surface Elevations at Varying Total Freshwater Flows at Two Tidal Floodplain Locations During the Dry Season.

Figures 8-9 and **8-10** provide a another illustration of the frequencies of floodplain inundation during a dry season (April 2004) and a wet season (November 2004) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13), which is near Transect 6 at RM 8.43, and Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92), which is approximately ½ mile away from Transect 9 at RM 6.46 in the lower tidal reach. Although the tidal amplitude was nearly the same at these two locations, the floodplain elevations are not the same. The average elevation of floodplain swamp plots at Transect 6 is 1.71 ft whereas the average elevation at Transect 9 is 1.57 ft and has more days of floodplain inundation than Transect 6. **Figure 8-11** shows the surveyed elevation of Transect 9. There is a marked change in vegetation type from the mangrove floodplain forest (LTsw1 and LTsw2) to hydric hammock (HH) to upland forest vegetation. The three remaining live bald cypress trees on Transect 9 are located near the trail (elevation about 2 feet), and the cabbage palms of the LTMix (Lower Tidal Mix) are also elevated about 2 feet. Because of their slightly higher elevation (6 inches above the floodplain), the cypress trees and cabbage palms are protected from most tidal effects. The elevations of adjacent islands and peninsulas between RM 7.5 and RM 6.8 (**Figure 8-7**) are expected to be lower than the floodplain elevation of Transect 9. Thus, the low elevations of the floodplains and riverbeds compound the problems associated with tidal amplitude and floodplain inundation and limit the potential for restoring freshwater vegetation in this segment of the lower tidal reach.

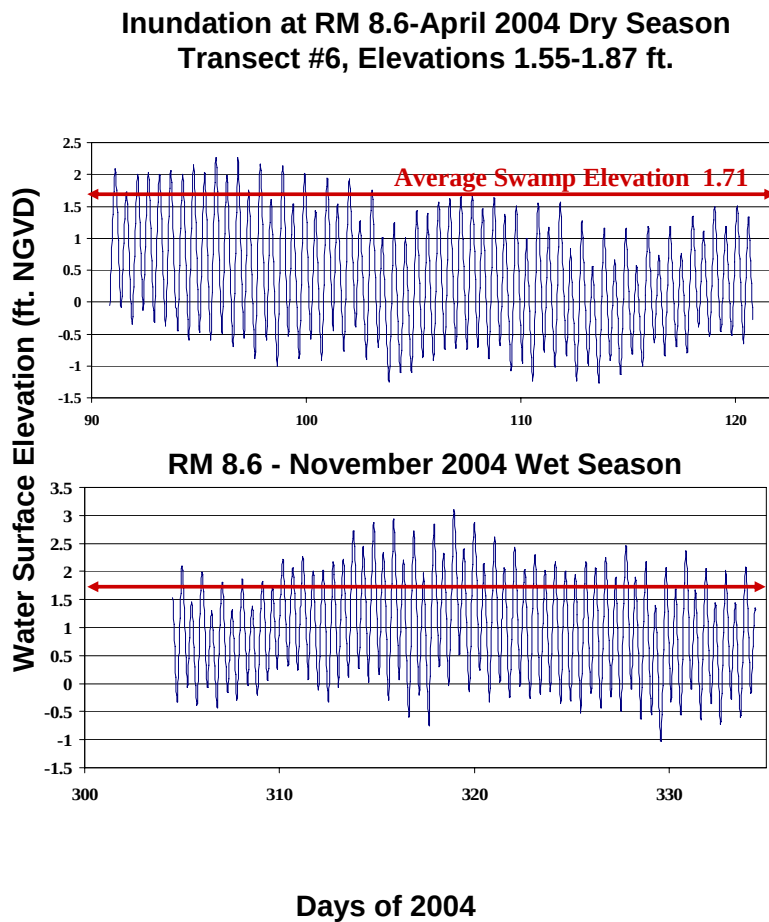


Figure 8-9. Tidal Amplitude at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) During April (Wet Season) and November (Dry Season) of 2004 Relative to Transect 6 (RM 8.43) Elevation.

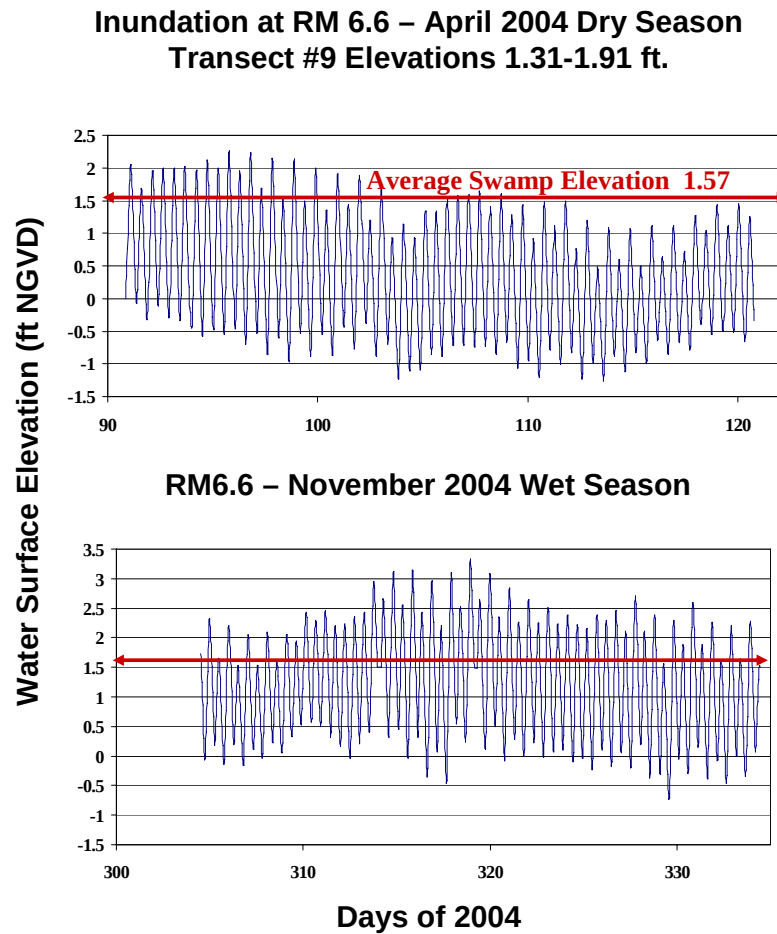


Figure 8-10. Tidal Amplitude at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) During April (Wet Season) and November (Dry Season) of 2004 Relative to Transect 9 (RM 6.46) Elevation.

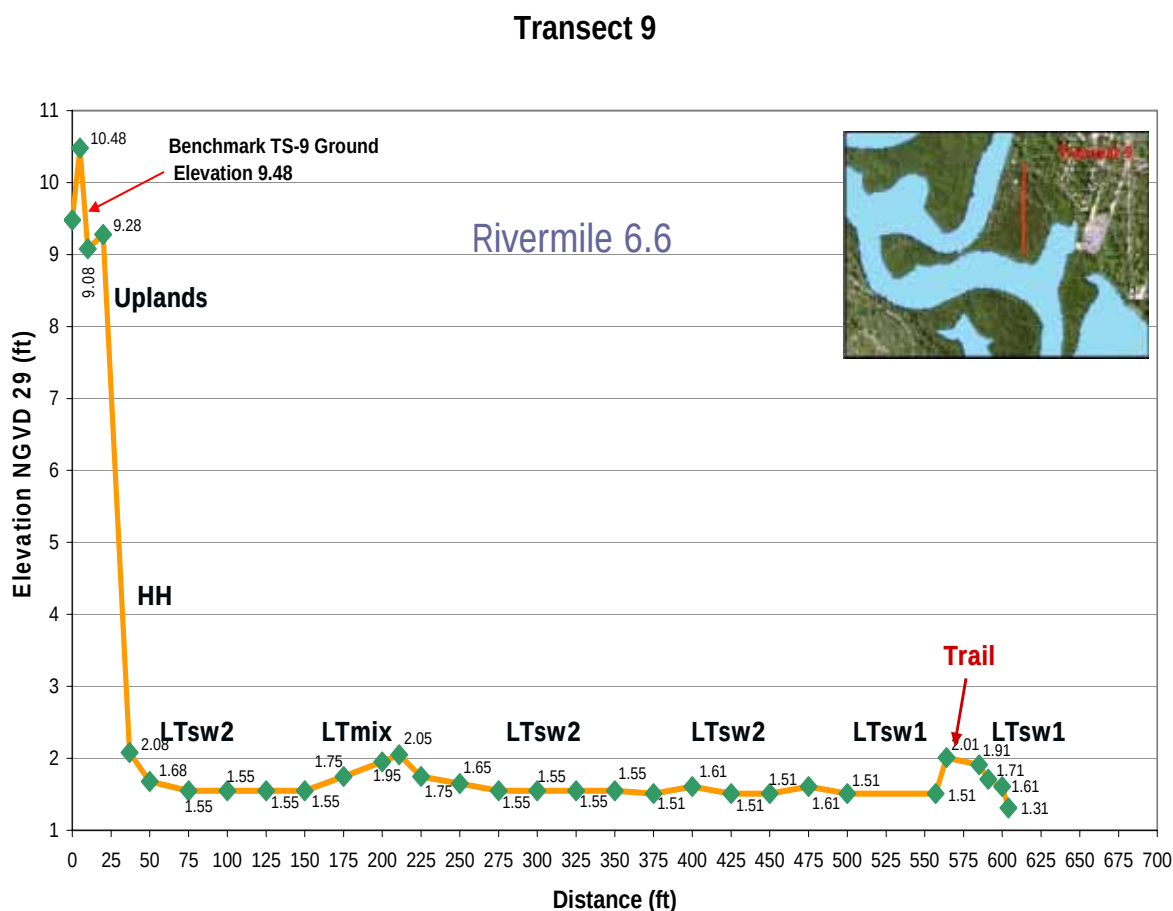


Figure 8-11. Vegetation Types and Elevations Along Transect 9, RM 6.46.

Upon examination of the proceeding salinity, tidal amplitude, and topographical data, it was concluded that **LV90TV60** (flows over Lainhart Dam and from the downstream tributaries) was the preferred restoration scenario for the riverine and tidal floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The additional flows provided by the **LV90TV90** and **LV90TV120** scenarios would have very little impact on the restoration and enhancement of freshwater vegetation in the lower tidal reaches because of the low floodplain elevations and the dominant island/peninsular features.

EVALUATION OF ESTUARINE BIOTA

Low Salinity Zone Evaluation: Variable Flow scenarios for Fish Larvae

The evaluation of fish larvae distribution and abundance in relation to salinity and flow in the Northwest Fork in **Chapter 7** established the preferred salinity range for fish larvae of 2 to 8 ppt would seldom move downstream of RM 5.5 from February to June when fish larvae are most abundant. However, a more natural variable flow and salinity gradient in the LSZ can enhance environmental conditions for fish larvae. Additional salinity analysis was needed for variable flows because the previous results were based on the effect of constant flows on the salinity

gradient (**Figure 7-11**). As managed or naturally variable flows increase and decrease, salinity isohalines move downstream and upstream affecting fish larvae abundance and distribution. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the frequency and duration of low salinity (<8 ppt) events at RM 5.5 to evaluate the comparative affects of variable flow scenarios on fish larvae. RM 5.5 was chosen as the downstream location because it hydrodynamically supports the formation of a turbidity maximum and it has appropriate shoreline habitat for fish larvae settlement. Therefore, this detailed analysis of variable flow alternatives was conducted using modeled salinity data at RM 5.45.

Figure 8-12 shows the frequency expressed as the percent of time of low salinity events (< 8 ppt) with duration ranging from 1 to 25 days at RM 5.45 during February to June for the base condition and the variable flow scenarios during the 39-year period of record. It is apparent that as flow increases, the frequency and duration of the low salinity events also increases. When compared with the base condition, **LV90TV60** results in an increase in exceedences for about 9 - 15%. However, the number of exceedences ranges from 18 - 28% for **LV90TV90** and for from 35 - 50% for **LV90TV120**. Even though the flows from the tributaries increase by an increment of 30 cfs, the frequency and duration of salinity threshold exceedences increases rapidly when compared with the base case. This increase in salinity threshold exceedences shows the sensitivity of the system to small increases in flows once mean base flow of 170 cfs is reached. The impact of these increased numbers of exceedences on the function of the low salinity zone for fish larvae survival is difficult to quantify. The lowest flow alternative (**LV90TV60**) is recommended because of the relatively small increase in exceedences. Additional information is needed to evaluate the affects of flows on fish larvae productivity. A study has been proposed in the "Special Studies" section of **Chapter 10** to determine the relationship among varying base flows, salinity, water quality, turbidity maximum formation, and zooplankton distribution and abundance as part of the adaptive management process.

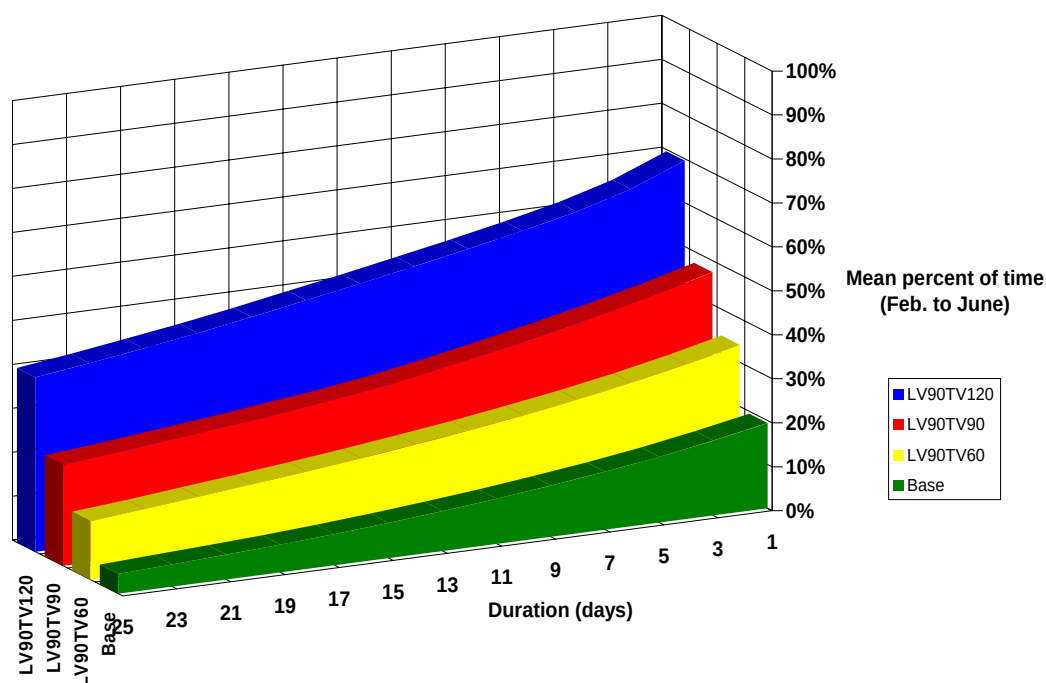


Figure 8-12. Percent Time and Duration When Salinity Was Below 8 ppt at RM 5.45 for Base (1965-2003) and Variable Flow Scenarios.

Mesohaline Zone Evaluation: Variable Flow Scenarios for Oysters

In association with constant flow from Lainhart Dam and downstream tributaries, the evaluation of oysters in the mesohaline zone (**Chapter 7**) revealed levels of oyster stress throughout the Northwest Fork salinity gradient. A critical flow that did not cause significant oyster stress was established from RM 6 to RM 4 where the greatest abundance of oysters occurs. These critical flows were about 90 cfs, 130 cfs, 160 cfs, and 230 cfs, at RM 5.92, RM 5.45, RM 4.93, and RM 4.13 (Stations BD, 6, 5, and 4), respectively (**Table 7-15**). In the evaluation, the distribution and density of the existing oyster population needs to be understood. To address this issue, **Figure 8-13** was compiled using recent field and GIS data to demonstrate cumulative number and acres of oysters from RM 6 to RM 4. Downstream of RM 6, a small increase in area (~1.75 acres) and number (~ 3 million oysters) of oysters appears near RM 5.5 and remains relatively constant until about RM 5. Beginning at RM 5 a significant increase in oysters occurs from about 2.2 to 10.0 acres and from near 5.8 to 23 million oysters at RM 4. Therefore, approximately 75% of oysters are downstream of RM 5. Utilizing the critical flows established above, an increase in flow to 160 cfs could be managed before significant oyster stress occurs at RM 4.93. Since the majority of oyster resources are downstream of RM 5, a maximum of about 160 cfs total flow (flow from Lainhart Dam and the downstream tributaries) was preferred.

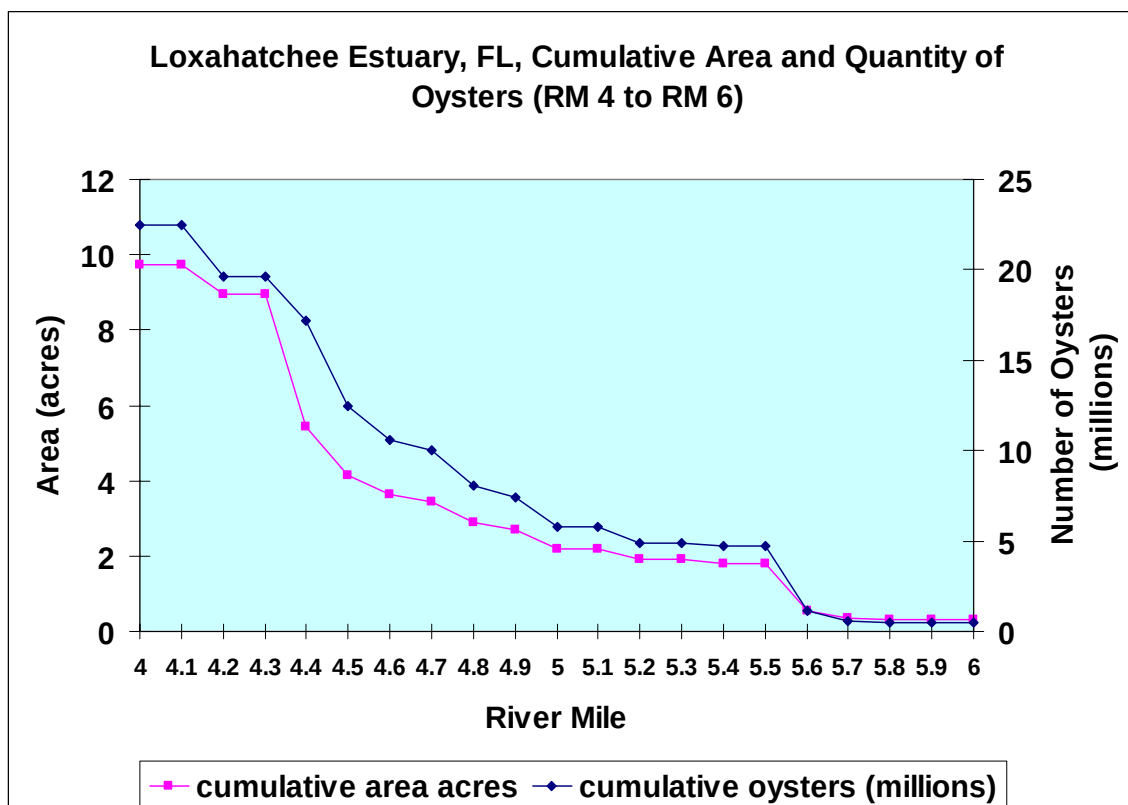


Figure 8-13. Cumulative Number of Oysters and Acreage between RM 4.0 and RM 6.0.

The ecologically preferred method of managing flows is to use variable flows that mimic natural flows. The same methods used to evaluate earlier constant flow scenarios (**Chapter 7**) were used to evaluate these three variable flow alternatives. **Figures 7-16 to 7-23** reveal levels of oyster stress for egg development, larvae, spat, and adults with the constant flow scenarios. The three variable flow alternatives (**LV90TV60**, **LV90TV90**, **LV90TV120**) were evaluated to determine oyster stress levels. The goal is to cause no significant stress on oysters downstream of about RM 5. The **LV90TV60** variable flow scenario, with a total average inflow of about 150 cfs during the dry season, was consistent with the previous preference of 160 cfs.

Figures 8-14 and **8-15** illustrate the stress levels for oyster life stages along the salinity gradient for the base case and the preferred alternative (**LV90TV60**). **Figure 8-14** shows a slight increase in harmful salinity conditions to egg development at Station 5 (RM 4.93) compared to the base case. However, the level of harm is similar to Station 6 (RM 5.45) base case. Salinity conditions causing egg mortality (**Figure 8-14**) in the base case and **TV60** are similar at RM 4.93 and do not exceed egg mortality of the base case at RM 5.45. Harmful salinity conditions for oyster larvae, a sensitive indicator, increased slightly at RM 4.93 to levels found in the base case at RM 5.54 (**Figure 8-14**), however most importantly, larvae mortality was nearly the same as the base case at RM 4.93 (**Figure 8-14**). Oyster spat at RM 4.93 will experience a small increase in harmful salinity (**Figure 8-15**) from a median percentage of time of about 20% for the base case to 30% with alternative **TV60**. This increase in the median to 30%, nevertheless, is similar to what is presently experienced at RM 5.45. **Figure 8-15** indicates that salinity conditions resulting

in mortality to year class oyster spat rarely occur during the base case and the preferred alternative. **Figure 8-15** reveals that the median percent of time adults are exposed to harmful salinity conditions increases from about 27% to 48% for the base case to alternative **LV90TV60** at RM 4.93. This 48% of time adults could experience harmful salinity is presently experienced at RM 5.92. However, adult oyster mortality rarely occurred in the base case and under the **LV90TV60** alternative at RM 4.93 (Station 5). Therefore, the salinity environment resulting from the variable flow scenario **LV90TV60** will slightly increase oyster stress near RM 5 but will not increase oyster mortality near RM 5, meeting our goal of maintaining the majority of oysters.

Since oysters migrated upstream in the Northwest Fork under existing dry season flow conditions, it was expected that increased flows would result in greater stress to upstream oyster communities. Increased flows would move favorable salinity conditions downstream where additional substrate (cultch) could be placed to mitigate loss of oyster beds upstream. Plans to mitigate the loss of about 2.5 acres of oyster beds near RM 4 have been included in the “Special Studies” section of **Chapter 10** in this document.

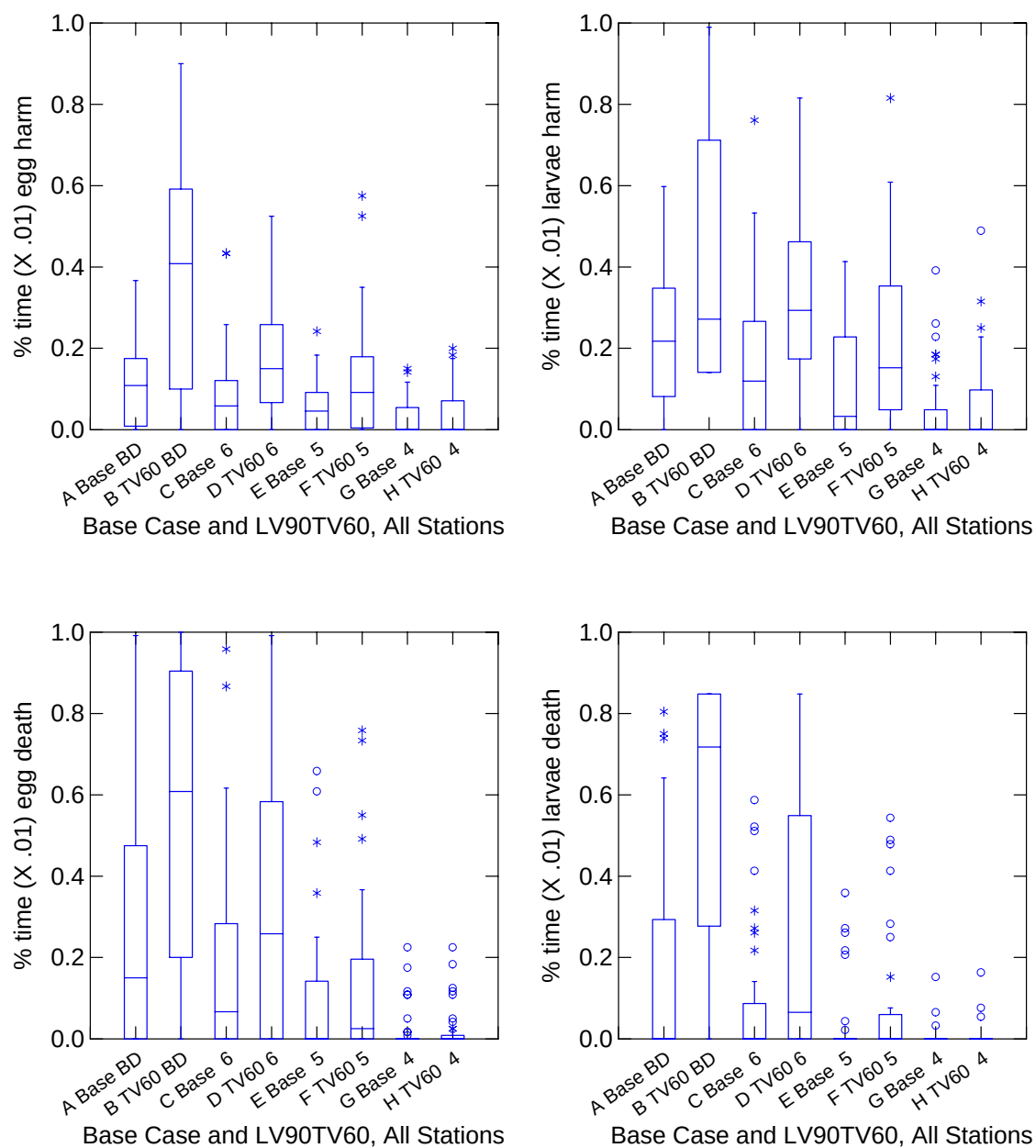


Figure 8-14. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm or Death Conditions Existed for Oyster Eggs and Larvae in the Base Case and LV90TV60 for Oyster Stations BD, 6, 5 and 4 (RM 5.92, RM 5.45, RM 4.93, and RM 4.13, respectively).

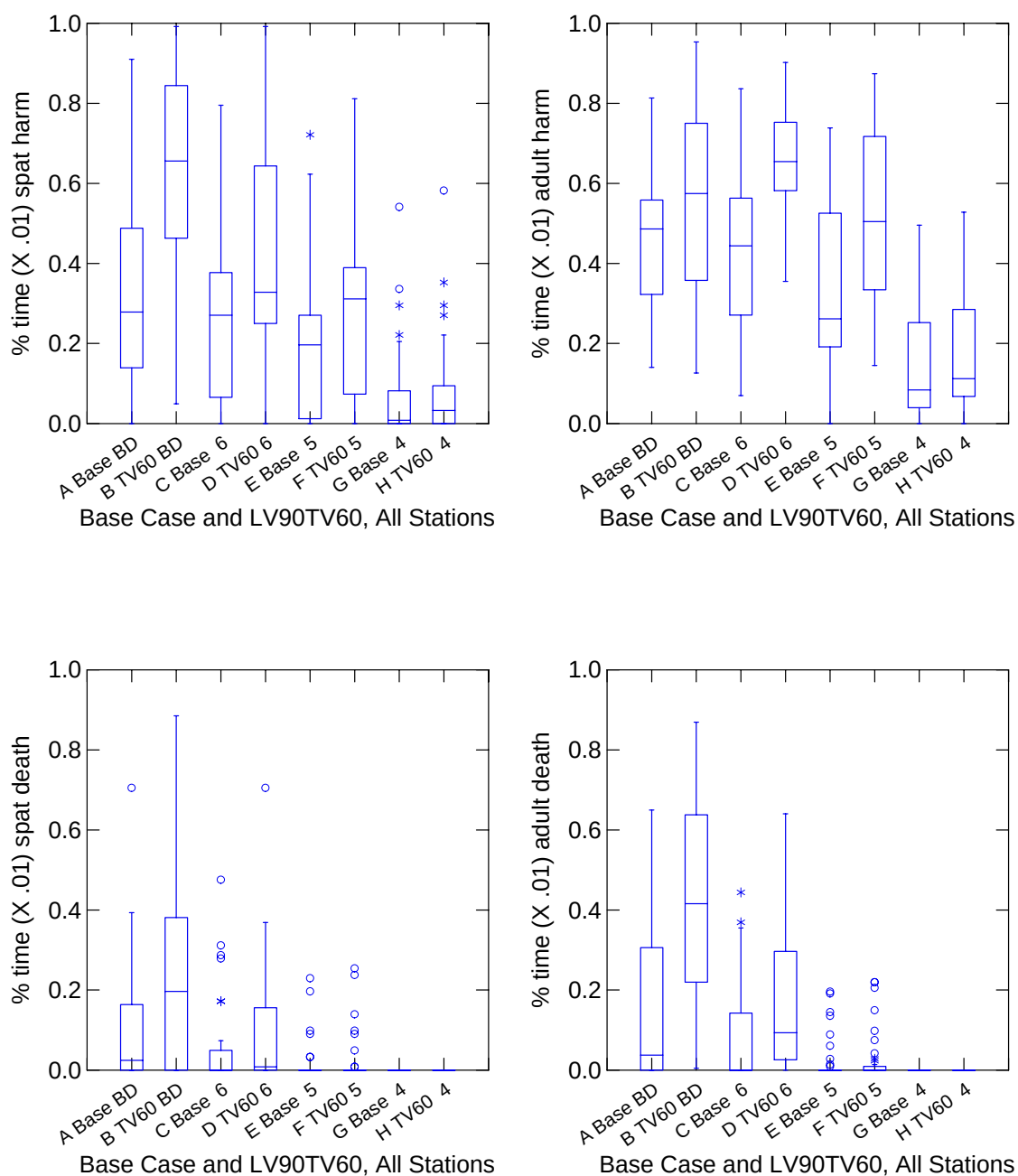


Figure 8-15. Box and Whisker Distribution Plots of the Predicted Percent of Time Harm or Death Conditions Existed for Oyster Spat or Adults in the Base Case and LV90TV60 for Oyster Stations BD, 6, 5 and 4 (RM 5.92, RM 5.45, RM 4.93, and RM 4.13, respectively).

Polyhaline Zone Evaluation: Variable flow Scenarios for Seagrasses

Long-Term (39-Year) Data Evaluation

Predicted salinities for nine model runs (6 runs evaluated in **Chapter 7** and 3 variable flow runs) for a 39-year period, were compared to the salinity tolerances of key seagrass species (**Table 4-5**) at five locations along a salinity gradient in the Loxahatchee Estuary. The results for “key” seagrass species are summarized in **Figure 8-16**. Since Johnson’s seagrass was found throughout the estuary in 2004, the same evaluation was conducted for this threatened species at all five locations (**Figure 8-17**). Results for the “key species” and Johnson’s seagrass evaluations were similar. The three variability salinity runs (**LV90TV60**, **LV90TV90**, and **LV90TV120**) were similar to the base conditions at the four downstream locations where most of the seagrass resources occur. At the most upstream location (**Site 02**) the variability runs began to diverge from base conditions by having fewer “optimal” and more “potential stress” days than the base conditions (these differences were slightly greater for Johnson’s seagrass than for the “key” seagrass species). However, the number of “stress” days was similar for base case and variability scenarios. Note that the base condition and all the scenarios include discharge from S-46 in the model simulations.

The 39-year data set was further evaluated at each of the five locations for each variability model run using the performance measures presented in **Table 4-6**. These performance measures are based on literature salinity tolerance values that included **duration** of a salinity threshold associated with a stress event (such as blade mortality). The number of stress events per model run per location is summarized in **Table 8-4**. There were no differences between the number of “stress events” for any of the model runs at any of the sites. Only one stress event was noted and it occurred at **Site 02** for Johnson’s seagrass for all model runs in October 1995. This result is consistent with **Figures 8-16** and **8-17** which indicate the number of “stress” days are similar and rare for all model runs.

Note that **Table 8-4** only shows the comparative evaluations of how daily salinity change would influence seagrass health between the base condition and restoration scenarios based on the best available data. As mentioned earlier in the restoration plan, other factors like color, turbidity, and short term salinity fluctuation are also critical to seagrass health. It is clear from prior seagrass mapping that during the 39-year period seagrasses were lost due to stress that was not identified by the salinity duration criteria used in this evaluation. Thus, it is cautioned that one may not use this table to infer that seagrasses were never stressed in the system during the period of record. Additional data are being collected to advance our understanding of stress criteria for seagrasses in the embayment area.

Short-Term (Wet vs. Dry Year) Data Evaluation

Shorter term data sets were also evaluated. One recent wet year and one recent dry year were selected for this evaluation. The wet year selected was 1995 (the year when all model results showed a “stress event” at **Site 02**) and the recent dry year selected was 2000 (**Figure 8-18**).

For both the wet and dry year, the variability model runs were similar to base conditions at the four downstream locations where most of the seagrass resources occur (**Figure 8-18**). The three variability runs began to diverge from base conditions at the most upstream seagrass location (**Site 02**). However, the number of “stress” days was similar for the base case and variability scenarios in both wet and dry years. Similar results were observed when the wet/dry year evaluation was conducted for Johnson’s seagrass (**Figure 8-19**).

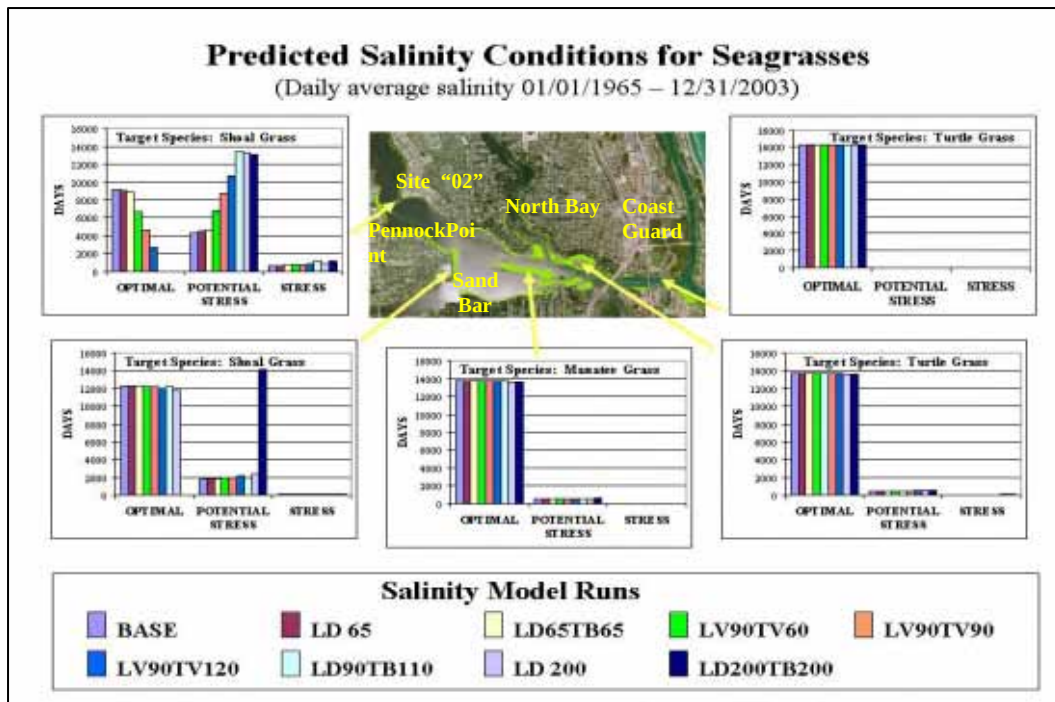


Figure 8-16. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.

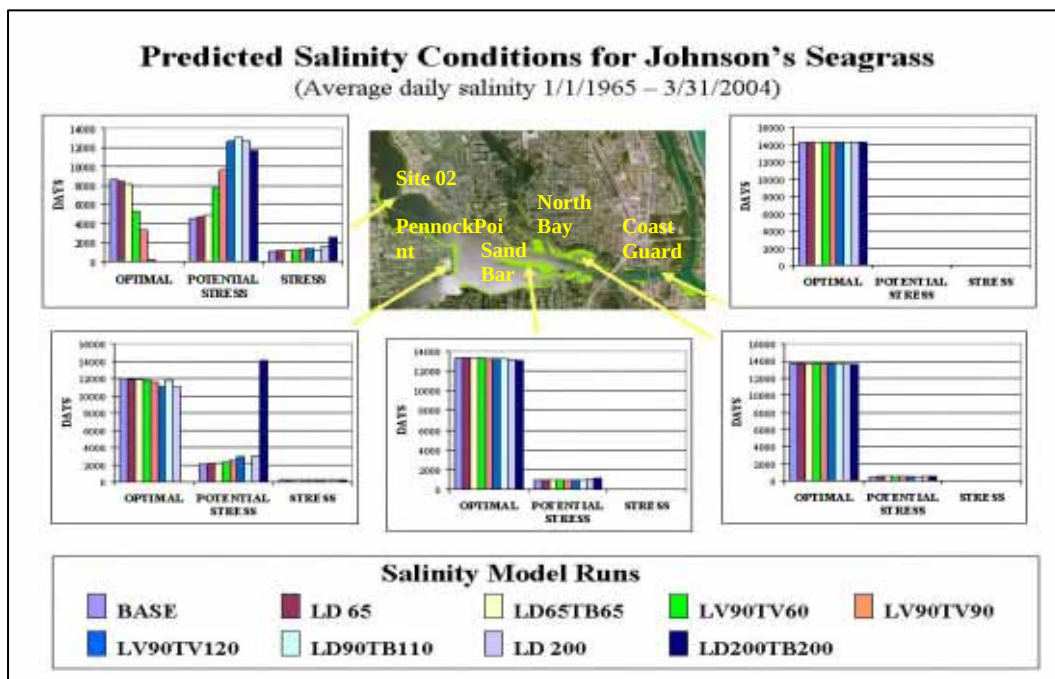


Figure 8-17. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone.

Table 8-4. Number of Stress Events per Model Run Based on Daily Average Salinity from 1/1/1965 – 12/30/2003.

Location	Target Seagrass Species	Stress Event (Salinity/Duration Threshold) ^a	Number of Stress Events Per Model Run								
			BASE	LD 65	LD65TB65	LV90TV60	LV90TV90	LV90TV120	LV90TB110	LD 200	LD200TB200
Coast Guard	Turtle grass	≤ 4 ppt for 7 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Bay	Turtle grass	≤ 4 ppt for 7 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sand Bar	Manatee grass	≤ 15 ppt for 26 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pennoch Point	Shoal grass	≤ 6 ppt for 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Shoal grass	≤ 3.5 ppt for 21 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Site 02	Shoal grass	≤ 6 ppt for 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Shoal grass	≤ 3.5 ppt for 21 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Johnson's seagrass	≤ 5 ppt for 3 days	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
^a The duration in this evaluation is in consecutive days.											

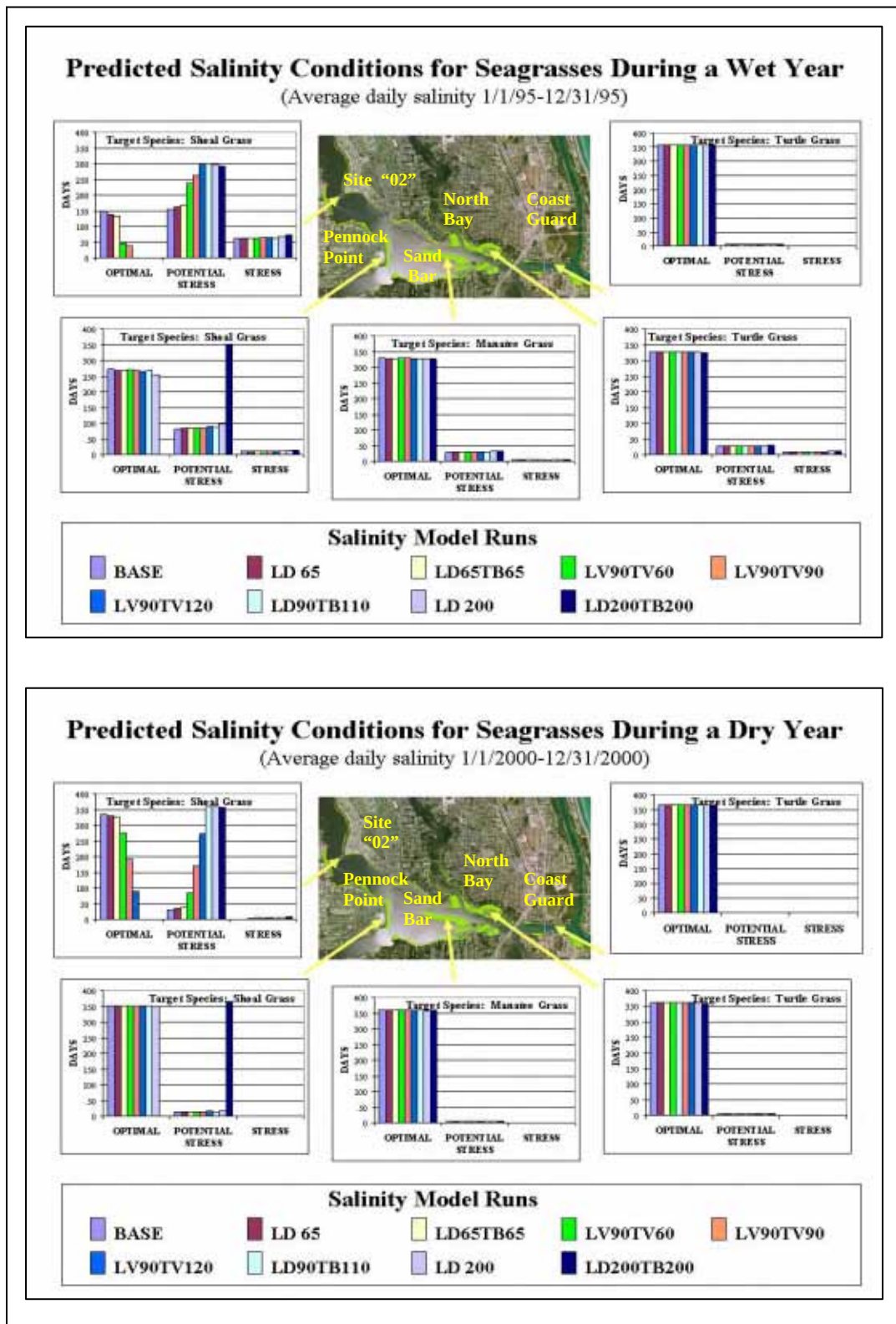


Figure 8-18. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Key Seagrasses at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).

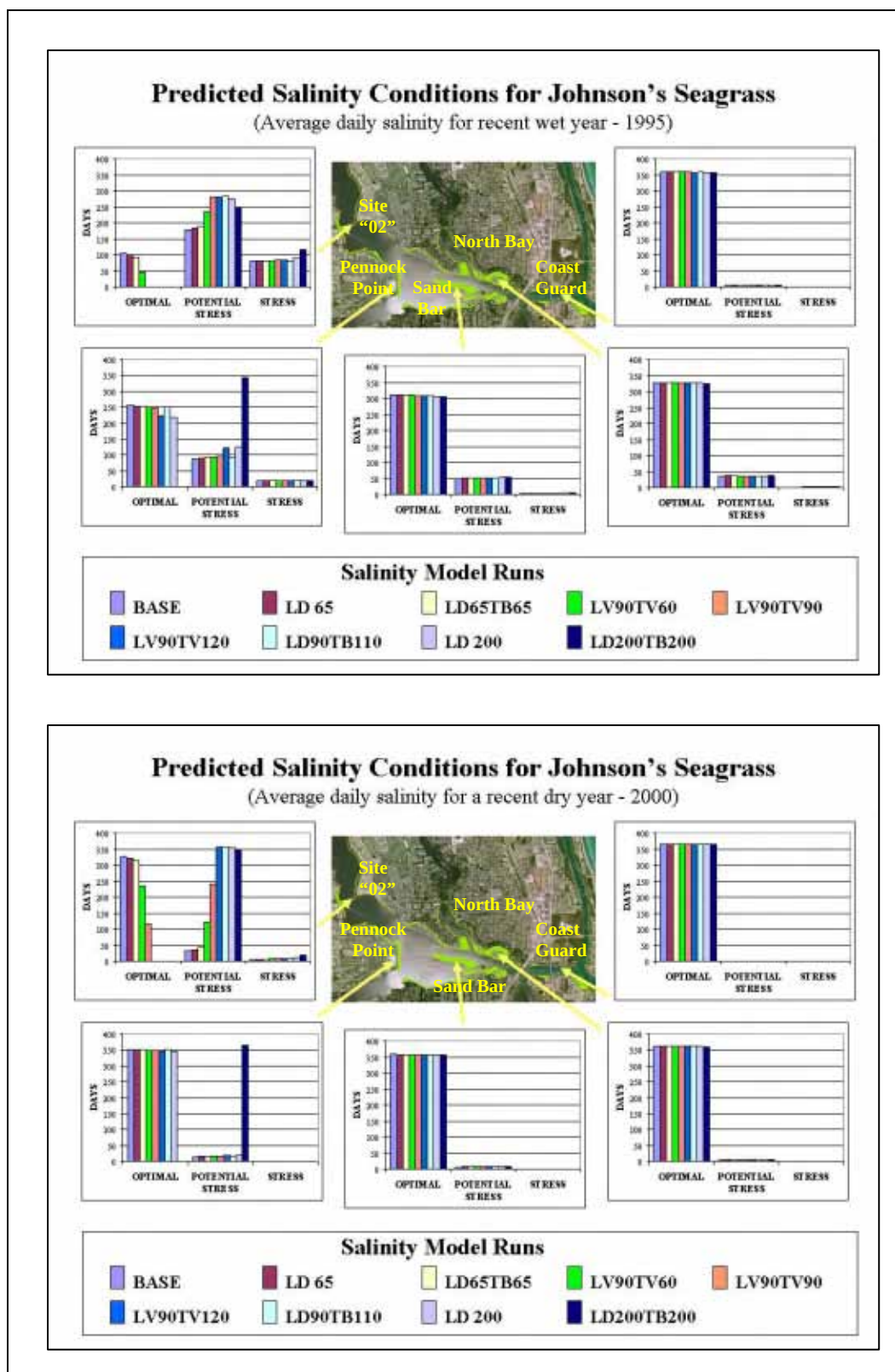


Figure 8-19. Predicted Salinity Conditions for Johnson's Seagrass at Five Locations Within the Polyhaline Ecozone During a Recent Wet (1995) and Dry Year (2000).

In **Chapter 7**, to further evaluate the wet/dry year data, daily average salinities were plotted for three of the seagrass stations (Coast Guard, Sand Bar, and Site 02; **Figure 7-28**). Since no adverse impacts were suggested at the four downstream locations for the variability model runs, only **Site 02** daily average salinities were plotted for this evaluation (**Figure 8-20**).

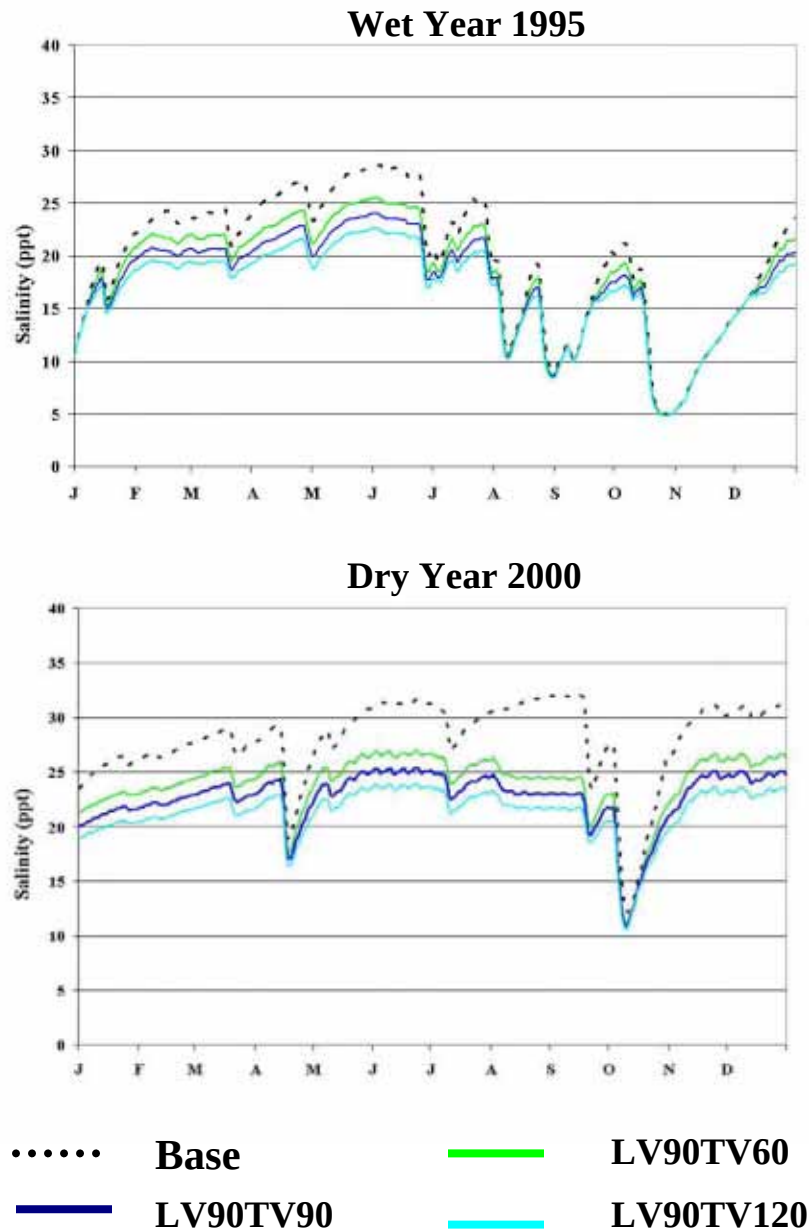


Figure 8-20. Comparison of Daily Average Salinity Conditions at Site 02 for Base Conditions and Three Variable Flow Runs.

Of the variability runs, **LV90TV60** was most similar to base conditions (**Figure 8-20**). During the wet year, when impacts to seagrasses from increased discharges would be expected to be greatest, **LV90TV60** was similar to the base conditions when salinities were low enough to

impact seagrasses. At times when base conditions were “optimal” and **LV90TV60** salinities fell within the “potential stress” salinity range, the differences in salinity values were minimal (a few ppt). During the dry year, there was greater separation between the base run and **LV90TV60**. However, as with the wet year, the differences were at higher salinities where seagrass impacts would not be expected. At times when salinities were low enough to impact seagrasses the two model runs were very similar.

ANTICIPATED ECOLOGICAL CHANGE

The evaluation of the three variable flow scenarios with respect to the five VECs concludes that **LV90TV60** is the preferred restoration flow scenario. The probable vegetative changes in the tidal floodplains that would occur with **LV90TV60** are shown in **Figure 8-21**. Under this flow condition, it is anticipated that the native freshwater vegetative communities in the riverine floodplain will be enhanced. However, the red mangrove communities may not diminish. The invasion of upland, transitional and exotic species onto the riverine floodplain will be discouraged. Also, this enhanced freshwater habitat should increase the occurrence of other aquatic organisms including amphibians, benthic invertebrates, and freshwater fish species such as largemouth bass *Micropterus salmoides*, and other fishes particularly from the Centrarchidae (sunfishes), Ictaluridae (catfishes) Cyprinidae (minnows) and Cyprinodontidae (killifish) families.

Due to the improved freshwater environment, a new Mixed Riverine Reach (light green shading) would be established between RM 10 (Moonshine Creek) and Kitching Creek (RM 8.1) in the upper tidal reach. Freshwater plant species (primarily bald cypress, pop ash and pond apple) would dominate at the canopy level and freshwater and saltwater species should be mixed at the subcanopy, shrub and ground cover levels. Other freshwater plant species such as red maple, buttonbush, swamp bay, and Carolina willow would occur less frequently while water hickory and other high bottomland hardwood species would probably be rare to absent due to the low elevations. The existing riverine communities at the back of the floodplains should improve in health and recruiting freshwater plant species within the Mixed Riverine Reach should also improve.

A new Upper Tidal Transitional Reach (**Figure 8-21**, yellow shading) would be established between the mouth of Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) and RM 7.5. This new Upper Tidal Transitional Reach would consist primarily of a pond apple/ mangrove canopy with a mangrove/ leather fern understory. Pond apple seedlings appear to have a wider tolerance of flooding than bald cypress seedlings from our observance along the river and therefore should continue to tolerate the higher tidal amplitudes and greater periods of inundation within this reach.

A condensed Lower Tidal Reach (**Figure 8-21**, beige shading) may be established between RM 7.5 and RM 5.5. This reach would remain dominated by red and white mangroves due to tidal amplitude, low elevations, and the higher frequency of peninsulas and islands in the floodplains. This reach will also provide key habitats for recreationally important fish species such as common snook and saltwater fish larvae.

The increased flow under the preferred restoration scenario will improve the frequency of low salinity events. Habitat for fish larvae is still maintained in the lower tidal reach of the Northwest Fork. The increased flow may also eliminate some of the existing oyster beds between RM 5 and RM 6. The majority of oyster beds downstream RM 5 will remain. Potential impacts on seagrasses are considered to be minimal when compared with the base condition.

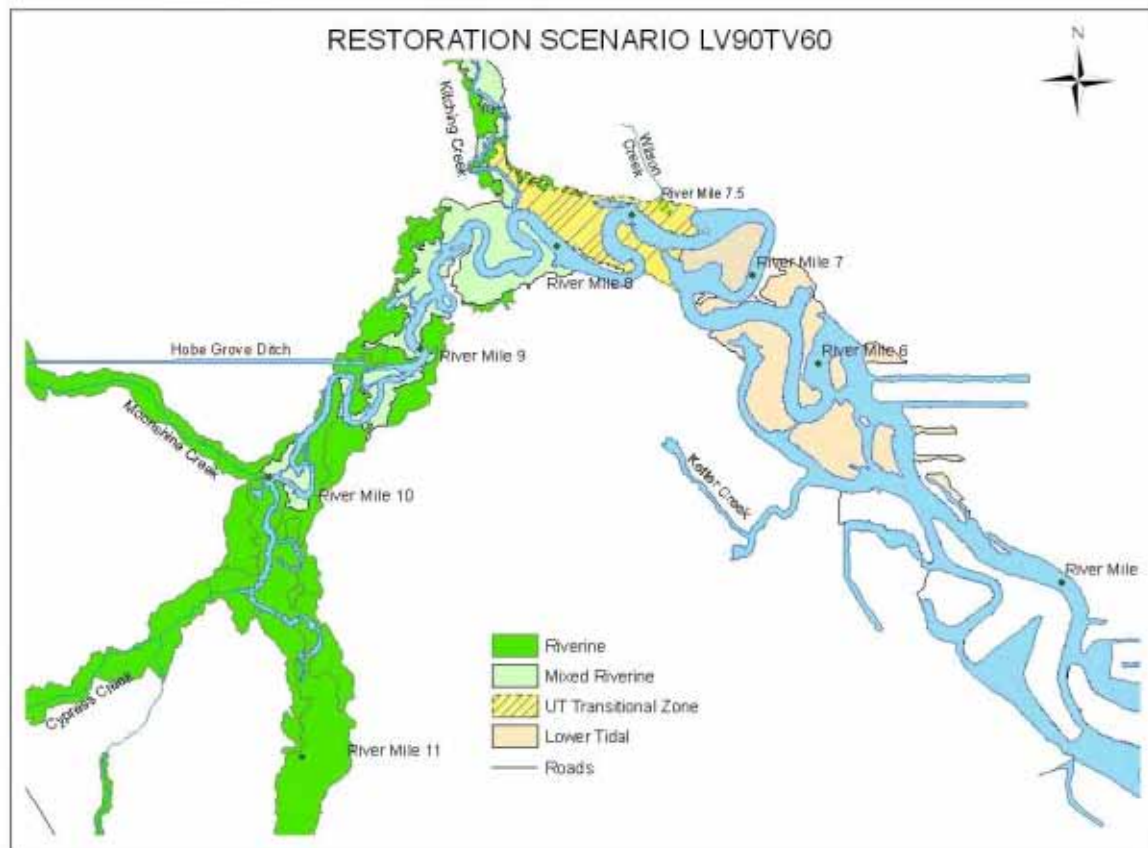


Figure 8-21. Expected Vegetation Changes in Response to the LV90TV60 Variable Flow Scenario (Also See Figures 3-5 and 3-6 in Chapter 3.).

SUMMARY

In response to the findings from the constant flow scenarios and public reaction to the results of the first five scenarios, three variable flow scenarios are developed to simulate a more natural, hydrological variability to achieve the restoration goal. The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** includes flows from the Lainhart Dam and the downstream tributaries into the Northwest Fork. It incorporates both dry and wet season hydrologic flow patterns and provides the greatest ecological benefit to freshwater riverine and tidal floodplain VECs with minimal impact on the estuarine VECs. In this scenario, variable flow from Lainhart Dam includes both seasonal and short-term variability (daily and monthly). Supplemental flows are introduced during the wet season to achieve 120 days of inundation of the cypress swamp in the freshwater riverine floodplain. In the dry season, supplemental flows are suggested to maintain a mean monthly flow of 69 cfs for freshwater riverine floodplain hydration and to limit salt water intrusion to the downstream segments. On a daily basis, these flows emulate pulses of water from small rain events to benefit estuarine plankton communities. For the other tributaries, when the total flow to the Northwest Fork is less than 300 cfs, a supplemental flow of 30 cfs is added.

Scientific information and modeling analysis found the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** to be a flow condition simulated by the **LV90 – TV60** model run using daily time-steps during the 39 year period of record (1965 through 2003). Generally, the LV90 model run represents variable flows over the Lainhart Dam providing flow augmentation when the daily flow falls below 70 cfs during the months of February through May, 130 cfs during the months of August through November, and 80 cfs during the transitional months. Adding flow during the wet season achieves 120 days of inundation (> 110 cfs at Lainhart Dam) of the cypress swamp in the riverine floodplain each year. The TV60 model run represents flows from the tributaries downstream of the Lainhart Dam, providing an additional 30 cfs of flow augmentation to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, when the total flows are less than 300 cfs. The combination of the LV90 and TV60 provides the **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** to protect and enhance the riverine floodplain, maintain conditions for the propagation of cypress trees in the tidal floodplain, and promote a healthy estuarine system in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. This flow scenario reflects the seasonal variations that are needed for protecting, enhancing and restoring the biological values of the Northwest Fork ecosystem. In addition, it includes rainfall driven monthly and daily flow variability also necessary for restoration. The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** provides a dynamic flow pattern with dry season mean monthly flows of 69 cfs over Lainhart Dam. Supplemental flows from the downstream tributaries maintain total daily flows greater than 150 cfs within the Northwest Fork to push the saltwater wedge downstream of river mile 7.5 more than 70% of the time during the 39 year period of record. The model run indicates that 10 percent of the time the total daily flow falls below 120 cfs.

The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** provides close approximations of optimal wet and dry season hydroperiods for cypress swamp in the freshwater riverine floodplain located between RM 16 and RM 9.5. In the freshwater riverine floodplain, the cypress swamp will be inundated for 4 to 8 months and the hydric hammocks will be inundated for about less than 30 days to 60 days in a year. During the dry season, water levels in the freshwater riverine swamp will drop and allow cypress seed germination. In the tidal floodplain, between RM 9.5 and RM 5.5, flows will push the saltwater front downstream from RM 9.5 to between RM 8 and RM 7.5. This will allow for recruitment of freshwater species in the upper tidal floodplain. Freshwater species will be expected to expand in number and dominate the canopy to the mouth of Kitching Creek near RM 8. There will also be recruitment of pond apple in the tidal floodplain due to the improvement in the freshwater environment near RM 7.5.

The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** is also designed to minimize the impact on the estuarine ecosystems. The low salinity zone, located between RM 9.5 and RM 5.5, requires a salinity regime of 2 ppt - 8 ppt during the dry season to function as a nursery for many saltwater fishes. Although restorative flows will move the appropriate salinity range downstream, the low salinity will still remain within an area that will provide suitable habitat for juvenile fish development. The optimal salinity range for oysters is from 10 ppt to 20 ppt, which is currently located between RM 6 and RM 4. With increased flows during the dry season these salinity levels will be moved downstream and the upstream oyster beds at RM 6 will be lost. However, the majority of the oysters are located downstream of RM 5 and will not experience harmful drops in salinity levels. The addition of oyster substrate near RM 4 will mitigate the loss of oysters at RM 6. The **Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario** will have minimal impact on seagrasses in the Central Embayment area.

It should be noted that there are uncertainties involved with the evaluations. The current understanding of the ecosystem and the evaluation methods are based on best available data and analysis, which will be updated as more knowledge is gained regarding this system in the future. It is also unlikely that the future hydrological condition will follow exactly the same pattern as that in model simulations. Therefore, it is likely that the day-to-day system operation decisions

will be based on the actual flow/stage and salinity readings from the monitoring stations with the freshwater flow versus salinity relationship provided by the model as a guideline. It is also anticipated that the system operation and ecosystem response in the future will take an adaptive management approach based on consistent system monitoring. Detailed operational procedures will need to be determined through adaptive management in the implementation stage of this plan. The ecosystem monitoring for Northwest Fork adaptive management is described in **Chapter 10**.

CHAPTER 9

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS SALTWATER BARRIER PROPOSALS	4
THE 1975 PROPOSAL.....	4
THE 1986 FEASIBILITY STUDY	5
PRELIMINARY MODELING EVALUATION OF SALINITY MANAGEMENT WITH SALTWATER BARRIERS.....	5
DEVELOPMENT OF A 3-D MODEL FOR HYDRODYNAMIC AND SALINITY SIMULATIONS OF SALTWATER BARRIERS	5
Design of Salinity Barrier Alternatives.....	6
Saltwater Barrier Types	6
Saltwater Barrier Locations	6
Salinity Barrier Alternatives	7
Salinity Model Applications	9
Type 1 Salinity Barrier Simulations	11
Type 2 Salinity Barrier Simulations	15
EVALUATION OF SALINITY BARRIER ALTERNATIVE MODELS	18
ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE TYPE 2 SALINITY BARRIER	20
ECOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION.....	20
WATER QUALITY	21
FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION COMMUNITIES	22
CONCLUSIONS.....	22

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 9-1. The Locations of the Three Saltwater Barriers Used for the Salinity Simulations within the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.	7
Figure 9-2. Placement of the Three Type 1 Saltwater Barriers at Location 1 for Alternatives S4 and S8.....	9
Figure 9-3. Freshwater Flows at S-46, Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek for January 2004.....	10
Figure 9-4. Tidal Elevation at the Coast Guard Station for January 2004.....	10
Figure 9-5. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S0 to S5.	11
Figure 9-6. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S0 to S5.....	12
Figure 9-7. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S6 to S8.	12
Figure 9-8. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S6 to S8.....	13
Figure 9-9. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S7, S9, S10 and S11.....	14
Figure 9-10. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S7, S9, S10 and S11.....	14
Figure 9-11. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.	15
Figure 9-12. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 7.0 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.	16
Figure 9-13. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.	17
Figure 9-14. Simulated Water Surface Elevation at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.	17
Figure 9-15. Simulated Flow Rate at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3. Flood tide +; Ebb tide -.....	18

LIST OF TABLES

Table 9-1. Description of the 14 Saltwater Barrier Alternatives Modeled in the CH3D Simulation for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.....	8
Table 9-2. Comparison of the Performance of the Salinity Barrier Alternatives.	19

Chapter 9

The Saltwater Barrier as a Restoration Alternative

INTRODUCTION

Managing freshwater flow to the Loxahatchee River and Estuary is the most natural way to manage salinity levels within the Northwest Fork. However, too much fresh water during the dry season can reduce the establishment of riparian tree seedlings within the floodplain and reduce plant diversity. Using a saltwater barrier may provide a supplemental means to manage salinity when freshwater amounts are inadequate or are needed for best management practices for the health of the river.

This chapter summarizes two previous proposals to place saltwater barriers in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. A preliminary modeling study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of using two types of saltwater barriers in different locations for salinity management in the Northwest Fork. Based on the modeling results and the evaluation of the potential ecological impacts of the barrier system on the floodplain forest and estuarine communities, evaluations are made based on the location and type of barrier. The model simulations described in this chapter were conducted under average dry season flow conditions.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS SALTWATER BARRIER PROPOSALS

THE 1975 PROPOSAL

In 1975, the Jupiter Inlet District (JID) and Florida Department of Natural Resources (FDNR) applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to construct a saltwater barrier weir in the Northwest Fork near River Mile 6.0. The project would have involved the construction of a weir at an elevation 4-feet below mean sea level within the south boundary of Jonathan Dickson State Park (JDSP) and near an existing power line crossing. The weir would prevent a wedge of saline water from extending up river during the dry season. This project was planned to occur in conjunction with another permit application for removal of oyster bars near and under the FEC Railroad Bridge and the A1A Bridge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expressed concern that there was no hydrologic study that could confirm the effectiveness of such a weir structure in preventing saltwater intrusion. They recommended that the permit be denied until a hydrological analysis was made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed weir. The FWS also recommended the study include other salinity management alternatives such as increasing freshwater flows and adding an inflatable structure on top of the proposed weir.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IV, also objected to the proposal. The EPA was not convinced that the proposed structure would prevent salt water from intruding upstream since the weir would be overtopped frequently by tidal action due to its low height. They were also concerned that the structure would trap salt water, allow organic material to be

deposited behind the weir, and degrade water quality due to reduced tidal flushing. The permit to construct the saltwater barrier was not granted pending further study.

THE 1986 FEASIBILITY STUDY

In 1986, the Jupiter Inlet District (JID) initiated a study on the feasibility of using a barrier to limit saltwater intrusion upstream in anticipation of possible impacts upstream of the Loxahatchee River associated with the proposed inlet dredging program. This study investigated the need for and feasibility of placing one or more submerged weir(s) to limit the salinity intrusion that might result from the proposed Jupiter Inlet dredging. The study included a literature search on various types of installations for salinity control and identified potential sites within the Loxahatchee River for barrier placement. The literature search found that “little published information exists on the use or performance of submerged weirs for salinity control.” The feasibility report concluded that design of a submerged structure on the Loxahatchee River would require comprehensive study to verify its performance. Three sites were recommended as potential locations for the submerged weir salinity barrier: Island Way Bridges near River Mile 5.0; River Mile 5.5; and River Mile 6.0 (Cubit Engineering 1986).

PRELIMINARY MODELING EVALUATION OF SALINITY MANAGEMENT WITH SALTWATER BARRIERS

DEVELOPMENT OF A 3-D MODEL FOR HYDRODYNAMIC AND SALINITY SIMULATIONS OF SALTWATER BARRIERS

Saltwater barriers include many types of structures designed to prevent saltwater intrusion. The structures range from tide gates that can block out tide entirely to more common weir-type barriers that can be submerged during high tide. The simulation of a saltwater barrier requires a hydrodynamic computer model with special capabilities. When the tide falls below the crest of a saltwater barrier, fresh water from upstream will pour down the barrier crest and form a water fall. Such a flow phenomenon is called “supercritical flow” in hydraulics. Most existing hydrodynamic models, such as the RMA (USACE 1996), only simulate “subcritical flow” with a smooth water surface. To simulate supercritical flow over a saltwater barrier, a three-dimensional numerical model, CH3D, was modified to suit the task. The CH3D model is a non-orthogonal curvilinear grid hydrodynamic model that has been used in the Chesapeake Bay restoration study by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA. The boundary-fitted grid feature of CH3D is well suited for the Loxahatchee River where natural river channel patterns of bends and oxbows are preserved. The modified CH3D model covers the entire Loxahatchee River including the Southwest Fork, North Fork, and Northwest Fork. It also covers part of the Intracoastal Waterway north to St. Lucie Inlet and south to Lake Worth Inlet.

The modified CH3D model was verified using the most recent tide, flow, salinity and meteorological data collected by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Then the model was used to study the relationship between freshwater flow and tidally averaged salinity at selected sites as a double check on the relationships that were established by previous 2-D model simulations (see **Chapter 6**, the RMA Model). The modified CH3D model was used to study the effectiveness of a proposed saltwater barrier to reduce the saltwater intrusion problem in the Loxahatchee River during the dry season. A number of design alternatives were modeled and results were evaluated to determine the effectiveness of each alternative.

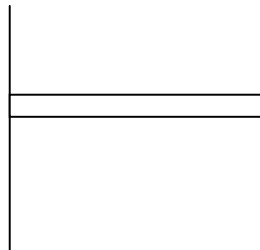
Design of Salinity Barrier Alternatives

SALTWATER BARRIER TYPES

Two types of saltwater barriers were simulated. The Type 1 saltwater barrier has a single opening with barriers extending from each bank of the river. The opening was placed along the existing navigational channel. When the navigational channel is along the bank, only one barrier was needed. To model the Type 1 barrier, it has to be placed as one side of a grid cell that CH3D regards as an idealized thin barrier across which there is no flow.



The Type 2 saltwater barrier is inflatable and extends across the entire channel. Supercritical flow occurs over the Type 2 structure at low tide, the modified CH3D model is able to simulate this type of supercritical flow.



SALTWATER BARRIER LOCATIONS

Three barrier site locations were tested in the simulations (**Figure 9-1**). The first location (Location 1) is within the boundary of JDSP at RM 6.0 and represents the downriver edge of the existing oligohaline or low salinity zone ecozone. The second site (Location 2) is at the Island Way bridges (RM 5.0) and is located in the midpoint of the mesohaline ecozone. The third location (Location 3) is located near the sand bars at RM 4.0, and represents the upper edge of the polyhaline ecozone.

The locations of these simulation sites were chosen for modeling purposes only. The objective was to examine the difference of effectiveness of a barrier in each general area.



Figure 9-1. The Locations of the Three Saltwater Barriers Used for the Salinity Simulations within the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

SALINITY BARRIER ALTERNATIVES

A total of 14 salinity barrier alternatives were simulated and are listed in **Table 9-1**. Alternative S0 represents the baseline condition with no salinity barrier. Alternatives S1 through S11 represent the use of one or more Type 1 barriers. For Type 1 barrier alternatives, the water depth at the opening was kept a minimum of 3.3 feet and the opening was kept at least 25 feet wide in order to meet the requirement for small craft navigation (State Organization for Boating Access 1996). Alternatives S12.1, S12.2, and S12.3 represent the use of a Type 2 (inflatable) barrier at Location 1. The difference between these three Type 2 alternatives is the crest elevation, the crest elevation for S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3 are -1.0 , $+0.1$, and $+1.0$ feet NGVD29, respectively. For each of the 14 alternatives, the 2004 dry season was repeatedly simulated using the modified CH3D code developed by Coastal Tech. Each simulation run lasted 10 days.

Table 9-1. Description of the 14 Saltwater Barrier Alternatives Modeled in the CH3D Simulation for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Alternative	Barrier Location	Barrier Type	Opening width (ft)	Depth at opening (ft, NGVD29)	Description
S0	--	--	--	--	No barrier
S1	1	1	100	Local depth	
S2	2	1	100	Local depth	
S3	3	1	100	Local depth	
S4	1	1	100	Local depth	Three barriers used (see Figure 9-2)
S5	1, 2 & 3	1	100	Local depths	Combination of S1, S2 & S3
S6	1	1	80	3.3	
S7	1	1	25	3.3	
S8	1	1	25	3.3	Three barriers used (Similar to S4, Figure 9-2)
S9	2	1	25	3.3	
S10	3	1	25	3.3	
S11	1, 2 & 3	1	25	3.3	Combination of S7, S9 & S10
S12.1	1	2	--	1.0	Crest elevation = -1.0 ft NGVD29
S12.2	1	2	--	0.1	Crest elevation = +0.1 ft NGVD29
S12.3	1	2	--	-1.0	Crest elevation = +1.0 ft NGVD29

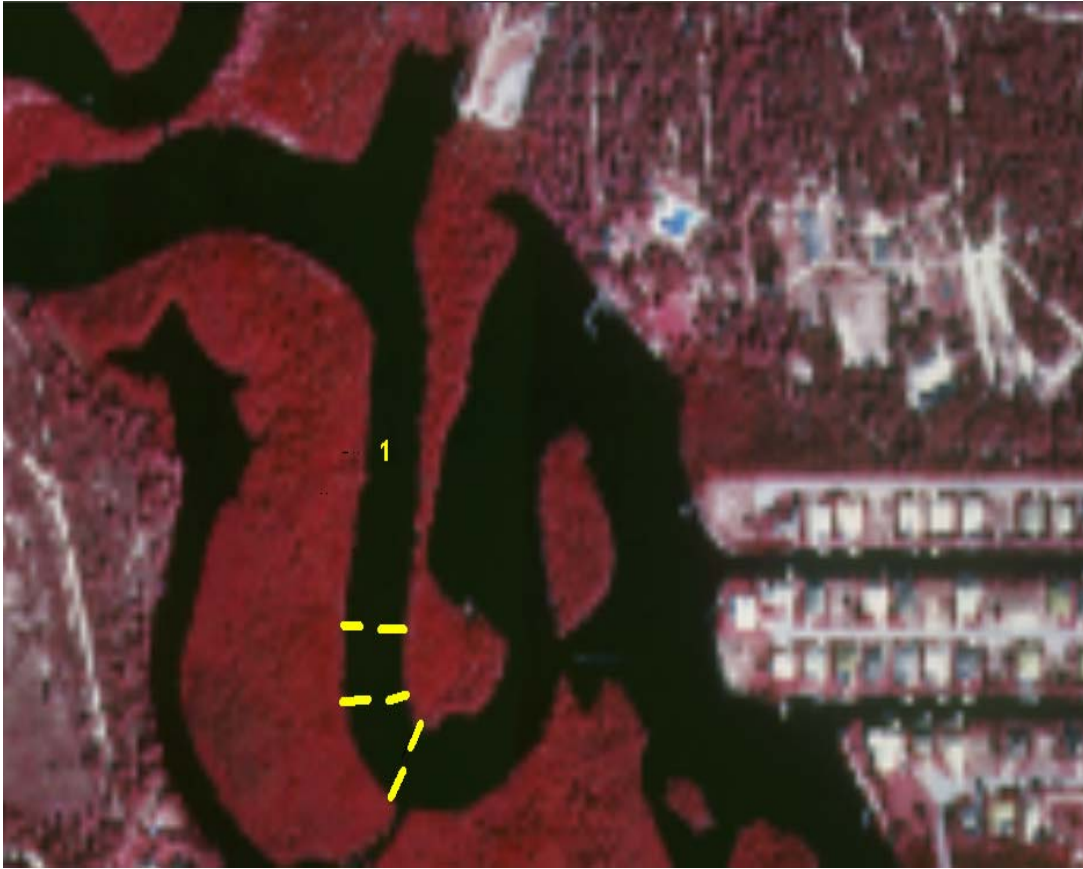


Figure 9-2. Placement of the Three Type 1 Saltwater Barriers at Location 1 for Alternatives S4 and S8.

Note: The actual placement locations of the three saltwater barriers were selected for modeling purposes only. The study objective was to examine the effectiveness of a series of barriers vs. a single barrier. These barriers may or may not be allowed within the boundary of the Wild and Scenic River.

Salinity Model Applications

Figure 9-3 shows the freshwater flows used as boundary conditions at S-46, Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek for January 2004. To avoid tidal influences, the Kitching Creek USGS flow gauge was placed north of the mouth of Kitching Creek. Therefore it does not record all the runoff from the entire Kitching Creek basin. **Figure 9-4** shows the tidal elevation used at the open ocean boundary. The ocean open boundary condition for salinity was kept constant at 35.5 ppt when the flow is coming in (flood tide). During ebb tide, salinity at the open ocean boundary was computed by the model.

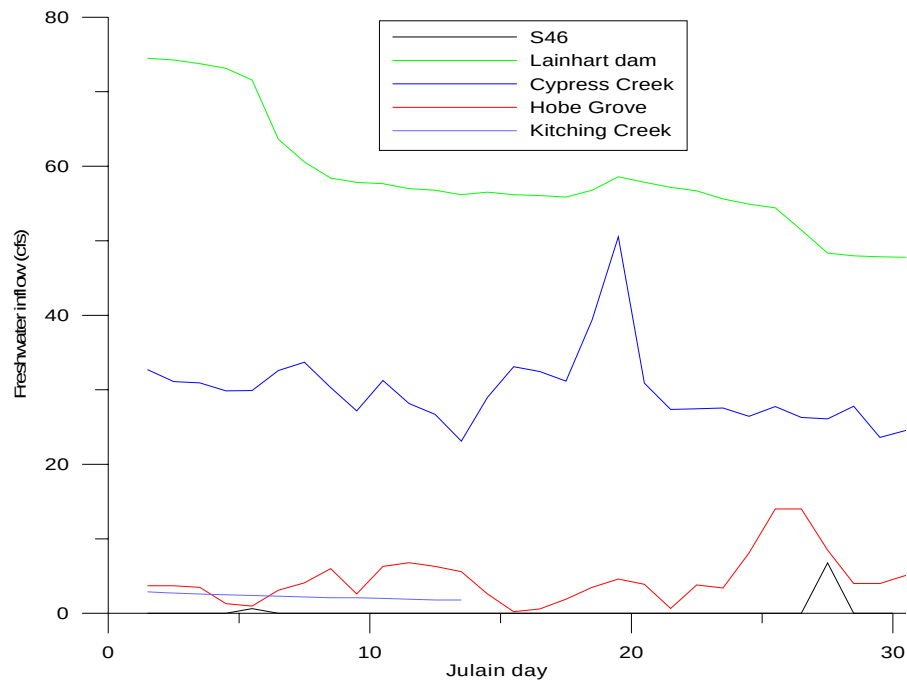


Figure 9-3. Freshwater Flows at S-46, Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch, and Kitching Creek for January 2004.

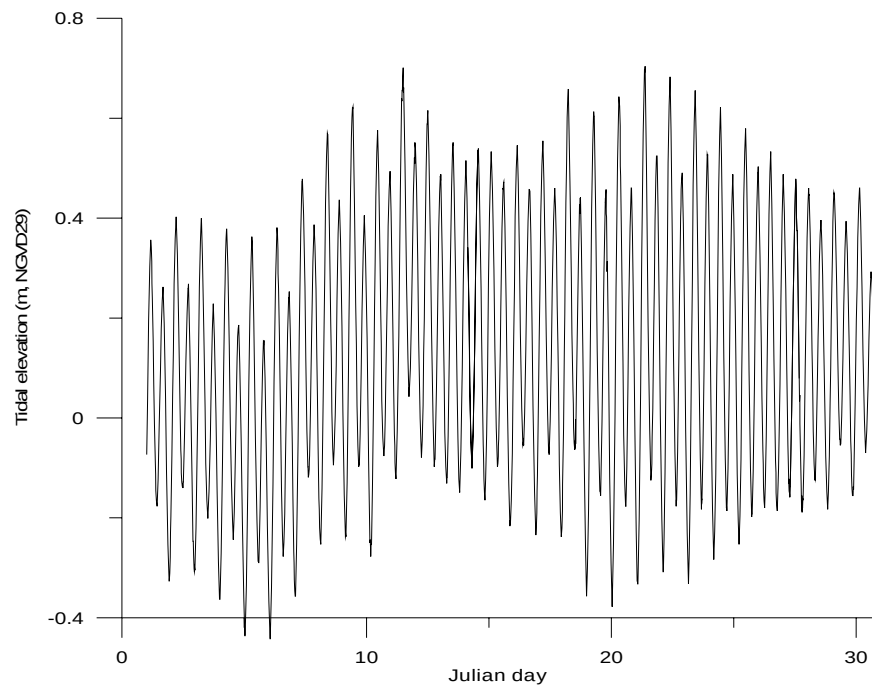


Figure 9-4. Tidal Elevation at the Coast Guard Station for January 2004.

The simulation of changes in salinity after introducing the 15 saltwater barriers alternatives was performed. The target range for the saltwater barrier performance simulation was to keep the salinity at River Mile 6.2 below 2 ppt.

TYPE 1 SALINITY BARRIER SIMULATIONS

Figure 9-5 shows the modeled salinity at RM 6.2 for Alternatives S0 through S5. For this group of alternatives, Type 1 barriers are used (except S0, which is the base condition for comparison). The central opening is 100 feet wide. In S1, S2 and S3, only one barrier is placed at each location. In S4, three Type 1 barriers are all placed at Location 1 (see **Figure 9-2**). And in S5, one Type 1 barrier is placed at each of the three locations. There is little reduction of salinity at River Mile 6.2 with any of these alternatives. Further upstream at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13; **Figure 9-6**), salinity reduction less than 1 ppt was seen for all the alternatives.

Figure 9-7 shows the modeled salinity at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S6, S7 and S8. For this group of alternatives, The Type 1 barrier is used only at Location 1. For these three alternatives, the width of the central opening was decreased from 100 feet (as used in Alternatives S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) to 80 feet (S6) and 25 feet (S7 and S8). In S8, three barriers are placed at Location 1 (similar to S4, see **Figure 9-2**). Again, there is little reduction in salinity at River Mile 6.2. However, peak salinity at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13; **Figure 9-8**) is significantly reduced under Alternatives S7 and S8. This is because as the central opening at the barrier becomes increasingly smaller, the total salinity brought upstream by flood tide is significantly reduced leading to lower salinity at upstream locations after the initial ‘jet’ has dissipated.

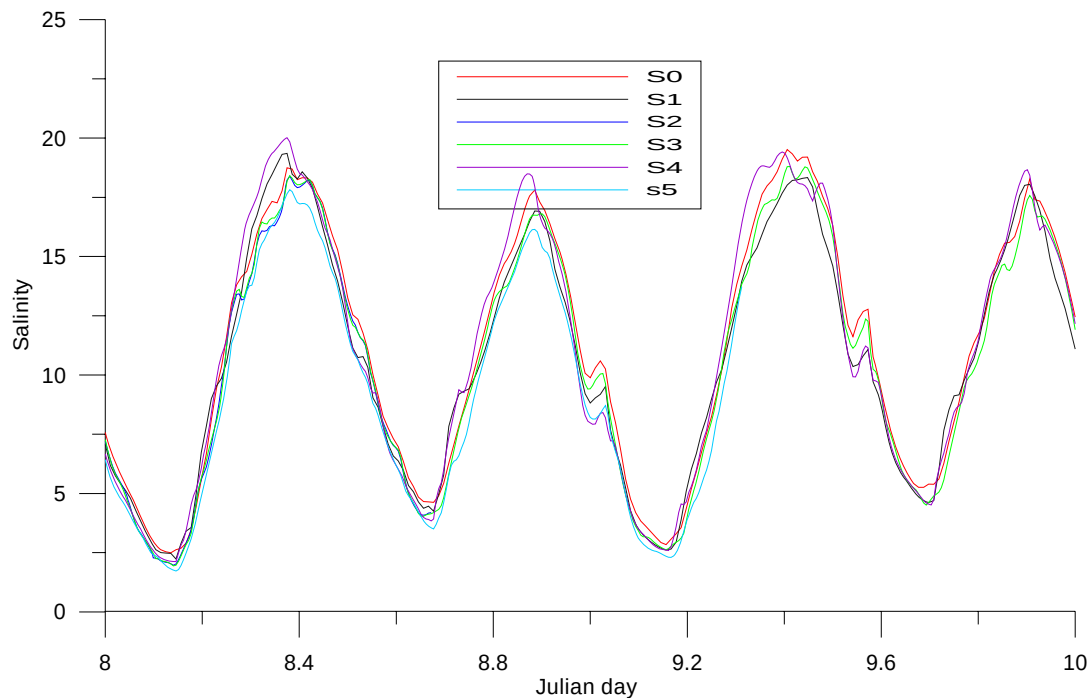


Figure 9-5. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S0 to S5.

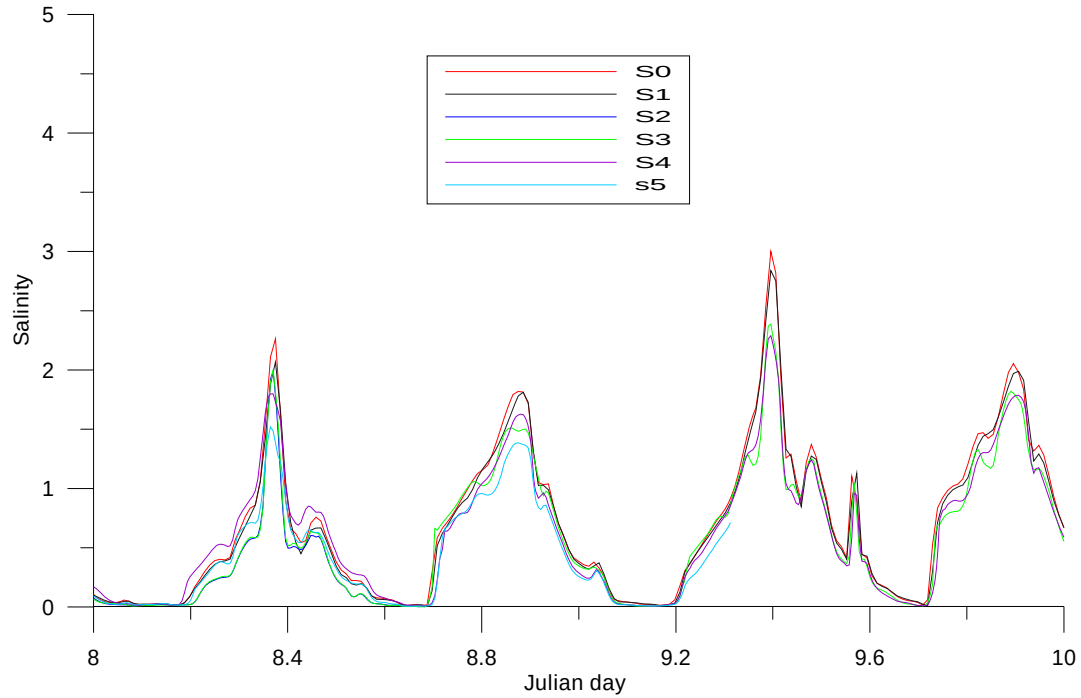


Figure 9-6. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S0 to S5.

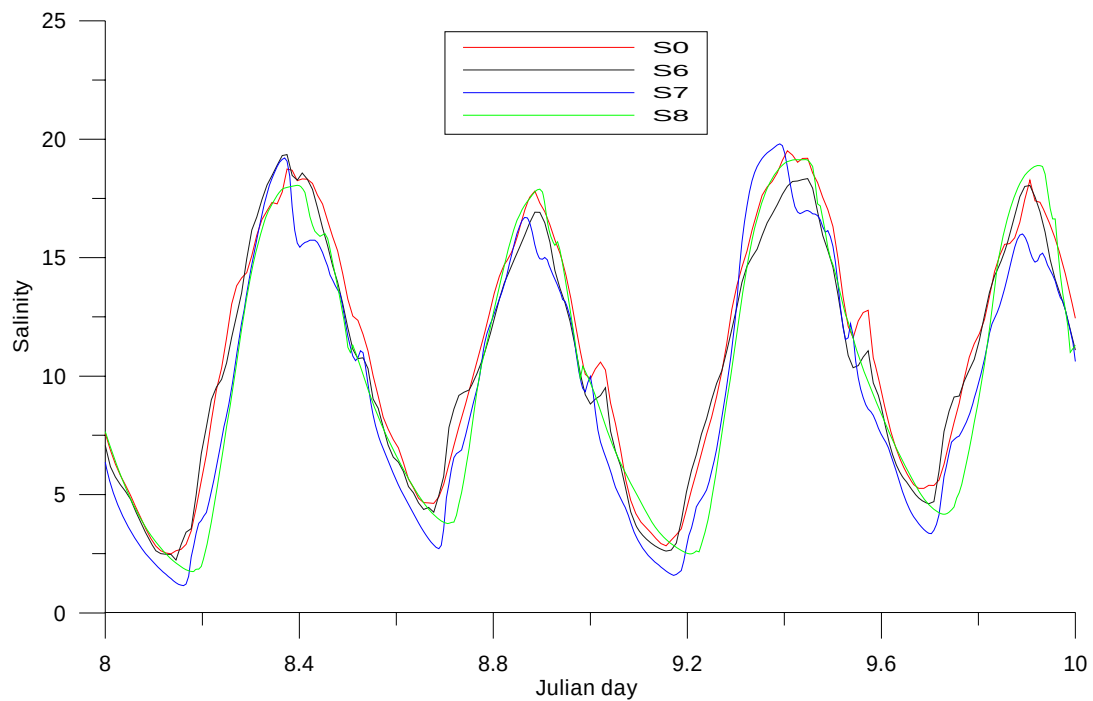


Figure 9-7. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S6 to S8.

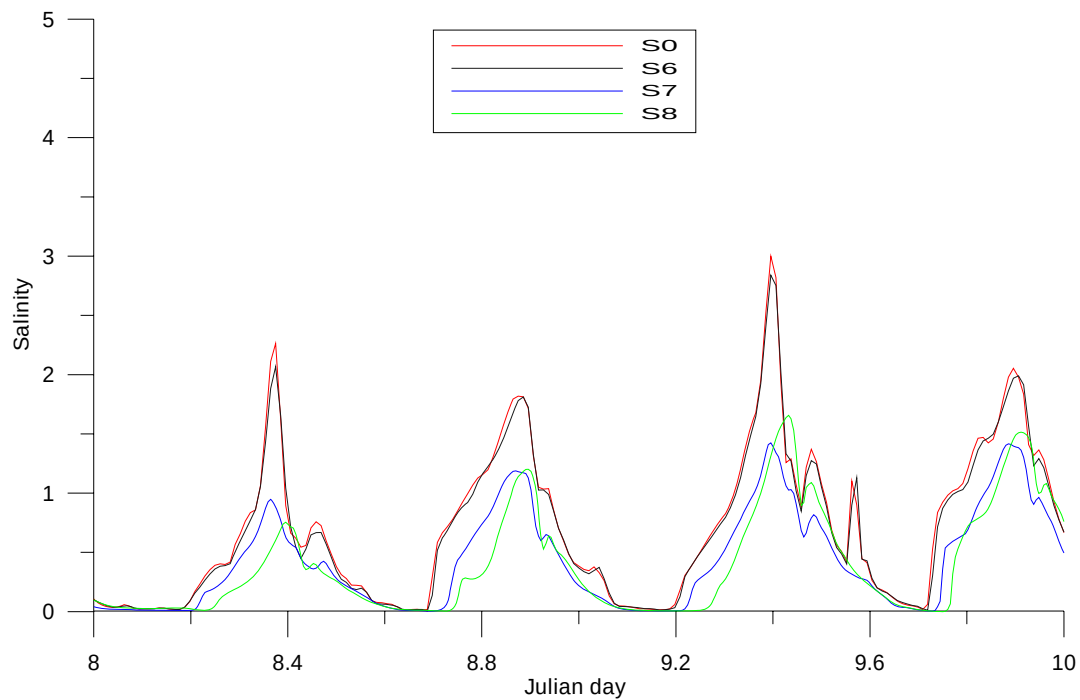


Figure 9-8. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S6 to S8.

Figure 9-9 shows the modeled salinity at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S9 to S11. Alternatives S0 and S7 are also shown for comparison. For this group of alternatives, Type 1 barriers with 25-foot wide opening were used. In S7, S9 and S10, only one such barrier is used at each of the three selected sites. Alternative S11 is a combination of Alternatives S7, S9, and S10 (i.e., three barriers are used, one at each site). Little or no salinity reduction at River Mile 6.2 is seen for Alternatives S7 and S10. However, significant salinity reduction is seen for Alternatives S9 and S11. Salinity reduction is more significant in terms of percentage at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13; **Figure 9-10**) for all the alternatives. For Alternative S11, the most effective alternative, peak salinity reduction is approximately 25 percent at River Mile 6.2 and 80 percent at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13). Alternative S9 seems to be the most effective alternative for a single barrier placed at a single site. For S9, peak salinity is reduced by approximately 20 percent at River Mile 6.2.

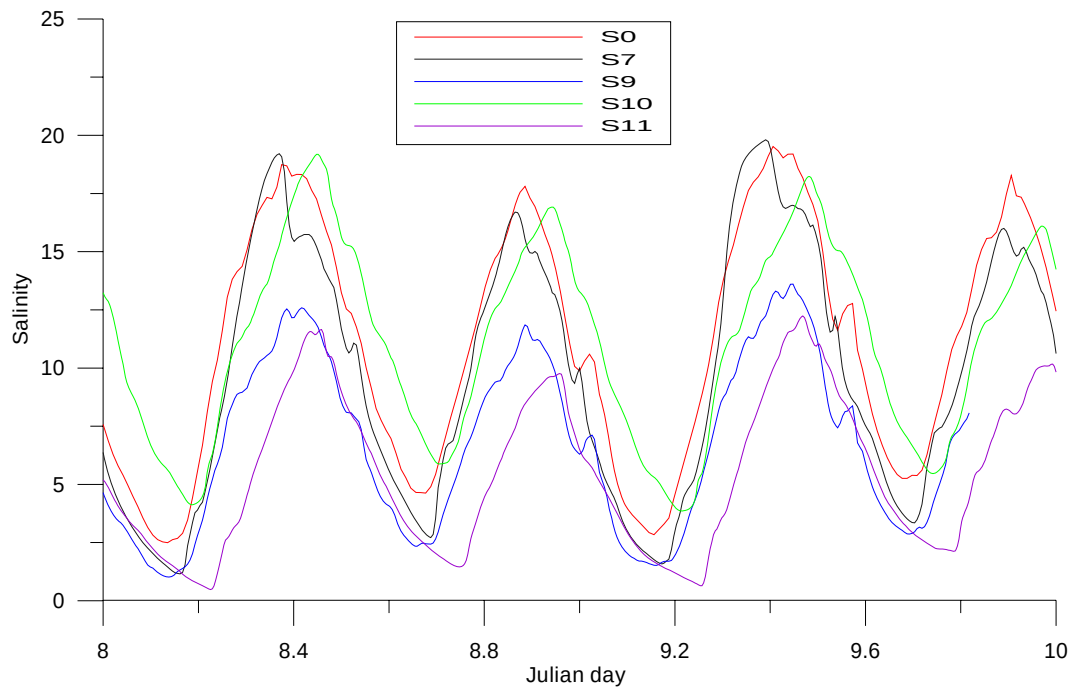


Figure 9-9. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S7, S9, S10 and S11.

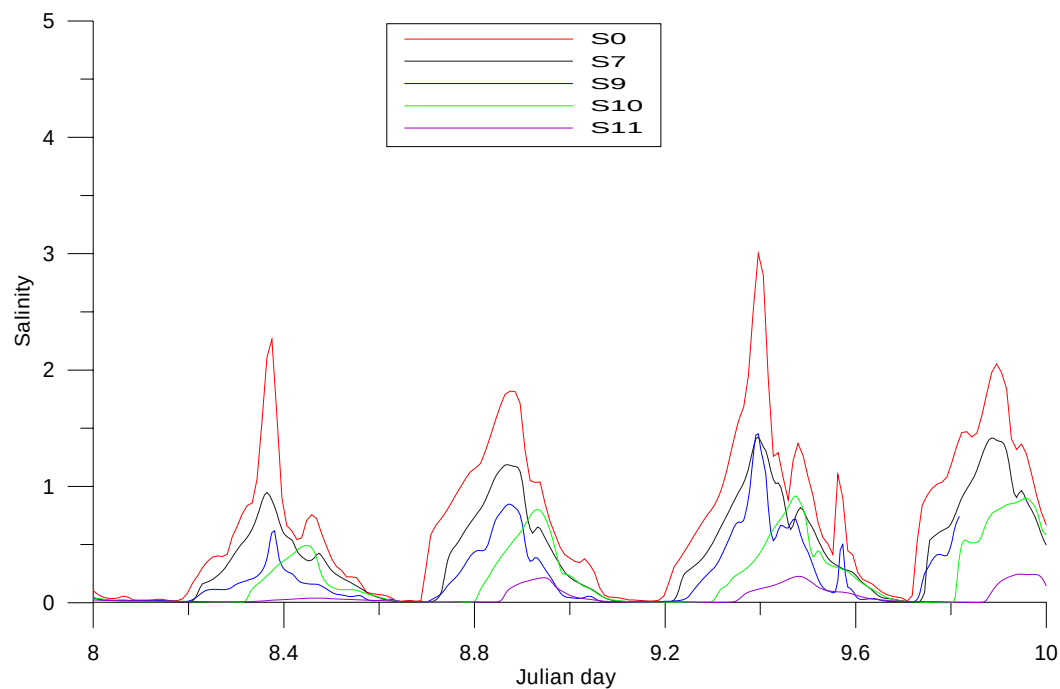


Figure 9-10. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S7, S9, S10 and S11.

Summarizing the performance of Type 1 barriers, Alternatives S1 to S11, the simulation predicts significant salinity reduction when the width of the barrier opening was reduced to 25 feet. However, none of the simulations predict achieving the goal of keeping salinity at River Mile 6.2 lower than 2 ppt. By decreasing the width of the opening, the goal to achieve a salinity of less than 2 ppt at RM 6.2 should be possible, but there would be a likely negative impact to navigation for water craft. The minimum recommended navigable width requirement for small craft varies from state to state, but in most states, the minimum requirement is that the channel should be at least 20 feet wide and 3 feet deep at low tide. The simulation results suggests that using saltwater barriers in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River that meet this navigation requirement are not likely to achieve the specified goal for reducing salinity at River Mile 6.2 to less than 2 ppt.

TYPE 2 SALINITY BARRIER SIMULATIONS

Because Type 2 barriers extend across the width of the channel, navigation inevitably will be disrupted during the operation period. Using inflatable Type 2 barriers may alleviate some of the navigational disruption because they can be removed during the wet season when there is no need for saltwater barriers.

Figure 9-11 shows the modeled salinity at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3. As the crest elevation rises, the salinity at River Mile 6.2 decreases. Alternative S12.3 seems to nearly achieve the goal of salinity less than 2 ppt. At River Mile 6.2 it is less than 2 ppt throughout most of the tidal cycle except at high tide. Upstream at River Mile 7.0, the peak salinity is less than 2 ppt (**Figure 9-12**). Further upstream at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13), the water becomes almost fresh (**Figure 9-13**).

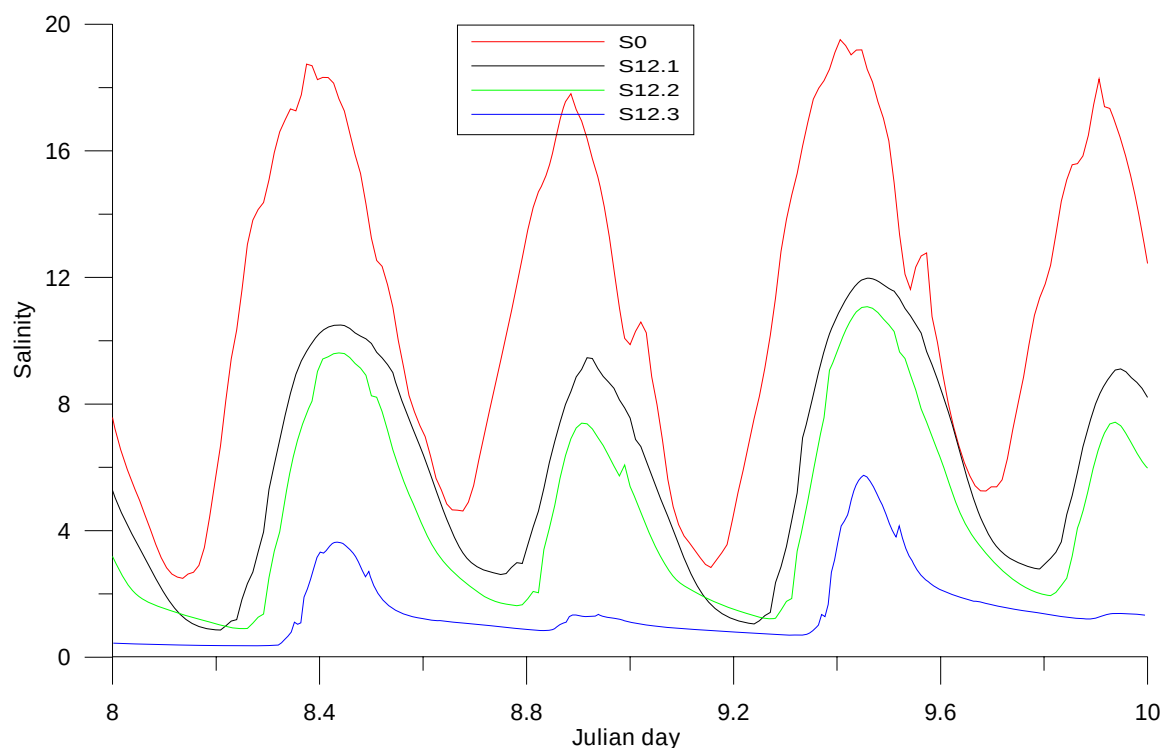


Figure 9-11. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.

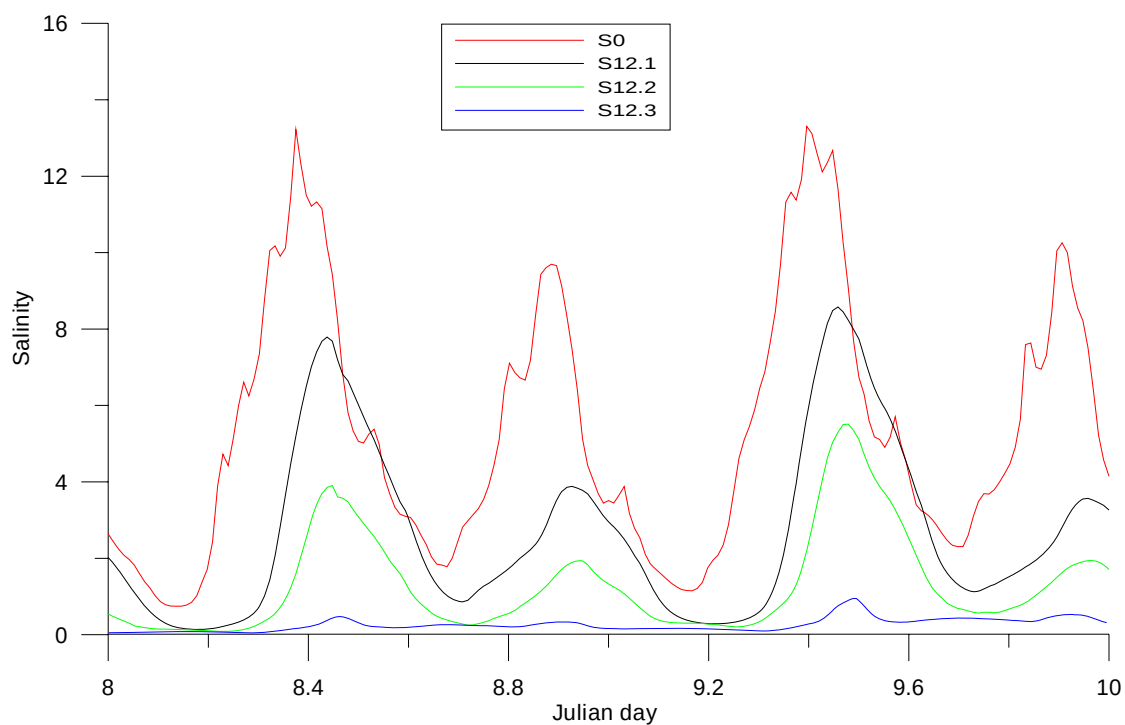


Figure 9-12. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity (in ppt) at River Mile 7.0 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.

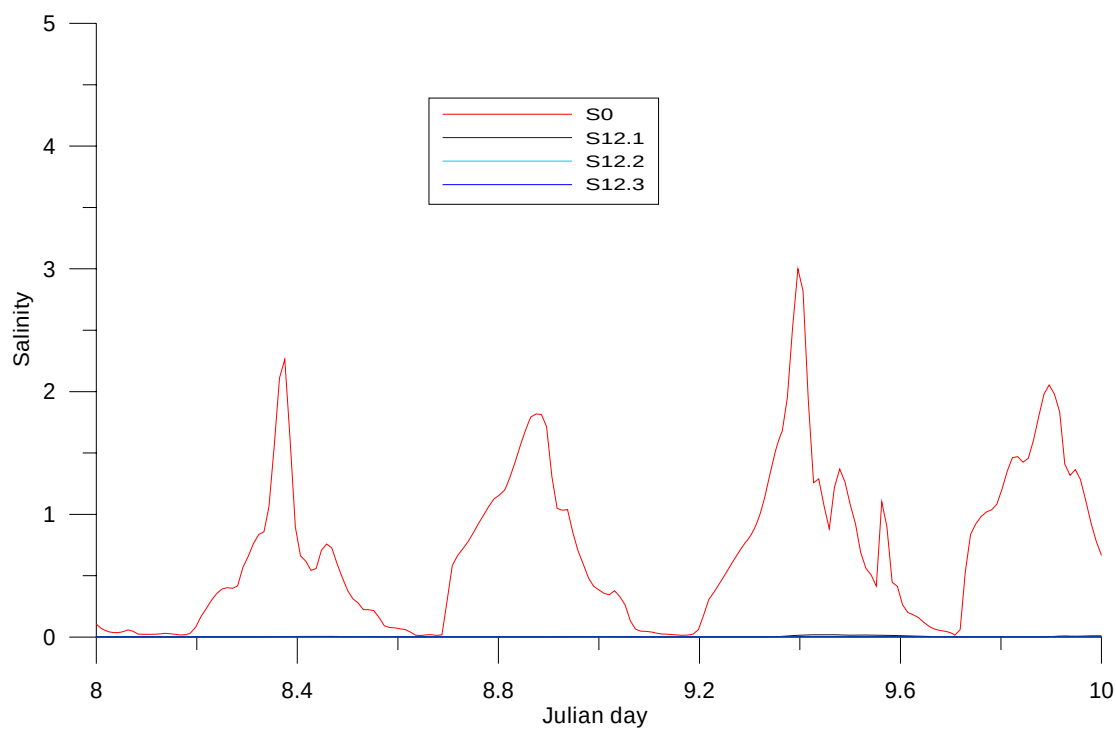


Figure 9-13. Simulated Upper Layer Salinity at Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.

Because of the relative effectiveness of the Type 2 barriers in reducing saltwater intrusion, their impact on water level (**Figure 9-14**) and flow rate (**Figure 9-15**) was compared with the base condition, S0. Tidal range is greatly reduced with the presence of the saltwater barrier (**Figure 9-14**). Tidal range is less than 0.5 feet for Alternative S12.3 compared with tidal range of nearly 3 feet for the existing condition (S0). Flow rate is also greatly reduced as it is blocked by the barrier.

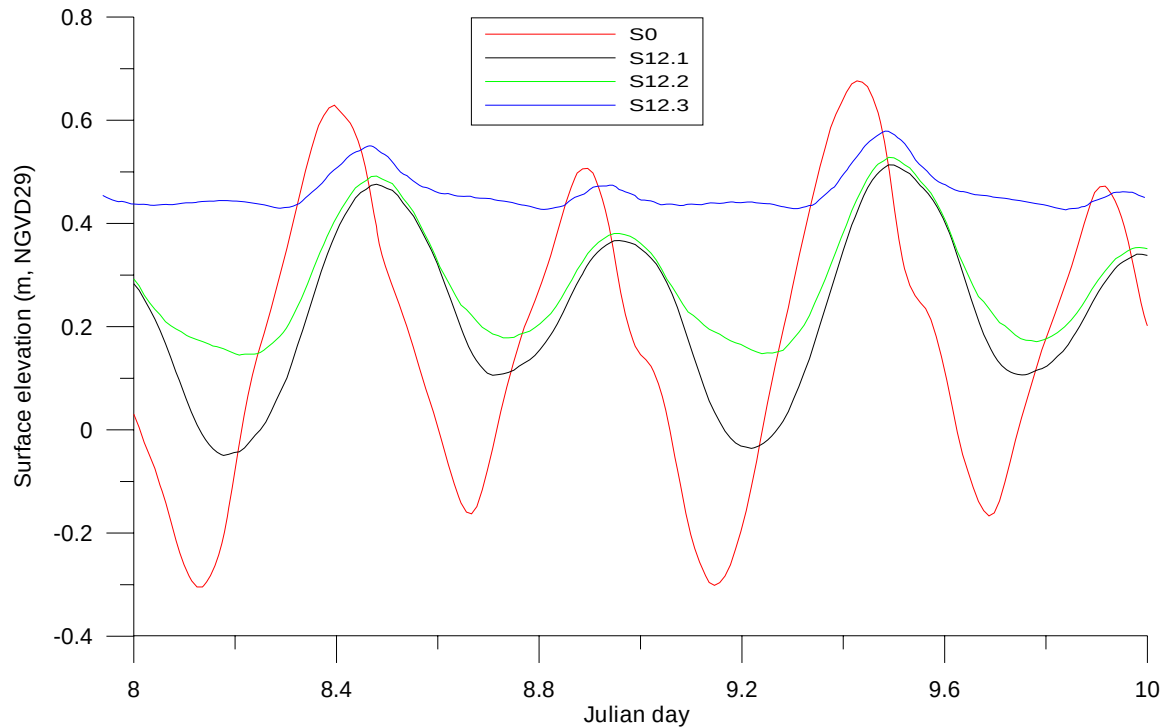


Figure 9-14. Simulated Water Surface Elevation at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3.

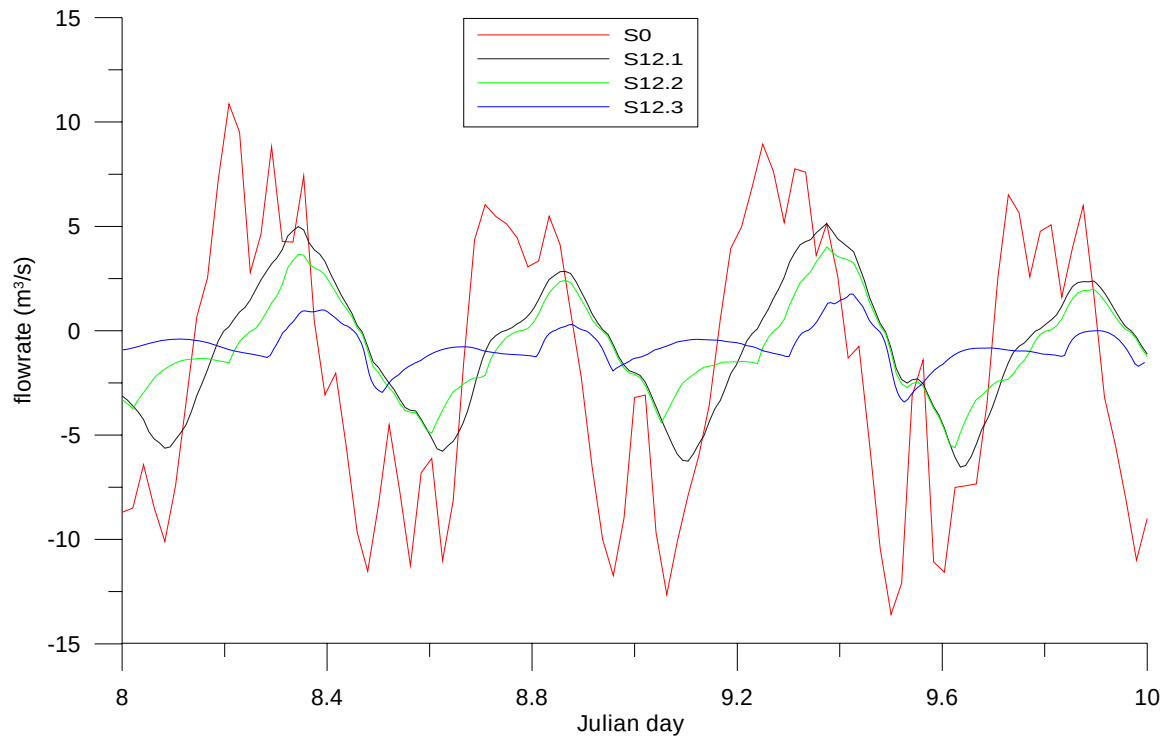


Figure 9-15. Simulated Flow Rate at River Mile 6.2 for Alternatives S12.1, S12.2 and S12.3. Flood tide +; Ebb tide -.

EVALUATION OF SALINITY BARRIER ALTERNATIVE MODELS

In summary of the performances of all the alternatives, **Table 9-2** lists the peak salinities at Boy Scout Dock (RM 5.92) and Kitching Creek (RM 8.13) during the period from Julian day 8 to 10 as predicted by the CH3D model. The lower the peak salinity, the more effective the alternative is. Another measure of the overall performance is the total salinity transported upstream of Boy Scout Dock. The better performing salinity reduction alternatives will transport less salinity upstream. The 6th column of **Table 9-2** shows the total salinity transported upstream at Boy Scout Dock during flood tide for the period from Julian day 8 to 10, 2004. All of the alternatives offer some degree of salinity reduction relative to the existing condition (S0). However, alternatives using the Type 2 barrier are significantly more effective in reducing salinity than are the alternatives using a Type 1 barrier.

Table 9-2. Comparison of the Performance of the Salinity Barrier Alternatives on Julian Days 8 to 10, 2004.

Alternative	Barrier		Peak Salinity (ppt)		Total salinity transport (kg)
	Location	Type	BSD	KC	
S0	--	--	19.51	3.00	2,100,836
S1	1	1	19.61	2.29	2,067,592
S2	2	1	15.55	0.92	1,541,236
S3	3	1	18.40	1.99	1,928,816
S4	1	1	20.01	2.26	1,997,935
S5	1, 2 & 3	1	14.88	1.57	1,557,198
S6	1	1	18.83	1.98	2,045,861
S7	1	1	19.81	1.42	1,786,714
S8	1	1	19.14	1.66	1,640,093
S9	2	1	13.60	1.45	1,295,635
S10	3	1	14.17	0.30	998,579
S11	1, 2 & 3	1	10.75	0.17	661,928
S12.1	1	2	11.97	0.03	630,869
S12.2	1	2	11.08	0.00	465,165
S12.3	1	2	5.80	0.00	102,148

Based on the results of this model simulation, we conclude that a weir raised to an elevation one foot above the mean tide is the most effective barrier type for salinity reduction in the Northwest Fork. This barrier can be effective at the immediate upstream if the crest elevation was higher than high tide.

For saltwater barriers with an opening to be effective, the width of the opening needs to be small. Barriers with 25-foot wide openings (the minimum allowable channel size for small watercraft) performed better than barriers with larger openings. Based on model simulations using barriers with an opening, salinity is not significantly reduced until approximately 1 mile upstream of the barrier.

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE TYPE 2 SALINITY BARRIER

Using a salinity barrier that spans the full width of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River downstream from RM 6.0 offers significant salinity reduction. However, there are significant ecological concerns that also need to be addressed regarding the use of a saltwater barrier as a possible restoration alternative. Several questions have been raised though District staff's communications with the Park Service of FDEP (Roberts 2004):

1. In the process of feasibility study, water quality needs to be considered, especially the location of the structure in relationship to stormwater run-off areas.
2. Should there be a concern about nutrient concentrations and possible algal problems occurring behind the structure?
3. A saltwater barrier can cause both a temperature and dissolved oxygen imbalance in and around its vicinity.
4. The barrier structure will have an effect on the spawning and nursery areas for fish. Some type of "fish ladder" device will certainly be required by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.
5. There also will be concern about localized flooding when a weir type structure is built on the river.
6. Recreational boat traffic will need to be minimally impacted if the project is to succeed.

Discussions of some of these questions as they relate the Type 2 barrier are presented in the following sections.

ECOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION

A paramount concern of using the Type 2 barrier is that, although this barrier is most effective for saltwater intrusion control, it would cause fragmentation of the estuary ecosystem by seriously reducing the area of essential, low salinity zone (LSZ) nursery habitat available to juvenile estuarine and marine fish and shellfish, and causing significant declines in fish abundance and diversity above the barrier (Mallen-Cooper 1999). This loss of essential habitat could have a negative impact on the success of the year class of those species dependant on this estuarine nursery function during the dry season (North and Houde 2001). These species include fishes popular with anglers, such as snook and redfish; those used commercially, such as eels and blue crabs; those species important in the estuarine food chain such as bay anchovies, mullet, gobies and mojarras; and threatened species such as the opossum pipefish. Furthermore, many tropical species that frequent the Loxahatchee estuary, such as five species of snook, seek the warm groundwater temperatures in the inner estuary during cold events. The Type 2 barrier would prevent these tropical species from migrating upstream to this warm water refuge during the winter.

Once the barrier is in place, the normal inner estuary tidal flushing, about 2 feet of amplitude, will be minimized. This tidal flushing normally transports runoff and also inundates and drains a portion of the vegetated floodplain which consistently exports particulate organics and dissolved nutrients to the estuary. These substances are required for successful, healthy phytoplankton and zooplankton populations to nourish juvenile and adult fish and shellfish (oysters), the anticipated reduction of these substances from the inner estuary may reduce overall estuarine productivity and nursery function. Additionally, the retention of these substances upstream of the structure may provide suitable water quality conditions for harmful algal blooms.

WATER QUALITY

Because the Type 2 saltwater barrier only allows flows out of the inner estuary, the water quality and hydrology upstream and downstream of the saltwater barrier may be affected. Extensive surface water quality monitoring of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is being conducted by the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District (LRD). In consultation with LRD staff, the most significant water quality issues that would be encountered with a saltwater barrier would be the lack of surface water circulation and deposition of muck and other sediment immediately behind the structure. This would affect several water quality parameters including water temperature, dissolved oxygen, total suspended solids, water clarity, turbidity, tannins, total organic carbons, chlorophyll, fecal coliform bacteria, pesticides, and herbicides. The stagnant water conditions created by the barrier would lower dissolved oxygen and water clarity, and raise the water temperature.

Dams serve as settling basins for pollutants. Of concern with a temporary inflatable structure would be the effect on water quality immediately after the deployment period ends. When the structure is removed, sediment plus the pollutants that fall out into that sediment immediately behind the structure would be carried downstream into the estuary and eventually offshore to the reef systems over a short period of time.

Thermal stratification would occur behind the structure and negatively impact dissolved oxygen concentrations by preventing the mixing of the two water layers. The bottom water layer would become trapped and have no contact with the air. The oxygen in the lower layer would be gradually depleted as organic material that has been washed downstream settles to the bottom and decays (Tennessee Valley Authority 2004). The depletion of dissolved oxygen and increase in Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) are harmful to aquatic plants and animals.

Water temperatures can have significant effects on health, distribution, and abundance of fish, amphibians, aquatic insects, benthic organisms, and aquatic plants (Washington State Department of Ecology 2004). Water impounded behind a dam has higher water temperatures than water in a free flowing river; the dam exposes more surface water area to solar and air temperature influences. Higher water temperatures can trigger algal blooms, excessive growth of aquatic macrophytes, and fish diseases.

Elevated levels of turbidity and total suspended solids can reduce water clarity. Increased turbidity can also clog gills; stimulate organism avoidance behavior; reduce the ability to find food; reduce the rate of photosynthesis and primary production; and smother benthic organisms, spawning areas, and habitat (Washington State Department of Ecology 2004).

Nutrients are important for the growth of plants and algae in the river and estuary system. The effect of a salinity barrier on the amount of nutrients available for the estuary ecosystem during the periods of deployment is unknown. However, the rate of nutrient loading into the estuary may be temporarily increased when the salinity barrier is removed. This short-term nutrient enrichment can have an adverse impact on aquatic ecosystems. By adding chemical sealants to the sediments, this may help promote a slower, steady release of nutrients when the barrier is removed.

Fecal coliform bacteria are used as indicators of the presence of bird and mammal (including human) feces. The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River has experienced high levels of fecal coliform bacteria in the past; this has resulted in closures of the Jonathan Dickinson State Park Public Swimming Area. Adding a dam structure to the river may increase the levels of fecal coliform bacteria as a result of reduced tidal flushing. Fecal coliform bacteria levels are generally lower in saline waters and are eventually destroyed by saline waters within the lower estuary and Atlantic Ocean.

The Washington State Department of Ecology (2004) recommended that as part of a formal compliance schedule for a dam that a water quality attainment plan be established to ensure the highest attainable water quality conditions at a structure. The water quality attainment plan should address current water quality standards, possible causes of impairment, monitoring considerations, and protection and improvement actions. Chapter 3 of the Guidance Manual provides a technical overview of many water quality parameters of concern, monitoring considerations, and some possible solutions to correct water quality problems.

FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

As discussed in **Chapters 3 and 4**, the tidal floodplains of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River consist primarily of mangrove and pond apple swamp and sabal palm hammock communities. One concern with using the Type 2 saltwater barrier would be the ability to produce an occasional dry-dry season for freshwater deciduous seed germination and seedling/sapling growth. The reservoir effect produced by the barrier coupled with the low elevations of the floodplain in the tidal reaches would cause the floodplain areas with elevations lower than mean high tide to likely remain flooded throughout the dry season. The critical periods for germination and seedling sapling growth (November-April) correspond to the dry season, which is the same time period that the saltwater barrier would be used to effectively control saltwater intrusion.

Higher water levels would change the short-term character of the groundcover and shrub communities to the advantage of plant species that are better adapted to flooding conditions. Those species that are not tolerant of flooding could become stressed or die. A major focus of the restoration plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is to promote the return of freshwater canopy, shrub and groundcover species to the areas that have been invaded by red and white mangroves.

Although placing a Type 2 barrier across the entire river provides the most significant reduction in saltwater intrusion, the potential ecological impacts are an obvious concern. However, using a Type 1 barrier that allows for some flow through the barrier provides significantly less reduction of saltwater intrusion. Additional reductions in saltwater intrusion might be achieved with improvements in the configurations, numbers, and locations of Type 1 barriers. Concerns about ecological fragmentation, water quality, and floodplain vegetation could be reduced as optimization of Type 1 barriers is achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the preliminary modeling evaluations, it is concluded that an inflatable weir (Type 2) raised to an elevation one foot above the mean tide that spans the entire width of the river channel is the most effective barrier for salinity reduction in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Because all of the simulations were conducted under the same hydrological conditions, comparisons between weir type and weir location are appropriate. As other restoration projects are implemented and dry season freshwater flows increase, it is possible that a weir alternative that was considered less effective in this assessment scenario may be sufficient under alternate freshwater flow conditions. Therefore additional modeling studies may be necessary when considering a saltwater barrier, combined with other restoration measures.

However, extreme caution must be used before a saltwater barrier is considered as a restoration option; the potential adverse impacts on the ecosystem, boat navigation, and recreational activities in the Northwest Fork may outweigh the benefits. Additionally, the saltwater barrier should only be considered if additional sources of water supply will not be

available for restoration flows in the dry season. In addition, the selection of barrier types should be carefully considered to allow for salinity management, flood control, navigation, and recreational use of the Loxahatchee River. Also, flexibility in operation is required so that if the water quality above the barrier decreases due to the reduced tidal circulation, the barrier can be quickly removed and the water quality restored. An inflatable weir seems to offer the flexibility to preserve the conveyance of the existing river channel and reduce negative impacts on flood control during the wet season. However, this has to be exercised with a precise operational schedule, taking into account the possibility of ecological segmentation and increases in salinity when the barrier is partially deflated.

CHAPTER 10

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
NORTHWEST FORK SYSTEMWIDE MONITORING	4
RAINFALL DATA	4
WATER QUALITY	4
GROUNDWATER MONITORING.....	6
LAINHART DAM FLOW	6
OTHER TRIBUTARY FLOWS.....	7
TIDE AND SALINITY MONITORING	7
FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM MONITORING.....	7
ANIMAL MONITORING	7
Amphibians	8
Bird Monitoring.....	8
Small Mammals	9
Freshwater Fish	9
Freshwater Macroinvertebrates	10
RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION MONITORING	10
TIDAL FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION MONITORING	10
SOIL MONITORING.....	11
ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM MONITORING	11
OLIGOHALINE (LOW SALINITY ZONE) ECOZONE: FISH MONITORING.....	11
MESOHALINE ECOZONE: OYSTER MONITORING.....	12
POLYHALINE ECOZONE: SEAGRASS MONITORING	12
Seagrass Mapping	13
BENTHIC MACROINVERTEBRATE MONITORING	14
SYNOPSIS OF EXISTING MONITORING PROGRAMS	15
SPECIAL STUDIES.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED AND ESTUARINE MODELING	16
JONATHAN DICKINSON STATE PARK VEGETATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT	16
VEGETATION RESPONSE TO SEVERE STORMS OR DROUGHTS	16
CYPRESS SEEDLING STUDIES.....	16
SYSTEM RESPONSE TO RAINFALL EVENTS AND DROUGHTS	16

MESOCOSM STUDIES.....	17
OYSTERS	17
FISH LARVAE	17
CONCLUSIONS.....	17

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 10-1. Selected Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Water Quality Sampling Stations in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.....	6
Figure 10-2. Locations of the Four South Florida Water Management District Historic Seagrass Monitoring Sites.	13
Figure 10-3. South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Sites (1986 – 1988).....	14

LIST OF TABLES

Table 10-1. Water Quality Target Values for Salinity Zones in the Loxahatchee River Estuary.	5
Table 10-2. Days of Inundation Required for Different Species of Native Frogs Found in JDSP to Complete Metamorphosis (adapted from SFWMD 2002).....	8
Table 10-3. Threatened, Rare or Endangered Birds in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.	9
Table 10-4. Summary of Existing Monitoring Programs and Sampling Frequencies for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.	15

Chapter 10

Ecological Monitoring for Adaptive Management

INTRODUCTION

The Preferred Restoration Scenario identified for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River Restoration Plan was developed with available data and analysis techniques successfully used to create water management guidelines for similar ecosystems. The integration of predictive results from watershed, hydrodynamic/salinity and biological models in concert with information from recent field investigations provided the basis for evaluating potential impacts of various flow scenarios on Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) and their Performance Measures (PMs).

Without past efforts to document various physical, chemical and biological parameters in the watershed and receiving waterbody, a Preferred Restoration Scenario could not have been developed to the level of certainty accomplished for this Plan. During plan development the value of existing monitoring programs was evaluated to support the new restoration flow scenario. If the new restoration flow scenario is adopted, it will be implemented in a step-wise fashion as restorative flows are provided. All new information obtained should be focused on our ability to assess biological and hydrological affects of our water management methods as new facilities become operational. Using this information, we can adaptively manage flows and proceed toward our goal of achieving a healthy ecosystem.

Effective monitoring of the Northwest Fork ecosystems will require adjustments to several existing monitoring programs and the addition of new scientific programs to assure the information obtained will promote beneficial water management methods. A Northwest Fork Science Plan (NWFSP) will be developed based on specific scientific questions that need to be answered to manage restoration flows. Once the appropriate questions are identified by the NWFSP, specific monitoring programs and special projects can be designed and implemented. These monitoring programs will provide the information needed to successfully manage restoration flows on a real-time basis and establish a database for retrospective and predictive analyses. To assist in this effort, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Monitoring and Assessment Plan, Part 1 (CERP 2004) for the Loxahatchee Estuary includes some important monitoring programs that will be incorporated into the NWFSP.

The NWFSP will guide future scientific efforts for the next five years and will enable the efficient application of limited resources to prioritize infrastructure, water management and monitoring projects. It will be developed by the scientists and engineers associated with the development of the Preferred Restoration Scenario and shared with other agencies and the public. This Restoration Plan presents recommendations to continue current monitoring programs, develop additional monitoring programs, and implement special short-term studies. All of these recommendations will be reviewed in context of the NWFSP. As a coordinated, scientifically based understanding of the ecosystem response to water management evolves, adaptive management decisions will be scientifically justified and documented. A report, compiled by all involved parties, will update the progress of our adaptive management techniques and the NWFSP every five years.

This chapter identifies the systemwide and ecosystem-specific monitoring programs necessary to measure water flows, vegetation and wildlife changes, and changes in other constituents. The data collected from these programs will be used to protect and restore the freshwater floodplain, tidal floodplain and the estuarine reaches of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Monitored parameters, locations, frequencies and rationales will be discussed.

Monitoring programs should provide the data and information necessary to do the following:

1. Characterize the condition of each of the river reaches in terms of:
 - a. Flows and associated water stages, duration, and timing,
 - b. Water quality criteria such as salinity and other constituents,
 - c. Select flora,
 - d. Select fauna.
2. Observe changes in monitored constituents on an ongoing basis.
3. Measure and quantify changes and trends in the monitored constituents during the restoration activities.
4. Support ongoing and future modeling activities.

NORTHWEST FORK SYSTEMWIDE MONITORING

RAINFALL DATA

The current, nine rainfall gauging stations within the watershed are maintained by the SFWMD and provide adequate data to model surface water runoff to the Loxahatchee River. Additional rainfall data at two other locations in the watershed are available from the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Wild Pine Laboratory.

Recommendation – The SFWMD rainfall gauges are part of a regional data collection network and should be maintained to support the adaptive management of the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

WATER QUALITY

From about 1970 to 1990, water quality monitoring in the Loxahatchee River was performed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), SFWMD, and LRD, which included a limited number of parameters when compared with the number included today. In the 1990s, the LRD began the “RiverKeeper” project that provided for a bi-monthly comprehensive water quality (30 parameters) sampling program at 43 sites. These sites are located in the three major forks of the Loxahatchee River and in tributaries to the Northwest Fork (**Appendix D**).

In 2004, the LRD and SFWMD established interim water quality targets for three segments of the Northwest Fork and the FPS at JDSP assisted in developing interim water quality targets for the Wild and Scenic portion of the Northwest Fork. These target values are averages of eight years of data. The water quality target values for salinity zones are identified in **Table 10-1** with sample sites depicted in **Figure 10-1**.

Recommendation – The existing water quality program was designed to identify long-term trends related to State water quality standard compliance and self-imposed water quality targets. The NWFSP will address additional objectives needed to adaptively manage the system. Once the NWFSP is complete, specific recommendations for future efforts can be considered.

Table 10-1. Water Quality Target Values for Salinity Zones in the Loxahatchee River Estuary.

Water Quality Parameter	Loxahatchee River and Northwest Fork Stations				
	Estuarine Reach		Tidal Floodplain	Riverine Floodplain	
	Marine	Polyhaline Ecozone	Mesohaline/Oligohaline Ecozones	Wild & Scenic Reach	Fresh Water Tributaries
	Stations 10, 20, 30	Stations 51, 60, 72	Stations 62, 63, 64	Stations 67, 68, 69	Stations 81, 95, 100
Temperature(°C)	25.4	25.4	24.3	24.1	24.4
pH (units)	7.83	7.69	7.56	7.37	7.44
Alkalinity (mg/L)	117	115	135	159	146
Salinity (ppt)	31.5	23.9	7.6	0.5	0.5
Specific Conductivity (mmho/cm)	48.2	37.7	12.1	0.5	0.5
Color (PCU/units)	18	46	61	64	63
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	6.8	6.1	4.2	4.1	4.4
Turbidity (NTU)	2.7	3.0	2.1	2.3	2.5
Secchi Disc (Meters)	1.74	1.27	1.39	1.10	1.26
P.A.R. @ 1M (%)	61.7	40.1	21.6	--	--
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	6.53	6.41	5.54	5.30	6.21
Dissolved Oxygen Saturation (%)	94.8	89.2	67.5	63.5	70.7
Total Phosphorus (µg/L)	25	38	56	46	51
Total Nitrogen (mg/L)	0.98	1.31	1.41	0.99	1.03
Ammonia Nitrate (mg/L)	0.058	0.072	0.065	0.087	0.077
Chlorophyll a (µg/L)	3.45	8.02	4.74	2.94	4.79
Fecal Coliform Bacteria CFU/100mL	17	99	211	282	325



Figure 10-1. Selected Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Water Quality Sampling Stations in the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

GROUNDWATER MONITORING

In 2003 the SFWMD installed 12 shallow groundwater monitoring wells in JDSP along Vegetation Transect 1 (RM 14.5), Transect 3 (RM 12.07), Transect 7 (RM 9.10), Transect 8 (on Kitching Creek) and Transect 9 (RM 6.46). Electronic monitoring at 15- to 20-minute intervals measured stage, temperature and conductivity. These data are essential to document hydroperiods and saltwater movement within the groundwater of the upper and lower tidal floodplains so they can be related to changes in vegetation. Additionally, these data are being used by the SFWMD to develop a model that predicts groundwater movement and quality.

Recommendation – Long-term monitoring of the groundwater wells needs to continue with the long-term monitoring of river channel stage and salinity.

LAINHART DAM FLOW

Of the four tributaries that contribute to the Northwest Fork, the largest portion of flow is from the Lainhart Dam. Since 1971 the USGS has been monitoring water stage immediately upstream of the Lainhart Dam and estimating flows (published annually) from a stage/flow rating curve developed at that time. The SFWMD also started monitoring stage at the same location in 1977 to calculate real-time flows for management purposes. In 2004, District Technical Publication, SHDM #1, Rating Improvements for Lainhart Dam by Juan A. Gonzalez revisited the rating curve established in 1977, and recommended periodic updates to maintain appropriate levels of accuracy.

Recommendation – Documenting real-time flow from Lainhart Dam is essential to adaptively manage the system and provide information to enhance all of the predictive models. Additional upstream monitoring of stages at existing vegetation transects and flows to the waterway need to be considered in the NWFSP. It is also important to provide adequate maintenance for this structure.

OTHER TRIBUTARY FLOWS

The composite flow from the three additional tributaries downstream of Lainhart Dam also needs to be monitored. For this reason, stage recorders were installed outside of the region of tidal influence at Kitching Creek, Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch.

Recommendation – Flows from each tributary must be monitored to capture the relative contributions and subsequent effects on the tidal floodplains and salinity in the estuary. Additional gauges will be considered in the NWFSP relative to potential restoration activities within these tributaries.

TIDE AND SALINITY MONITORING

Since 2002, tidal stage and salinity have been monitored in the Northwest Fork and estuary by USGS, SFWMD, and LRD (**Appendix D**) to support model development and other analyses. Ocean boundary conditions for the estuary salinity model are based on tidal and salinity data collected at the USGS Coast Guard station (RM 0.70) in Jupiter Inlet. The salinity station in the Central Embayment (RM 1.77), where most of seagrasses are located, is affected by flows from all the major tributaries with a large portion often provided from the Southwest Fork at S-46 on C-18. The three other stations (RM 5.92, RM 8.13, and RM 9.1) are near or in the Wild and Scenic River portion of the Northwest Fork where saltwater intrusion is a main concern. Since January 2004, the LRD, in cooperation with the SFWMD, monitored five additional stations. Two of the stations are located in the Central Embayment to enhance observations near seagrass beds, whereas the other three locations provide additional information for modeling and biological investigations.

Recommendation – Real-time monitoring is critical in the Wild and Scenic River portion of the Northwest Fork to successfully manage restoration flows. The SFWMD needs additional instrumentations to allow for environmental operations at the West Palm Beach headquarters to observe salinity and manage control structures in accordance with the plan.

FLOODPLAIN ECOSYSTEM MONITORING

ANIMAL MONITORING

An assessment and monitoring program based on adaptive management principles can provide information to understand changes and make appropriate decisions regarding the use and maintenance of resources and biodiversity in the ecosystems (Spellerberg 1991, 1992; Dallmeier and Comiskey 1998). The abundance and distribution of specific animals in the riverine floodplain can be keystone or indicator species that reflect the overall health of this ecosystem. These species can include some of the rare, endangered, or threatened fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

For this restoration plan, the frequency and magnitude of inundation of the riverine floodplain was determined for each alternative scenario and used to evaluate potential effects on vegetation and wildlife. Sufficient literature and historical Loxahatchee riverine floodplain vegetation information was available to quantify the relationship of long-term hydroperiods with the health

of vegetation communities. However, there is limited information on wildlife within the floodplain that can be used for this type of analysis. Therefore, the following wildlife monitoring programs are recommended by FPS at JDSP to provide baseline information for evaluations to guide future water management methods.

Amphibians

Amphibians can be used as indicators of the overall health of the floodplain ecosystem. They provide food for invertebrates, fish, reptiles, birds, and small mammals. However, no data are available on how saltwater intrusion and levels of inundation have impacted amphibian populations and production which changes from year to year in rainfall driven systems (Semlitsch et al. 1996). Different species of Florida amphibians require varying lengths of inundation for their larvae to metamorphose (SWFWMD 2002; see **Table 10-2**). As the length of the inundation period increases, so does larvae competition for resources, and predation (Semlitsch et al. 1996).

Recommendation – The monitoring of adult and metamorphic amphibian populations in the floodplain is recommended. The baseline monitoring should be defined in the NWFSP.

Table 10-2. Days of Inundation Required for Different Species of Native Frogs Found in JDSP to Complete Metamorphosis (adapted from SWFWMD 2002).

Species	Days of inundation
Pig frog	360
Southern leopard frog	90
Green tree frog	60
Florida cricket frog	45-90
Southern toad	30-60
Squirrel / pinewoods tree frog	30-60
Eastern narrowmouth toad	30
Little grass frog	10
Eastern spadefoot toad	10

Bird Monitoring

A variety of birds use the floodplain of the NWFLR, including song birds, owls, raptors, and wading birds. The majority of listed bird species on the NWFLR are wading birds (**Table 10-3**). However, improved hydrology will potentially increase food resource availability such as invertebrates, amphibians, and fish and improve nesting habitat suitability for wading birds (Bancroft et al. 1988). Therefore, a monitoring protocol that will encompass the largest variety of birds is desirable.

Recommendation – The monitoring of bird populations in the riverine floodplain is necessary to establish baseline studies and to evaluate the effects of restorative flows on habitat and associated wildlife.. The baseline monitoring should be defined in the NWFSP.

Table 10-3. Threatened, Rare or Endangered Birds in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Bird Species	FFWCC	USFWS	FNAI
Little Blue Heron	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S4
Tricolored Heron	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S4
Roseate Spoonbill	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S2
Snowy Egret	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S3
Wood Stork	Endangered	Endangered	G4 / S2
White Ibis	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S4
Limpkin	Species of Special Concern	None	G5 / S3
Bald Eagle	Threatened	Threatened	G4 / S3

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) ranks legend:

G - Global occurrences.

S - State occurrences.

1. Critically imperiled, or less than six occurrences.

2. Imperiled or six to 20 occurrences.

3. Rare, restricted, or otherwise vulnerable to extinction.

4. Apparently secure.

5. Demonstrably secure.

Small Mammals

Small mammals affect the structure, composition and dynamics of natural communities through activities such as seed dispersal (Brewer and Rejmanek 1999), pollination (Janson et al. 1981; Fleming and Sosa 1994; Carthew and Goldingay 1997), mycorrhizal dispersal (Janos et al. 1995), impacts on insect populations (Yahner and Smith 1991; Cook et al. 1995) and as food for carnivorous animals (Greene 1988; Wright et al. 1994). Most small mammals like mice, moles, and rats as well as mid-size mammals including raccoons, Virginia opossum, and weasels, are not abundant in seasonally flooded cypress swamps (Harris and Vickers 1984). However, the presence and abundance of small mammals have been identified as potential indicators because of their ecological importance and link to specific ecological conditions.

Recommendation – The monitoring of small and mid-size mammals in the floodplain is recommended. The baseline monitoring should be defined in the NWFSP.

Freshwater Fish

Freshwater fish have a long history of being used to assess the ecological health of aquatic ecosystems (Karr 1981, 1991). Fish integrate ecological conditions over biologically relevant spatial and temporal scales, and can be effectively used to assess ecological conditions following river restoration efforts (Trexler 1995; Toth et al. 1998). Restoration activities will directly influence the timing and magnitude of water delivery to the main channel and flood plain of the Northwest Fork. Such alterations are expected to directly influence assemblage structure and trophic dynamics of constituent freshwater fishes. Furthermore, because fish represent an ecologically, economically, and sociologically important resource, freshwater fish in the main channel and floodplain habitats should be monitored.

Recommendation – The monitoring of fish in the main channel and floodplain is recommended. The baseline monitoring should be defined in the NWFSP.

Freshwater Macroinvertebrates

Indices developed from evaluations of freshwater Macroinvertebrates help to comprehensively assess ecosystem health and vitality. Macroinvertebrates are known to respond to changing water quality conditions, which may not be detected by periodic water quality sampling. A long-term (1991 to present) record of macroinvertebrate assemblage composition, as measured through Hester-Dendy samplers, has been compiled in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River by the LRD. Continued monitoring of macroinvertebrates (especially select taxa, e.g., EPT taxa) will allow comparisons with the pre-restoration conditions.

Recommendation – The monitoring of macroinvertebrates within the freshwater reach of the Northwest Fork should be continued.

RIVERINE FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION MONITORING

The riverine floodplain in the Northwest Fork lies between Riverbend Park (RM 15.5) and Trapper Nelson's (RM 10.2) and is dominated by several communities of freshwater vegetation. The preferred flows in this restoration plan simulate the dry (spring) and wet (fall) seasons which provide the appropriate length of inundation and soil moisture needed for the two indicator communities (flood plain swamp and hydric hammock). Transect 1 (RM 14.5), Transect 2 (RM 13.43), Transect 3 (RM 12.07) and Transect 4 (RM 11.18) are located in the floodplain and have been extensively studied. These four transects, and two others, were originally characterized for vegetation in 1983 and 1984 by the SFWMD (Worth, 1984). Subsequently, additional transect data were collected (Ward and Roberts, 1993-1994), and most recently a joint FDEP/SFWMD study (Roberts and Hedgepeth) was completed in 2003.

Recommendations – Continued monitoring of the riverine floodplain vegetative transects is necessary to identify changes in vegetative community composition and plant species distribution. Shrub and groundcover species should be relatively sensitive to improved hydrology thus, these shrub and groundcover changes should manifest within two to three years. Shrub and groundcover vegetation should be monitored at least every three years. Canopy species are longer lived and slower to respond; therefore, canopy species along transects should be examined every 6 years to assess community health and composition. Routine monitoring at Transect 1 and Transect 3 is necessary. Transect 1 is located just downstream of Lainhart Dam and is an indicator of health of the upper reaches of the freshwater riverine floodplain area. It is not tidally influenced so stage is directly correlated with flows over Lainhart Dam. There are no issues of salinity intrusion in the water column or soils. It is considered to be a reasonably healthy ecological area given a Wetlands Evaluation Summary (WRAP) score of 0.81 (out of a maximum of 1.0) in summer of 2004 by a team of wetland experts. The unique location of this transect along with groundwater monitoring, easy access for data collection, and a healthy WRAP score, support the use of this transect for long term monitoring activities. Transect 3 is downstream of Masten Dam. Like Transect 1, flows over Lainhart Dam influence water stages at this transect. Although stage at this site can be tidally influenced, there is no evidence of impact from saltwater intrusion this far upstream. This site has similar vegetation and ecosystem quality to the other transects downstream from Masten Dam yet it is far enough downstream from Masten Dam that it is not subject to the rapid water stage changes evident near Masten Dam. As an intermediate location between Transect 2 and Transect 4, it is an appropriate site for long-term monitoring for this portion of the floodplain. Data should be collected on a routine basis from Transect 2 and Transect 4 to provide a complete set of data.

TIDAL FLOODPLAIN VEGETATION MONITORING

The tidal floodplain is identified as the section of the Northwest Fork floodplain that lies between Trapper Nelson's (RM 10.2) at the upstream end and RM 4.5 at the downstream

terminus. This section presently contains primarily brackish water vegetation. It has two segments including the “upper tidal” between RM 10.20 and RM 8.02, and the “lower tidal” occurring between RM 8.02 and RM 4.50. Three transects, Transect 6 (RM 8.43), Transect 7 (RM 9.10) and Transect 9 (RM 6.46), are located in tidal floodplain. River water levels in the tidal floodplain are influenced mostly by the tides; however water levels can also be affected by flows from Lainhart Dam, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek. Historical vegetation information is available for Transects 6 and 9 (Worth 1984; Ward and Roberts 1994; and Roberts and Hedgepeth 2003). Transect 7 and Transect 9 are the most appropriate locations to conduct routine monitoring for evaluation of biological constituents. Transect 7 has four groundwater and soil moisture monitoring stations across from the eastern end of Hobe Grove Ditch. It is an area of vegetative transition from freshwater to brackish water communities resulting from saltwater intrusion, changes in elevation, and historical logging. In addition, a USGS tide and monitoring station is located at RM 9.1. Transect 9 is on a peninsula adjacent to the JDSP boat ramp with three groundwater monitoring wells. This area, studied by Taylor Alexander from 1967 through 1971 and reexamined in 2003 (Roberts and Hedgepeth), has experienced losses of bald cypress and cabbage palms and is now primarily red and white mangroves. Ongoing studies indicate some of the highest salinity and sulfide levels in the Northwest Fork exist on this transect due to the lack of water exchange and flushing within the interior of the peninsular.

Recommendation – Monitoring the tidal floodplain transects is necessary to determine changes in species compositions and distributions. This area will experience an appreciable reduction in salinities from restoration flows and therefore a noticeable response in vegetation is expected. It is recommended that shrub and groundcover species be examined every three years and canopy species every six years.

SOIL MONITORING

The SFWMD has supported the University of Florida (UF), Tropical Research and Education Center to determine relationships among floodplain vegetation, surface water and groundwater stage and salinity as well as soils. Additionally, the rate of soil moisture change at depth after inundation of the floodplain will be ascertained. Soil salinity from the surface 20 cm at 10 vegetation transects is being evaluated. Soil cores from each vegetation transect are also being used in laboratory studies to determine salinity movement during controlled rainfall conditions. Some of the results are included in **Appendix I**.

Recommendation – Monitoring soil moisture and salinity is necessary to determine the effectiveness of restorative flows. The special study establishes the base condition. Continued monitoring is needed to analyze soil moisture and salinity response to the hydrologic restoration.

ESTUARINE ECOSYSTEM MONITORING

OLIGOHALINE (LOW SALINITY ZONE) ECOZONE: FISH MONITORING

Environmental requirements of fish larvae in the Northwest Fork Low Salinity Zone (LSZ, RM 6.0 to RM 10.2) were used to determine potential affects of restoration flow alternatives. A hydrodynamic phenomenon that frequently occurs in the LSZ (0 ppt to 10 ppt) of many estuarine systems concentrates suspended materials and zooplankton, including fish larvae, causing a turbidity maximum. Fish larvae within the turbidity maximum have an increased probability of survival due to the presence of abundant prey and limited predation during a critical portion of their life history. Recent zooplankton sampling in the Northwest Fork reveals the greatest concentration of zooplankton occurred during the dry season (spring), upstream of RM 6.0 within

a salinity range of 2 pt to 8 ppt. The Preferred Restoration Flow Scenario moved the LSZ and associated habitat of fish larvae downstream during the dry season (spring) with minimal impact on this resource.

RECOVER (CERP 2004) intends to document the long-term affects of implementing improved water management capabilities in the Loxahatchee River Watershed on tidally influenced, juvenile and adult transient and resident species associated with various habitats. These habitats include various bottom types (i.e. mud, sand, oysters), herbaceous vegetation, and forested shoreline habitats. Additionally, a statement of work to monitor juvenile and adult fishes in the estuary is being developed and should be evaluated for its applicability to the NWFSP. The NWFSP will provide the bases for this evaluation.

Recommendation – To determine the effects of the restoration flows, flora (vegetative transects) and fauna (fish larvae, amphibians, and macroinvertebrates) and water quality parameters in this portion of the Loxahatchee River need to be monitored. The results and recommendations derived from the NWFSP should be coordinated with RECOVER efforts.

MESOHALINE ECOZONE: OYSTER MONITORING

The LRD, SFWMD and the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) are working cooperatively to assess the oyster resources in the Loxahatchee Estuary. To support the Monitoring and Assessment Program (MAP) component of RECOVER, a long-term oyster monitoring program is being developed by FWRI. A pilot study will determine final monitoring locations and methodologies. This effort will focus on four aspects of oyster ecology: (1) spatial and size distribution patterns of adults, (2) distribution and frequency patterns of the oyster diseases *Perkinsus marinus* (“dermo”) and *Haplosporidium nelsoni* (MSX), (3) reproduction and recruitment, and (4) juvenile oyster growth and survival. Maps of oyster beds, density and health will be produced at routine intervals.

Recommendation – To enhance the probability that appropriate oyster mapping and monitoring for this plan are conducted, the results and recommendations derived from the NWFSP should be coordinated with RECOVER efforts.

POLYHALINE ECOZONE: SEAGRASS MONITORING

The SFWMD monitored seagrasses at four locations within the Loxahatchee Estuary from February 1986 through March 1988 (**Figure 10-2**). This monitoring was part of an effort to determine the environmental changes that may occur with increased flows into the Northwest Fork. The LRD and SFWMD began a monthly seagrass monitoring program in the summer of 2003 (see **Chapter 4, Figure 4-9**) to determine seasonal variability of seagrass and macro algae and response of seagrass to freshwater flows (see details in **Chapter 4**). This seagrass monitoring is being conducted by LRD through summer of 2006. At that time, monitoring results will be evaluated to determine if any changes are needed in the monitoring program design.

Recommendation – Monitoring seagrass density, diversity, and coverage in relation to environmental parameters will document affects of restoration efforts and may provide information for a seagrass model. It is recommended that the results from the LRD study be implemented and an evaluation of baseline seagrass observations made in the 1980s be conducted for comparison with current observations.



Figure 10-2. Locations of the Four South Florida Water Management District Historic Seagrass Monitoring Sites.

The LRD and SFWMD began a monthly seagrass monitoring program in the summer of 2003 (see **Chapter 4, Figure 4-9**) to determine seasonal variability of seagrass and macro algae and response of seagrass to freshwater flows (see details in **Chapter 4**). This seagrass monitoring is being conducted by LRD through summer of 2006. At that time, monitoring results will be evaluated to determine if any changes are needed in the monitoring program design.

Recommendation – Monitoring seagrass density, diversity, and coverage in relation to environmental parameters will document affects of restoration efforts and may provide information for a seagrass model. It is recommended that the results from the LRD study be implemented and an evaluation of baseline seagrass observations made in the 1980s be conducted for comparison with current observations.

Seagrass Mapping

Past and present seagrass mapping efforts are detailed in **Chapter 4**. These maps provide an understanding of large-scale seagrass distribution changes throughout the Loxahatchee River Estuary from the early 1980s to present. Methods currently being used include mapping seagrass signatures through the interpretation of true color aerial photography, groundtruthing, and an analytical stereoplotter.

Seagrass mapping is being conducted by the LRD which is funded by CERP (RECOVER 2004). In 2003/2004 the LRD produced a species-specific seagrass map using detailed groundtruthing and sub-meter accuracy GPS technology that was extremely useful as baseline information. Currently, all seagrass mapping and monitoring in CERP are being evaluated to determine if changes should be made to these monitoring programs.

Recommendations – Future seagrass mapping efforts are necessary to document and understand the environmental conditions that cause variability of seagrass species distribution and should include the following recommendations:

- (1) Future seagrass mapping should cover the area from the Jupiter Inlet (RM 0.0) to RM 4.0 to capture all seagrass habitats in the estuary,
- (2) Presently, IRL seagrass beds are mapped by the SJRWMD and SFWMD every two to three years from aerial photographs. This effort should be continued. However, these efforts do not map species distribution that could reveal important subtle affects of flow regime changes. This information is needed and should be determined in concert with ongoing mapping. New technologies that aerially differentiate seagrass species should be explored and implemented to reduce cost of species-specific mapping.
- (3) To enhance the probability that appropriate seagrass mapping and monitoring for this plan are conducted, the results and recommendations derived from the NWFSP should be coordinated with RECOVER efforts.

BENTHIC MACROINVERTEBRATE MONITORING

The SFWMD collected benthic macroinvertebrate samples every other month at five locations from February 1986 through March 1988 (**Figure 10-3**).



Figure 10-3. South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Sites (1986 – 1988).

The LRD collected a set of benthic macroinvertebrate samples in the dry season (February) and the wet season (October) from 1992 to 1999 at nine stations in the watershed (see **Chapter 2, Figure 2-6**). Two additional stations (B69 and B67) were monitored from 1999 to present. During the 2004 monitoring period, two hurricanes occurred (Frances and Jeanne) providing valuable information on the response of macroinvertebrates to storm events. Species composition

has been determined for most of the LRD samples and for all of the SFWMD samples. These data are being evaluated to determine trends and the identification of macroinvertebrate polyhaline indicator species.

Recommendation – Results of the macroinvertebrate evaluation should be used to develop a monitoring program that satisfies the requirements of the NWFSP.

SYNOPSIS OF EXISTING MONITORING PROGRAMS

Table 10-4 summarizes information concerning existing monitoring programs. All of the data collection methods and sampling frequency of these programs will be reviewed in light of the information needed and justified in the NWFSP.

Table 10-4. Summary of Existing Monitoring Programs and Sampling Frequencies for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Parameter	Monitoring Frequency						Responsible Agency
	Continuous	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	3 Yrs	6 Yrs	
Systemwide Components							
Watershed Rainfall	X						SFWMD/LRD
Rainfall on floodplain	X						SFWMD/LRD
Water Quality parameters		X (every 2 months)					LRD/SFWMD
Groundwater stage of floodplain	X						SFWMD/JDSP
Flow and stage over Lainhart Dam	X						SFWMD/USGS
Flow from other tributaries	X						SFWMD
Tide and Salinity	X						USGS/LRD/ SFWMD
Floodplain Ecosystems							
Fauna: amphibians					X		JDSP
Fauna: birds					X		JDSP
Fauna: mammals					X		JDSP
Fauna: Fish					X		JDSP/SFWMD
Vegetation: groundcover					X		JDSP/SFWMD
Vegetation: canopy						X	JDSP/SFWMD
WRAP evaluation						X	JDSP/SFWMD
Estuarine Ecosystems							
Oligohaline: fish larvae				X			SFWMD
Mesohaline: oysters				X			SFWMD/LRD
Polyhaline: seagrasses		X		X			LRD/SFWMD
Macroinvertebrates				X (Every six months)			JDSP/LRD/ SFWMD

SPECIAL STUDIES

Special studies are designed to answer specific questions identified in the NWFSP in a short time to assist in initial adaptive management efforts or to reduce uncertainties associated with plan development.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED AND ESTUARINE MODELING

A key factor in the restoration of freshwater vegetation habitats is the affect of restoration flows on soil salinity and hydroperiod in the floodplain. To predict these affects, a model needs to be developed that integrates floodplain flows with surface water and groundwater exchanges. Supported by the FDEP and SFWMD, a model is being developed by the University of Central Florida (UCF). This new model will integrate the existing estuarine surface water model to simulate surface and groundwater movement, stage and quality in the river and floodplain.

Monitoring programs recommended in this chapter will provide data needed to calibrate the integrated model. The close coordination between modeling teams and the continued support from the SFWMD and FDEP is paramount to completing this extremely important water management tool.

As more water quality data become available, water quality models will need to be developed for the Loxahatchee River Watershed and Estuary. These models will become essential tools to evaluate change in flows and nutrient loading on the water quality status in the Northwest Fork.

JONATHAN DICKINSON STATE PARK VEGETATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

This study by FPS at JDSP will evaluate the success of restoration and growth of desirable native vegetative species in areas aggressively managed for exotics removal. Exotic removal was conducted in the designated locations in April/May 2003 near RM 8.6. The target area success criteria is to achieve 80% success in survival of planted species and 80% coverage of desirable obligate and facultative wetland species after five years. The evaluation effort is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2007.

VEGETATION RESPONSE TO SEVERE STORMS OR DROUGHTS

The high winds and flooding in the Northwest Fork floodplain from Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in 2004 and Hurricane Wilma in 2005 destroyed canopy trees, understory vegetation and ground cover. Routine assessments of the impacted vegetative communities by FPS at JDSP will help document system response and recovery from these types of extreme weather events.

CYPRESS SEEDLING STUDIES

This study is designed to determine how cypress seedlings are affected by salt water and is being conducted by University of Florida. Because salinity levels in the riverine floodplain will decrease when restoration flows are implemented, the salt tolerance of bald cypress seedlings is an important aspect of restoration. The study will be completed in 2008.

SYSTEM RESPONSE TO RAINFALL EVENTS AND DROUGHTS

Special studies are necessary to document short term changes of water quantity and quality of watershed runoff from various rainfall events. This information, collected concurrently with estuarine water quality, will provide data needed to calibrate an estuarine water quality model used to develop Pollution Load Reduction Goals (PLRGs) and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).

MESOCOSM STUDIES

This plan has demonstrated the importance of understanding salinity tolerances of seagrass species to evaluate the potential impacts of alternative inflow regimes. A recent, extensive literature search provided sufficient seagrass salinity tolerance information for several species to conduct this evaluation, however, it has also revealed a paucity of information on several important species such as Johnson's seagrass and manatee grass. Controlled laboratory studies need to be conducted to determine the response of these species to various salinity regimes. With this additional information available, the existing monitoring and mapping efforts in concert with salinity tolerances of these species will reveal the level of detailed data needed to better evaluate restoration flow scenarios.

OYSTERS

The distribution and abundance of oysters in relation to salinity has been determined for the Northwest Fork. The oyster model predicts the preferred restoration flow alternative will move the suitable salinity environment downstream with minimum impact on the majority of oyster beds. However, mitigation for the oyster beds lost upstream from RM 4.0 can be addressed by providing substrate (cultch) in the area near RM 4.0. An investigation needs to be undertaken to determine locations and sizes of oyster beds that can be created. Once implemented, the success of this oyster bed creation project should be documented.

FISH LARVAE

The preferred restoration flow scenario augments dry season flows in a pulsing fashion that simulates the hydrograph of a small rainstorm event to benefit estuarine fish larvae. This is one of the most important and frequently used water management techniques recommended in this plan. However, an appropriate, environmentally sensitive way to implement this concept has not been determined. A special study to document the riverine floodplain response to short-term changes in water levels and the impact on fish larvae dynamics within the LSZ during the dry season should be conducted during controlled pulse releases from Lainhart Dam.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecological monitoring is essential to evaluate the effects of quantity, quality, timing and distribution of increased dry season flows and improved wet season flows in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. As flows change over time, the response of the biological communities must be also measured. Along with these long-term monitoring activities, special studies will also be identified to address specific issues associated with the Restoration Plan. The information obtained shall be used to support adaptive management processes by modifying water resources operation protocols. The Northwest Fork Science Plan will provide a framework to integrate information derived from on-going studies and needed future efforts to enhance the evolution of the adaptive water management process. The status of this process will be reported to the public every five years. As more information is obtained, 5-year updates to the Restoration Plan will also be necessary.

CHAPTER 11

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
CERP NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY PROJECT	4
NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY – PART 1.....	4
NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY – PART 2.....	5
FLOWS TO THE NORTHWEST FORK OVER LAINHART DAM.....	5
TRIBUTARY FLOWS TO THE NORTHWEST FORK.....	5
REGULATORY IMPLEMENTATION.....	6
MINIMUM FLOWS AND LEVELS RULE.....	6
INITIAL WATER RESERVATIONS	6
PROJECT WATER RESERVATIONS.....	7
OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS	8
MONITORING AND AN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.....	8
ADDITIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES.....	9
SFWMD ACTIVITIES	9
Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan	9
Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan.....	10
PARTNERS IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.....	11
Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service, Jonathan Dickinson State Park.....	11
Loxahatchee River District	12
Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council.....	13
Martin County and Palm Beach County	13
Local Municipalities.....	14
South Indian River Water Control District	14
Jupiter Inlet District	14
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council	14
Florida Inland Navigational District	15
United States Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service	15
Private and Special Interest Groups	15

Chapter 11

Implementation of the Restoration Plan

INTRODUCTION

The need for restoration flows to the Northwest Fork has been recognized for many years. In 1973, the USGS calculated the Northwest Fork needed 50 cfs over Lainhart Dam to retard further movement of saltwater into freshwater portion of the Northwest Fork at RM 10. This rate was established as the official operation and management flow target and has been used by the SFWMD since that time. The results from detailed studies of the Loxahatchee River Watershed, which began in the mid-1990s led to the development of analytic tools that made modeling of the system possible (Dent and Ridler 1997). In the mid-1990s, a multi-agency team of resource managers estimated that a dry season flow of approximately 65 cfs, over the Lainhart Dam, to the Northwest Fork was necessary to protect resources from the effects of upstream incursion of salt water. This flow was used as the target for the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (NPBCWMP; SFWMD 2002b). In 2002, a “minimum flow” of 35 cfs across Lainhart Dam was identified by the SFWMD as the amount of water needed to protect the remaining freshwater floodplain vegetation along the Northwest Fork from significant harm caused by saltwater intrusion (SFWMD 2002a).

In 2003, work began by FDEP and SFWMD, along with the Loxahatchee River District (LRD), on the development of a “practical restoration plan and goal” for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Best available data, additional field studies and current models were used to evaluate a series of flow scenarios and their effects on the freshwater, tidal and estuarine reaches of the river system as described in this report. A flow target (goal) for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River is established with the intent to protect the existing freshwater riverine floodplain, restore a remaining portion of the river’s historic cypress floodplain forest, protect this resource from damage due to saltwater intrusion, re-establish freshwater vegetation in areas of the floodplain that have been impacted by saltwater intrusion, protect fish larvae habitat, and protect oysters and seagrasses in the estuarine reach of the Northwest Fork. Careful monitoring of the system will be required to evaluate the long-term effects of proposed changes in water levels, hydroperiods and flows on plant and animal communities that currently occupy the river floodplain. Flow adjustments may be necessary as more knowledge and experience is gained regarding these important resources.

The means for achieving the proposed flow targets are under development. Many individual projects and facilities and improved operations will be required during the next decade to achieve the restorative flows and ensure that the resources of the Northwest Fork reach their intended long-term goals. The primary mechanisms that will be used to plan and construct facilities needed to provide this additional water are the North Palm Beach County Project, Part 1 and Part 2 components, of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP NPBC, Part 1 and Part 2). However, additional support from many other activities and entities will be required to provide supplemental infrastructure, protect the ecosystem and to operate, manage and monitor this system.

CERP NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY PROJECT

The targets identified in this document address the quantity, timing and, distribution of water deliveries needed for the protection and restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, based on the best available information and up to date models. The next step in the process will be conducted under the auspices of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), North Palm Beach County (NPBC) Project, Part 1 and Part 2. To prevent delay to the projects, the CERP NPBC Project Implementation Report (PIR) was divided into two parts. Part 1 contains all the project features that do not involve Aquifer and Recovery (ASR) systems and Part 2 contains ASR system projects. Using the flow targets established in this plan for the Northwest Fork, the NPBC Project will evaluate various alternative methods for meeting these future water needs. When the analyses are completed by the USACE and the SFWMD, the infrastructure projects, operational protocols and regulations needed to meet these requirements will be identified.

CERP NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY PROJECT – PART 1

The CERP North Palm Beach County Project, Part 1 (CERP NPBC-Part 1) is a CERP component and includes elements or projects that were identified in the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan (Northern Plan). The CERP NPBC-Part 1 was expanded with additional elements that were included because of the larger regional scope and the 50-year design horizon of CERP. One of the goals of CERP NPBC-Part 1 is to provide 48,000 acre/feet of storage in the L-8 Basin reservoir. Storage in the L-8 Basin reservoir will increase dry season water availability for improved hydroperiods for the Loxahatchee Slough and restorative flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Another goal is to design and construct the facilities needed to reconnect and manage the water flows and levels within the Grassy Waters Preserve and Loxahatchee Slough, which were severed by the construction of various canals, roads and railways in the project area. In addition, wet season stormwater discharges to the Lake Worth Lagoon will be attenuated and drainage improvements will be provided for Indian Trail Improvement District.

The SFWMD recognized that many of the elements within the CERP NPBC-Part 1 Project are essential to deliver necessary dry season restorative flows to the Northwest Fork. Therefore, in parallel with the USACE CERP planning process, the SFWMD moved ahead with the design and construction of the G-160 - Loxahatchee Slough Structure, and the G-161 – Northlake Boulevard Structure, along with the acquisition of 47,000 ac/ft of storage in the L-8 Reservoir and preparations are taking place to start construction of the G-161, Northlake Blvd. structure. Other related improvements such as the widening of the M-Canal, and the relocation and expansion of the Control #2 (Loxahatchee) Pump Station, will also take place on this expedited path in partnership with the City of West Palm Beach. The SFWMD will coordinate with the USACE during the planning process to ensure the work performed by the SFWMD is included in the alternatives analysis and incorporated where appropriate in the selected plan, which will be documented in the Project Implementation Report (PIR). The contributions and significance of these components was clearly identified in the Northern Plan. It is anticipated that if these components continue to demonstrate their worth through the analysis of the PIR effort that they will be included in the recommendation to Congress for cost sharing consideration.

The Restoration Goal and Plan for the Northwest Fork have identified the amount, timing and distribution of restoration flows to be delivered by the CERP NPBC-Part 1 Project elements. The restoration flow target is being incorporated into the CERP NPBC-Part 1 modeling effort, which will evaluate the alternatives for water delivery to the Northwest Fork. The PIR currently being developed will identify the means and methods necessary to meet these future requirements. This

effort is underway by the SFWMD and the USACE and supported by other agencies, local governments, public and private entities.

CERP NORTH PALM BEACH COUNTY PROJECT – PART 2

The CERP North Palm Beach County Project – Part 2 (CERP NPBC-Part2) includes two separable elements: the C-51 Regional Groundwater ASR system and L-8 Basin ASR system. These projects will provide additional long-term storage within the NPBC region.

The C-51 Regional Groundwater ASR System project includes a series of ASR wells with a total capacity of 170 million gallons per day and associated pre- and post- water quality treatment to be constructed along the C-51 Canal and canals that can receive water from the C-51 Canal. The conceptual design assumes 34 well clusters, each with an individual capacity of 5 million gallons per day fed by a combination of vertical and horizontal wells located near existing canals. The conceptual design includes disinfections pre-treatment and post-storage aeration. The level and extent of treatment and number of the ASR wells may be modified based on findings from a proposed ASR pilot project. The purpose of this project is to capture and store excess flows from the C-51 Canal, currently discharged to the Lake Worth Lagoon, for later use during dry periods.

The L-8 Basin ASR System project includes ASR wells with a total capacity of 50 million gallons per day and associated pre- and post-water quality treatment to be constructed in combination with the L-8 Reservoir. The conceptual design consists of 10 wells, each with an individual capacity of 5 million gallons per day for a total capacity of 50 million gallons per day. The conceptual design includes disinfection pre-treatment and post-storage aeration. The level and extent of treatment and number of the ASR wells may be modified based on findings from a proposed ASR pilot project.

The purpose of these projects is to increase water supply availability, maintain or enhance flood protection for northern Palm Beach County areas, and moderate water level within the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area. It will also provide flows to enhance hydroperiods in the Loxahatchee Slough, increase base flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, and reduces high discharges to the Lake Worth Lagoon. During periods when the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area is above desirable stages, 50 million gallons per day will be diverted for storage in the ASR wells.

Flows to the Northwest Fork over Lainhart Dam

The next steps in the process are for the CERP NPBC Projects to: a) study the feasibility of the proposed flow targets, b) estimate the amount of supplemental water required to be delivered to the NW Fork and the tributaries, c) determine amount and location of storage facilities needed within the basin and d) identify ongoing or proposed projects or combinations of projects that can meet these needs. Projects that were initially identified as part of the Northern Plan (SFWMD 2002b) provide a starting point. Previous studies (SFWMD 2002a) indicated that these projects, when completed could provide a sustained dry-season flow of 65 cfs or more over the Lainhart Dam to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River approximately 94% of the time. The restoration target presented in this report requires flow in the range of 65-90 cfs over the Lainhart Dam during the dry season; therefore, some additional water supply sources may be required.

Tributary Flows to the Northwest Fork

Analyses are also needed to estimate water deliveries from the tributary systems of the Northwest Fork that are downstream of the Lainhart Dam without adverse impacts to these systems. The analysis and data represented in this document have outlined some general tributary flow targets from Cypress Creek (RM 10.33), Hobe Grove Ditch (RM 9.07) and Kitching Creek

(RM 8.13). It is anticipated that the restorative flows will reduce the migration of salt water without damaging the pristine floodplain wetlands in the upstream "Wild and Scenic" reaches of the Northwest Fork. In addition the preferred restoration flow scenario will not adversely impact the juvenile fish nurseries and the oysters or seagrasses in the estuarine reach of the Northwest Fork system. A combined dry season flow of approximately 30 cfs from the three main tributaries has been identified as a current flow. 60 cfs of combined flow has been estimated to be the target for the three downstream tributaries.

The planning process of CERP NPBC projects will further refine the flows from the tributaries downstream of the Lainhart Dam. This will include the quantities of water needed at different times of the year, the source(s) of additional flow volumes, and how these flows should be distributed among the tributary basins. As part of the CERP process, various water management options and combinations of options will be developed to determine the best solution. A more detailed project design for the selected alternative will be developed that includes estimates of project costs and project timeframes to provide supplemental flows.

REGULATORY IMPLEMENTATION

Regulatory impacts of the proposed flow targets are necessary to be defined and stated. The proposed flow targets may have implications on Consumptive Use Permitting within the watershed. The restoration flow targets for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River essentially provide a foundation for the determination of an additional demand on any "new" water captured or developed within the watershed. Any new facilities that provide additional water will need to be evaluated to determine how much of the additional water is needed to meet environmental resource protection criteria and how much may be available for allocation for consumptive uses. The SFWMD has various tools that can be used to protect natural water bodies from the effects of surface or ground water withdrawals.

MINIMUM FLOWS AND LEVELS RULE

The SFWMD MFL rule (CH 40E-8 F.A.C.) for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, adopted in 2003, identified a minimum flow of 35 cfs and developed a recovery plan that includes projects, regulatory tools and operational modifications to the river and watershed that will, over time, achieve a sustained flow of 65 cfs to the Northwest Fork, approximately 94% of the time. The SFWMD is presently in the process of developing additional minimum flow criteria for the major tributaries, including Loxahatchee Slough, Cypress Creek, Hobe Grove Ditch and Kitching Creek. This effort is scheduled to be completed in 2007.

INITIAL WATER RESERVATIONS

The Florida legislature has defined water reservations as one of several tools that can be used by water management districts to protect water resources potentially threatened by water supply development activities. Section 373.223(4) Florida Statutes provides the basis for establishing reservations as a means to protect fish and wildlife resources. The purpose of the initial reservation is to quantify the amount of existing water that is needed to protect fish and wildlife resources within the river and protect it from future consumptive uses. Water reserved under this statute is not available for allocation for consumptive uses. All presently existing legal uses of water will be protected so long as such use is not contrary to the public interest. Fish and wildlife resources are considered to be protected based on a suite of science-based environmental performance measures and targets that if met, will maintain healthy lake, wetland, riverine and/or estuarine communities. In March 2005, the SFWMD Governing Board approved staff's proposed

rule development schedule for establishment of an *initial water reservation* for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

An initial reservation addresses existing water resources that may be available for the protection of fish and wildlife resources. The District's approach for establishing the initial reservation for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River consists of the following key steps: a) define the area where the initial water reservation will be established, b) select the appropriate scale hydrologic model (i.e., regional or subregional) to perform the water quantification analyses, c) define environmental targets that equate to protection of fish and wildlife resources for the riverine floodplain and downstream estuary, d) define model assumptions in terms of existing conditions including protection of existing legal users, e) perform the model simulation and graphically display results in concert with the methods outlined in CERP Guidance Memorandum #4 (USACE 2005) to determine the quantity of existing water that is needed for protection of fish and wildlife, e) document all methods and results in a peer reviewed technical document, and f) based on the findings of the technical document, prepare draft rule language, conduct public rule development workshops and request Governing Board rule adoption.

If model results show that the amount of water that is currently being delivered to the river is needed for the protection of fish and wildlife, then that quantity of water shall be reserved from future consumptive use allocation. If the amount of existing water currently exceeds the amount needed for protection of fish and wildlife, then the additional water may be available for other uses. Initial reservations will be implemented through rule adoption and will ultimately be used as part of the District's consumptive use permitting and water shortage programs.

PROJECT WATER RESERVATIONS

The primary difference between an initial water reservation and a *project-specific water reservation* is that initial reservations are implemented under State law (Section 373.223(4) F.S.) and identify the amount of existing water that is needed for protection of fish and wildlife. In contrast, project reservations are largely a federal process based on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2000. These programmatic regulations are designed to quantify the amount of water that is captured or produced by a CERP or Acceler8 project, that can be delivered to a natural system, and that is needed for protection of fish and wildlife resources and other water related needs of the region. Guidance Memorandum #4 (USACE 2005) provides the methodology that will be used in the development of PIRs for identifying the appropriate quantity, timing and distribution of water dedicated and managed for the natural system and other water-related needs of the region.

If the analysis conducted for development of initial water reservations indicates that the amount of water currently delivered is less than the amount needed for protection of fish and wildlife, then an additional project-specific water reservation will be developed for any new regional water management facility that is constructed in the future in the Loxahatchee River watershed. Each project will include a design specification that identifies the amount of "new" water that will be captured or produced by the project. Based on this amount, some portion of this water may be "reserved" by the SFWMD Governing Board, to the extent that it contributes toward achieving the total amount of water needed to protect fish and wildlife. The SFWMD Governing Board may determine that the project also provides additional water, beyond the amount needed for protection of fish and wildlife resources, which can then be allocated to other water-related purposes, including consumptive uses.

OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS

The restorative flows presented in this document provide the foundation for and include a preliminary attempt to determine the operational feasibility of a proposed flow regime. The intent of such an analysis is to provide the SFWMD Operations Department with a procedure that can be used to regulate water deliveries from the C-18 Canal through the G-92 Structure, on a seasonal basis and in a manner that will provide the prescribed stages and flows in the downstream river floodplain. These operational protocols need to be translated into gate openings that are adjusted periodically, depending on the relative upstream and downstream water levels, and flows across Lainhart Dam. Management of water levels upstream of G-92 (Loxahatchee Slough) will also be needed, to ensure that sufficient water is available for dry season deliveries. This will require consideration of water deliveries through the South Indian River Water Control District structures and the G-160, Loxahatchee Slough Structure, as well as consideration of water elevations in the C-18 Canal. Operation protocols will be developed for the G-160-Loxahatchee Slough Structure, operation of adjacent culverts, the G-161-Northlake Boulevard Structure, the Grassy Waters Preserve/West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area, M-Canal, the C-2 (Loxahatchee) Pump Station, L-8 Canal and L-8 Reservoir, when all these projects are on line and fully functional.

The analysis conducted in this plan did not take water availability into consideration during the development of the restoration flow alternative for the Northwest Fork. The focus of the plan was to identify the flows necessary for the protection and restoration of the Northwest Fork and it was assumed that the additional water needed would be delivered through the G-92 structure from an undefined and unlimited upstream water source and from the tributaries downstream of the Lainhart Dam.

A more specific analysis of operational procedures will be required as part of the detailed design of the alternative plan selected by CERP NPBC-Part 1 and Part 2. An optimization analysis, similar to studies conducted in the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie watersheds, may be needed to determine the ability of the overall system of structures, storage areas, and flowways to meet water needs of the Northwest Fork. Such an analysis may also be needed to demonstrate the feasibility and cost of the plan and may also identify opportunities to provide additional water through improved operations of existing facilities.

MONITORING AND AN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The basis of the adaptive management approach to the implementation of this plan is described in **Chapter 10**. A Northwest Fork Science Plan (NWFSP) will be developed to identify the data needed to monitor and assess the riverine, tidal and estuarine reaches of the Northwest Fork. The NWFSP will outline specific activities required to measure water flows and evaluate long-term biological effects of the preferred restoration flow scenario. Upon adoption of the plan, a report will be compiled every five years that will identify observed changes and trends. The benefits of restorative flows to the system will be measured through monitoring. Data collection and analysis will ensure that adaptive management decisions will be scientifically based and documented.

The LRD has monitored water quality in the Loxahatchee River for several decades, gathering data on several parameters in addition to salinity. To avoid duplication the SFWMD has entered into a partnership agreement for cooperative efforts with the LRD in monitoring the water quality and seagrasses in the various reaches of the Northwest Fork, as well as the Central

Embayment and the Jupiter Inlet areas. These activities also will be incorporated into the science plan developed for the Northwest Fork.

Monitoring and assessment is a part of the NPBC CERP effort and implemented through, or in close coordination with, the CERP RECOVER program, which focuses on the estuarine resources of the Loxahatchee River. In addition, over the years SFWMD cost-share funds have supported USGS monitoring for the Loxahatchee River for salinity and other parameters.

ADDITIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

The following section identifies other State and Federal programs, agencies, local entities and public and private organizations that play an active role in carrying out the recommendations identified in this report. This restoration plan will be implemented through a variety of projects and plans, some of which are underway. Ultimately, the CERP NPBC Project will provide an analysis that shows incremental increases in water flow to the Northwest Fork over time as project facilities are constructed and become operational, associated construction costs to achieve the restorative flows, operation of various project facilities, and a list of other projects or activities that may provide additional water. This analysis will clearly show the linkage between the preferred restoration flow alternative and other ongoing and proposed activities by the SFWMD, CERP and the other partners identified below:

SFWMD ACTIVITIES

Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan

Initiated in 1995, the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan (Northern Plan) was accepted by the SFWMD Governing Board in May 2002 (SFWMD 2002b). The sub-regional Northern Plan focuses on the southern L-8 Basin, the City of West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area (WCA-1) or Grassy Waters Preserve, C-18, the Loxahatchee Slough, and the Loxahatchee River, especially the Northwest Fork. The plan projects future water supplies for urban, agricultural and environmental uses for the year 2020.

The Northern Plan calls for a series of system improvements to be constructed in the area of Palm Beach County located north of Southern Boulevard and south of the Martin-Palm Beach County line, generally east of the L-8 Levee, and west of I-95. When all the proposed system improvements are in place, the Northern Plan will provide the projected 2020 public water supply demands of the area, hydrologic restoration of the Loxahatchee Slough, and protection of the Grassy Waters Preserve and a target base flow of approximately 65 cubic feet per second (cfs), in the dry season, measured at the Lainhart Dam, to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Construction has started on several of the Northern Plan components: the Loxahatchee Slough structure (G-160) was completed in January 2004; design of the Northlake Boulevard structure (G-161) was initiated in 2004 with construction started in 2005; and, the regional reservoir storage at the Palm Beach Aggregates site was increased through acquisition to 47,000 acre feet in 2004. The Northern Plan forms the basis for the North Palm Beach County CERP Project, Part 1, (CERP NPBC Part 1). It is being implemented through partnerships with the City of West Palm Beach, Indian Trail Improvement District, and Palm Beach County. State Legislative appropriations have been allocated for construction of system improvements.

Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan

The SFWMD Governing Board adopted the *Lower East Coast Regional Water Supply Plan* (LEC Plan) in May 2000. The purpose of the LEC Plan is to fulfill the requirements of Section 373.0361, Florida Statutes (F.S.) for regional water supply plans. Implementation of the LEC Plan will do the following:

- Create a water supply that fully meets the future (2020) needs of almost seven million people, agriculture and industries during 1-in-10 year drought.
- Reduce the number of exceedances of Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) criteria for the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the Biscayne Aquifer by 2020.
- Reserve from allocations sufficient water to allow for the restoration of the Everglades and enhancement of other significant South Florida natural systems.
- Reduce the uncertainty for issuing long-term permits for water users as they invest in tomorrow's water supply infrastructure.
- Provide public forums to modernize District operational procedures and promote greater flexibility in the operation of the regional water management system.

Several LEC Plan recommendations also provide the foundation for various actions to protect and restore the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River:

- LEC Recommendation 21: L-8 Project
- LEC Recommendation 32: Periodic Operational Flexibility
- LEC Recommendation 34: Water Reservations
- LEC Recommendation 35: Establish MFLs

Upper East Coast Water Supply Plan

The *Upper East Coast Water Supply Plan* (UEC Plan) was completed in 1998 and updated in 2004. Implementation of the UEC Plan will accomplish the following:

- Identification of eight water source options, which are aquifer storage and recovery, conservation, Floridan aquifer, reclaimed water, reservoirs, seawater, surface water and surficial aquifer.
- With appropriate management and diversification of water supply sources sufficient water to meet the needs of the region during a 1-in-10 year drought condition through 2025 will be available.

Several UEC Plan recommendations also provide the foundation for various actions to protect and restore the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River:

- Recommendation 14: Continue implementation of the NPBCCWMP.
- Recommendation 15: Complete the CERP NPBC Project – Part 1 Project Implementation Report and implement the findings.
- Recommendation 16: Develop a restoration plan for the Loxahatchee River
- Recommendation 17: Establish an initial water reservation for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

- Recommendation 18: Review and revise the MFL and associated recovery strategy for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River by 2005.
- Recommendation 19: Establish MFLs for tributaries to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River

PARTNERS IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Park Service, Jonathan Dickinson State Park

The Florida Park Service District Five Office (FPS) staff worked closely with the SFWMD and the LRD to develop the preferred restoration flow scenario for the Northwest Fork. FPS personnel contributed important field work, knowledge and biological experience important to the success of the plan. Jonathan Dickinson State Park was opened in 1950 and consists of approximately 11,471 acres in Martin County and northern Palm Beach County. The park occupies much of the watershed and most of the floodplain of the federally designated Wild and Scenic portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. JDSP supports many unique natural features and significant cultural resources, including a 2,600 acre wilderness preserve and 2,100 acres of highly endangered scrub community. Fifteen natural communities occur within the unit, including six wetland communities. These natural features create an exceptional environment for plants and wildlife including many designated rare, threatened and endangered species.

The park has a management plan (FDEP 2000) that serves as the basic statement of policy and direction for management of JDSP as a unit of Florida's State Park System. The plan consists of three interrelated components; resource management, land use and operations. Park goals and objectives include preserving the park's natural resources, creating awareness and appreciation for the park, enhancing organized programs and increasing attendance and visitation. The resource management component provides a detailed inventory and assessment of the natural and cultural resources, management problems and needs, specific management objectives, and guidance on the application of specific measures such as prescribed burning, exotic species removal, and restoration of natural conditions. The land use component provides a recreational resource allocation plan that is based on considerations such as access, population and adjacent land uses, allocation of physical space, location of use areas, estimated usage and types of facilities to be provided. The management plan provides an important tool to direct restoration and protection needs and management activities across a major portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River within JDSP and to some extent the watershed.

In addition, the Loxahatchee River Estuary and adjacent areas of the Intracoastal Waterway south of the Jupiter Inlet are designated by the state as an Aquatic Preserve. The Loxahatchee River – Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve was adopted under Florida Statutes Section 258 by the State of Florida on November 2, 1970 and is managed by the FDEP, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA). Designation as an aquatic preserve provides a basis to support future management of this system in a natural state, including efforts to restore flows to the Northwest Fork and appropriate salinity regimes within the estuary. A management plan for this preserve was adopted in 1984. The aquatic preserves and JDSP are also identified by FDEP's Outstanding Florida Waters designation; hence these have the highest standards for protection of water quality within the river and estuary.

The collaboration and cooperation that was established through the development of the plan will extend in the future. Cooperative efforts include data collection, monitoring and analysis, evaluation of restorative flow effects and plan updates every five years.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

In July of 1996, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Southeast District Office organized the Loxahatchee River Watershed Planning Committee to develop a management plan for the Loxahatchee River Watershed. The goals and objectives were developed through public process that involved all stakeholders within the watershed, including local, state and federal agencies, environmental groups, businesses and private citizens. Environmental restoration projects, proposed and on-going, were identified by sub-basin and are listed and described in the action plan document. The Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan was published in October 2002.

Many of the projects identified in the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan have been accomplished through ongoing commitments by local, regional, state and federal agencies. The projects have ranged from exotic vegetation removal by Palm Beach County in the Loxahatchee Slough to retrofitted urban stormwater systems in the Town of Jupiter. In addition, important tracts of land have been purchased within the watershed by Martin County, Palm Beach County, and SFWMD.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER PRESERVATION INITIATIVE

The Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI) is one of the productive outcomes of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Action Plan effort spearheaded by FDEP in 1996. The LRPI was formed in 2000 with the single purpose of seeking appropriations from the state and federal governments for local projects that would improve and protect the natural resources within the Loxahatchee Watershed. Several key local projects, critical to preserving the long-term health of the Loxahatchee, have been implemented with LRPI funds, such as urban stormwater improvements and retrofits, exotic vegetation removal, and stormwater structure construction to upgrade water quantity and water quality discharges to the Loxahatchee. The state appropriations have provided incentives and maintained momentum to protect the Loxahatchee River through the funding of local projects. Eighteen projects are slated to be completed in 2006 with the support of \$3.5M in LRPI funds.

Loxahatchee River District

For three decades, the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) has provided regional wastewater management for a 73 square mile area that includes Tequesta, Jupiter, Juno Beach and unincorporated areas of northern Palm Beach and southern Martin counties. The LRD is recognized for its excellence in operations by the State of Florida and declared "Best in Nation" by the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, the LRD has been guided by its mission to preserve and protect the Loxahatchee River, Florida's first Wild & Scenic River through environmental management, river research, pollution control and environmental education. The LRD conducts research in the river and its watershed to focus on aquatic resources and water quality. Ongoing efforts monitor biological, chemical and physical trends in water quality, benthic invertebrates and seagrass communities in order to quickly identify and eliminate pollution sources and assess the general health of the river. In December 2004 the LRD and the SFWMD entered into a cooperative agreement to cost share on monitoring and to continue and enhance the established monitoring and data collection programs of the LRD. The LRD is a member of the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC) and has played an active role in the protection of the Loxahatchee River.

Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council

An outcome of the state and federal government actions to designate the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River as a National “Wild and Scenic River” was the formation of the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC) through state legislation. Comprised of regional, state, federal agency and local government representatives, it oversees the impacts of proposed development, tracks plans and programs in areas adjacent to the Northwest Fork and its corridor, and is responsible for the development of a management plan for the river.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Written by the FDEP and the SFWMD, and approved by the LRMCC, the SFWMD Governing Board and the Secretary of the FDEP, the *Loxahatchee National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan* (2000) ensures that special consideration be given to the watershed surrounding the river corridor so that it is protected to maintain natural flow conditions, good water quality and the preservation of high quality natural areas. The LRMCC oversees the update of plan every five years. The development of the plan update is shared by FDEP, FPS and the SFWMD to track the accomplishments of the member agencies and local governments and to identify new projects and programs, all of which are necessary for the protection and restoration of the Northwest Fork. The plan document was updated in 2000 and an updated plan document will be completed in 2006.

Martin County and Palm Beach County

These two county governments that comprise the Loxahatchee River watershed are important partners in efforts to effectively manage the Loxahatchee River. The counties own large tracts of land that are managed for protection and enhancement of natural resources and recreational uses. These entities also participate as partners with the SFWMD in regional land acquisition and management decisions. Counties and local governments also have primary authority for regulating land use decisions on privately-owned tracts within the watershed that are outside of municipal boundaries. Palm Beach County has played a significant role in the development and funding of Loxahatchee River related projects and has leadership responsibilities in the protection and maintenance of the Loxahatchee Slough, and Riverbend Park. Wetlands restoration in Riverbend Park may provide additional flows and water quality benefits to the Northwest Fork. Palm Beach County and Martin County have been an essential land acquisition partners with the SFWMD in accumulating land in Pal-Mar and other areas that will benefit the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

In addition, Cypress Creek/Pal-Mar and the Groves are two subbasins in the northern area of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. Cypress Creek and Hobe Grove Ditch are important sources of surface water flow to the Northwest Fork. The Martin County, SFWMD, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), FDEP, and Palm Beach County have teamed together, using funds from Martin County, the SFWMD and state appropriations through the LRPI to study these areas. Through Phase I of the study the following water resource related problems have been identified:

1. Upstream movement of salt water in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
2. Sediment loading in Cypress Creek and the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
3. Flooding in Ranch Colony during severe storms
4. Over drainage in the Pal-Mar wetlands.

Phase II of this analysis is underway with a set of models being developed that represent the hydrologic and hydraulic processes in Cypress Creek/Pal-Mar and the Groves basins. The models will provide a basis for solutions to the current problems of the area, such as, means to improve wetland management on the Pal-Mar property and to identify and manage discharge volumes from the Groves and from Cypress Creek to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Coordination with the SFWMD on the NPBC, Part 1 CERP Project studies is taking place to cost-share and increase information on this part of the Northwest Fork Watershed. Both Martin County and Palm Beach County are represented on the LRMCC.

Local Municipalities

The City of West Palm Beach owns and manages the Grassy Waters Preserve/West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area to provide for urban water supply and to protect the environmental resources of the 20 square mile area. The City is a partner with the SFWMD and other agencies in the development and construction of facilities that will provide historic hydrologic connections between the Grassy Waters Preserve, the Loxahatchee Slough and the Northwest Fork.

The Town of Jupiter has established a stormwater utility to retrofit the stormwater systems within the incorporated limits of the Town. Through local commitments and state appropriations older systems are being replaced with facilities that will improve drainage and at the same improve the quality of the water entering the Loxahatchee River.

The Town of Jupiter and the Village of Tequesta are located in the immediate watershed of the Loxahatchee River and therefore are represented on the LRMCC.

South Indian River Water Control District

The South Indian River Water Control District (SIRWCD) serves the Jupiter Farms area, which is approximately 10,315 acres in size and drains primarily to the Northwest Fork. Through a partnership with the SFWMD and state appropriations through the LRPI control structures have been installed that provide improved control of discharges from the SIRWCD system to the Northwest Fork. The SIRWCD will continue to participate in projects that will improve and protect the Northwest Fork through participation on the LRMCC and the LRPI committee.

Jupiter Inlet District

Jupiter Inlet District (JID) has developed a Management Plan that outlines their role in the management of the Loxahatchee River. This plan is intended to continue public recreational uses, improve the productivity of the river, and preserve and enhance the natural resources and multiple uses of the Loxahatchee River for which JID has authority (JID 1993). The plan addresses the portion of the Loxahatchee River west of the Florida East Coast Railroad trestle including the Central Embayment, North Fork, Northwest Fork, Southwest Fork, C-18 Canal downstream of the S-46 Structure, and minor tributaries. Thirty prioritized options were included in the plan. Specific actions that have been taken include the restoration of four oxbows in the Northwest Fork to preserve natural hydrological functions, an environmental enhancement project for Sim's Creek, and seagrass bed monitoring. The Jupiter Inlet District is a member of the LRMCC and the LRPI committee.

Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) provides a regional forum where elected and appointed leaders regularly come together to discuss complex regional issues; develop strategic regional responses for resolving them; and build consensus for setting and accomplishing regional goals. The Council provides an effective forum to assist the state and

local governments in guiding land use and development activities. Elected officials serve annual terms, and gubernatorial appointees serve three-year terms. TCRPC is made up of nineteen elected officials and nine gubernatorial appointees. The mission of the TCRPC is to encourage and enable local units of government and citizenry to assemble and cooperate with one another and with representatives of major economic interests, to promote health, safety, and general welfare of the citizenry, and to plan for future development of the Region that will keep it competitive and afford a high quality of life.

In 1994, recognizing the importance of protecting the remaining wetland resources in the Loxahatchee River Watershed, TCRPC and Martin County conducted the Loxahatchee River Basin Wetland Planning Project (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1999), which was funded by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to identify wetlands in the Loxahatchee River Watershed and provide information about the functions and values of these wetlands. The TCRPC conducted the Palm Beach County portion of the study, while Martin County completed the study in the Martin County area. The TCRPC is represented on the LRMCC.

Florida Inland Navigational District

The Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND) is a state entity that works in cooperation with federal programs to maintain public waterways. FIND has played an important role in funding dredging projects in the Loxahatchee Estuary.

United States Department of Interior, National Park Service

In May 1985, the largely pristine portion of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River was designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (USDOI/NPS) for inclusion in the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System, following creation of the Loxahatchee River Wild and Scenic Designation and Preservation Act, (Chapter 83-358, Laws of Florida, approved June 1983). The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River was the first river in the state of Florida to receive this designation. USDOI/NPS participates as a member of the LRMCC.

Private and Special Interest Groups

The SFWMD, FDEP and the LRD recognize that the Northwest Fork is important to the residents of the Loxahatchee River Watershed. Therefore, community participation was invited and encouraged in the development of this restoration plan. Community participation is equally important in all the stages of implementation of the plan and is critical to the success of restoration of the Northwest Fork. Members of the Loxahatchee River Coalition, Friends of the Loxahatchee River, Friends of Jonathan Dickinson State Park, 1000 Friends of Florida and the Florida Audubon Society participated in the many public meetings during the development of the plan. The active interest and continued participation of these community groups and others nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is critical to the success of the implementation of the plans, projects and programs designed to restore the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

GLOSSARY

1995 Base Case A model simulation, which provides an understanding of the how the 1995 water management system with 1995 land use and demands responds to historic (1965-1995) climatic conditions.

1-in-10 Year Drought A drought of such intensity, that it is expected to have a return frequency of once in ten years. A drought, in which below normal rainfall, has a 90 percent probability of being exceeded over a twelve-month period. This means that there is only a 10 percent chance that less than this amount of rain will fall in any given year.

1-in-10 Year Level of Certainty Probability that the needs for reasonable-beneficial uses of water will be fully met during a 1-in-10 year drought.

2020 Base Case A model simulation which provides information of how the 1995 water management system would respond to anticipated future operations and demands under historic (1965-1995) climatic conditions with currently authorized restoration projects implemented, but without Restudy features.

Achievable Restoration Goal The level of restoration can be achieved given the physical, structural, ecological (and cultural) constraints of the system.

Acre-foot The volume of water that covers one acre to a depth of one foot; 43,560 cubic feet; 1,233.5 cubic meters; 325,872 gallons.

Anthropogenic Resulting from human influence.

Aquatic Preserve Water bodies that are set aside by the state to be maintained in essentially natural or existing condition, for protection of fish and wildlife and public recreation so that their aesthetic biological and scientific values may endure for the enjoyment of future generations.

Aquifer A portion of a geologic formation or formations that yield water in sufficient quantities to be a supply source.

Aquifer System A heterogeneous body of intercalated permeable and less permeable material that acts as a water-yielding hydraulic unit of regional extent.

Available Supply The maximum amount of reliable water supply including surface water, groundwater and purchases under secure contracts.

Average Daily Demand A water system's average daily use based on total annual water production (total annual gallons or cubic feet divided by 365).

Average Rainfall Year A year having rainfall with a 50 percent probability of being exceeded over a twelve-month period.

Baseline Condition (see *Reference Condition*)

Baseline Period A specified period of time during which collected data are used for comparisons with subsequent data.

Basin (Surface Water) A tract of land drained by a surface water body or its tributaries.

Bathymetry The measurement of water depth at various places in a body of water.

Benthic Pertaining to the bottom or sediment habitats of a body of water.

Benthos/Benthic Macroscopic organisms that live on or in the bottom substrate, such as clams and worms (contrast to plankton and nekton).

Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) The amount of dissolved oxygen required to meet the metabolic needs of aerobic microorganisms in water rich in organic matter, such as sewage. Also known as Biochemical Oxygen Demand.

Biomass The amount of living material in a particular sample, population, area or volume of habitat, usually measured as dry mass.

Bioturbation The recycling of nutrients from lake sediments to the overlying water column caused by the burrowing and feeding activities of benthic invertebrates and fish.

Brackish Water with a chloride level greater than 250 mg/L and less than 19,000 mg/L.

Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project (C&SF Project) A complete system of canals, storage areas and water control structures spanning the area from Lake Okeechobee to both the east and west coasts and from Orlando south to the Everglades. It was designed and constructed during the 1950s by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide flood control and improve navigation and recreation.

Chironomids Any of a family (Chironomidae) of midges that lack piercing mouthparts.

Class I through V Surface Water Quality Standards As defined by Chapter 62-302.400, F.A.C., all surface waters in Florida have been classified according to designated use as follows:

Class I Potable water supplies

Class II Shellfish propagation or harvesting

Class III Recreation, propagation and maintenance of a healthy, well-balanced population of fish and wildlife

Class IV Agricultural water supplies

Class V Navigation, utility and industrial use

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) The framework and guide for the restoration, protection and preservation of the south Florida ecosystem. The CERP also provides for water-related needs of the region, such as water supply and flood protection.

Consumptive Use Use that reduces an amount of water in the source from which it is withdrawn.

Consumptive Use Permitting (CUP) The issuance of permits by the SFWMD, under authority of Chapter 40E-2, F.A.C., allowing withdrawal of water for consumptive use.

Control Structure A man-made structure designed to regulate the level/flow of water in a canal or water body (e.g., weirs, dams).

Critical Water Supply Problem Areas (see *Water Resource Caution Areas*)

Decomposition The action of microorganisms breaking down organic compounds into simpler ones, resulting in the release of energy.

Demand The quantity of water needed to be withdrawn to fulfill a requirement.

Demographic Relating to population or socioeconomic conditions.

Denitrification Reduction of nitrates or nitrites commonly by bacteria (as in soil) that usually results in the escape of nitrogen into the air.

Diatom Any of a class (Bacillariophyceae) of minute planktonic unicellular or colonial algae with silicified skeletons.

Discharge The rate of water movement past a reference point, measured as volume per unit time (usually expressed as cubic feet or cubic meters per second).

Dissolved Oxygen - The concentration of oxygen dissolved in water, sometimes expressed as percent saturation, where saturation is the maximum amount of oxygen that theoretically can be dissolved in water at a given altitude and temperature.

District Water Management Plan (DWMP) Regional water resource plan developed by the District under Ch. 373.036, F. S.

Districtwide Water Supply Assessment (DWSA) Document providing water demand assessments, projections and descriptions of the surface water and groundwater resources within each of the SFWMD's four planning areas.

Domestic Self-Supplied (DSS) Water Demand (*Same as Residential Self-Supplied Water Demand*) The water used by households whose primary source of water is private wells and water treatment facilities with pumpages of less than 0.10 million gallons per day.

Domestic Use Use of water for household purposes of drinking, bathing, cooking or sanitation.

Drainage District A locally constituted drainage, water management or water control district that is created by special act of the legislature and authorized under Ch. 298 F.S., to construct, complete, operate, maintain, repair and replace any and all works necessary to implement an adopted water control plan.

Drawdown The vertical distance a water level is lowered resulting from a withdrawal at a given point.

Drought A long period of abnormally low rainfall, especially one that adversely affects growing or living conditions.

Ecosystem Biological communities together with their environment, functioning as a unit.

Effective Rainfall The portion of rainfall that infiltrates the soil and is stored for plant use in the crop root zone, as calculated by the modified Blaney-Criddle model.

Emergent Macrophytes Wetland plants that extend above the water surface. Cattail and rushes are two examples.

Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) A permit issued by the SFWMD under authority of Chapter 40E-4 F.A.C. to ensure that land development projects do not cause adverse environmental, water quality or water quantity impacts.

Ephemeral Surface water that carries or water body that holds water only during and immediately after periods of rainfall.

Epiphytes Plants that derive their moisture and nutrients from the air and rain, usually growing on other plants.

Estuary The part of the wide lower course of a river where its current is met by ocean tides or an arm of the sea at the lower end of a river where fresh and salt water meet.

Eutrophic An aquatic environment enriched with nutrients, usually associated with high plant productivity and low oxygen levels.

Eutrophication The gradual increase in nutrients in a body of water. Natural eutrophication is a gradual process, but human activities may greatly accelerate the process.

Evapotranspiration (ET) Water losses from the surface of water and soils (evaporation) and plants (transpiration).

Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) An area of histosols (muck) extending south from Lake Okeechobee to the northern levee of WCA-3A, from its eastern boundary at the L-8 Canal to the western boundary along the L-1, L-2 and L-3 levees. The EAA incorporates almost 3,000 square kilometers (1,158 square miles) of highly productive agricultural land.

Everglades Construction Project (ECP) Twelve interrelated construction projects located between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. The cornerstone of the ECP is six large constructed wetlands known as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs). They use naturally occurring biological processes to reduce phosphorus that enters the Everglades. The ECP also contains four hydropattern restoration projects designed to improve the volume, timing and distribution of water entering the Everglades.

Everglades Protection Area This area is comprised of the Water Conservation Areas and Everglades National Park.

Everglades Stormwater Program A program to ensure that water quality standards are met at all structures not included in the Everglades Construction Project.

Exotic Plant Species A nonnative species that tends to out-compete native species and become quickly established, especially in areas of disturbance or where the normal hydroperiod has been altered.

Fauna All animal life associated with a given habitat.

Fiscal Year (FY) The South Florida Water Management District's fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 the following year.

Flatwoods (Pine) Natural communities that occur on level land and are characterized by a dominant overstory of slash pine. Depending on soil drainage characteristics and position in the landscape, pine flatwoods habitats can exhibit xeric to moderately wet conditions.

Floating Aquatic Vegetation (FAV) Wetland plants that have portions floating at or near the water surface but are rooted in substrate (e.g., water lily).

Flora All plant life associated with a given habitat.

Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) The Florida Administrative Code is the official compilation of the administrative rules and regulations of state agencies.

Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (FDACS) FDACS communicates the needs of the agricultural industry to the Florida Legislature, the FDEP, and the water management districts, and ensures participation of agriculture in the development and implementation of water policy decisions. FDACS also oversees Florida's soil and water conservation districts, which coordinate closely with the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) The SFWMD operates under the general supervisory authority of the FDEP, which includes budgetary oversight.

Florida Statutes (F.S.) The Florida Statutes are a permanent collection of state laws organized by subject area into a code made up of titles, chapters, parts and sections. The Florida Statutes are updated annually by laws that create, amend or repeal statutory material.

Florida Water Plan State-level water resource plan developed by the FDEP under Section 373.036 F.S.

Floridan Aquifer System (FAS) A highly-used aquifer system composed of the Upper Floridan and Lower Floridan Aquifers. It is the principal source of water supply north of Lake Okeechobee and the upper Floridan Aquifer is used for drinking water supply in parts of Martin and St. Lucie counties. From Jupiter to south Miami, water from the Floridan Aquifer System is mineralized (total dissolved solids are greater than 1,000 mg/L) along coastal areas and in southern Florida.

Flow The actual amount of water flowing by a particular point over some specified time. In the context of water supply, flow represents the amount of water being treated, moved or reused. Flow is frequently expressed in millions of gallons per day (MGD).

Food Web The totality of interacting food chains in an ecological community.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) The abstract representation of natural (or cultural) features of a landscape into a digital database, geographic information system.

Governing Board Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District.

Groundwater Water beneath the soil surface, whether or not flowing through known and definite channels.

Groundwater Heads Elevation of water table.

Harm As defined in Rule 40E-8, F.A.C., the temporary loss of water resource functions that results from a change in surface or groundwater hydrology and takes a period of one to two years of average rainfall conditions to recover.

Hectare A unit of measure in the metric system equal to 10,000 square meters (2.47 acres).

Hydrogeomorphology The scientific study of the physical appearance and operational character of a water body as it adjusts its boundaries to the magnitude of flow and erosional debris produced within the watershed.

Hydrological Alterations The lack of adequate seasonal water level fluctuations and an unnatural reversal of seasonal high and low water levels.

Hydrology The scientific study of the properties, distribution and effects of water on the earth's surface, in the soil and underlying rocks and in the atmosphere.

Hydropattern Water depth, duration, timing and distribution of fresh water in a specified area. A consistent hydropattern is critical for maintaining various ecological communities in wetlands.

Hydroperiod The frequency and duration of inundation or saturation of an ecosystem. In the context of characterizing wetlands, the term hydroperiod describes that length of time during the year that the substrate is either saturated or covered with water.

Hypoxic A deficiency of oxygen reaching the tissues of the body.

Incremental Simulations Model simulations performed to understand how the system would perform with partial completion of the Restudy projects and if the ability to meet the 1-in-10 year level of certainty criteria improves over time. Incremental years selected were, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

Indian River Lagoon Extending for 156 miles from north of Cape Canaveral to Stuart along the east coast of Florida, this lagoon is America's most diverse estuary, home to more than 4,000 plant and animal species.

Indicator Region A grouping of model grid cells within the SFWMM consisting of similar vegetation cover and soil type. By grouping cells, the uncertainty of evaluating results from a single two by two, square mile grid cell that represents a single water management gage is reduced.

Infiltration The movement of water through the soil surface into the soil under the forces of gravity and capillarity.

Inorganic Involving neither organic life nor the products of organic life; relating to or composed of chemical compounds not containing hydrocarbon groups.

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Agricultural branch of the University of Florida that performs research, education and extension.

Intrusion (see *Saline Water or Saltwater Intrusion*)

Invasive Exotic Species Species of plants or animals that are not naturally found in a region (nonindigenous). They can sometimes aggressively invade habitats and cause multiple ecological changes, including the displacement of native species.

Irrigation The application of water to crops and other plants by artificial means.

Isohaline Zone Transition between the saltier mesohaline and the fresher oligohaline habitats.

Lagoon A body of water separated from the ocean by barrier islands, with limited exchange with the ocean through inlets.

Lake Okeechobee Largest freshwater lake in Florida. Located in central Florida, the lake measures 730 square miles and is the second largest freshwater lake wholly within the United States.

Levee An embankment to prevent flooding or a continuous dike or ridge for confining the irrigation areas of land to be flooded.

Level of Certainty Probability that the demands for reasonable-beneficial uses of water will be fully met for a specified period of time (generally taken to be one year) and for a specified condition of water availability (generally taken to be a drought event of a specified return frequency). For preparing regional water supply plans, the goal associated with identifying the water supply demands of existing and future reasonable beneficial uses is based on meeting those demands for a drought event with a 1-in-10 year return frequency.

Limnology The scientific study of bodies of fresh water for their biological, physical and geological properties.

Littoral Of, relating to, situated or growing on or near a shore.

Load Concentration times flow.

Macrophytes Visible (non-microscopic) plants found in aquatic environments. Examples in south Florida wetlands include sawgrass, cattail, sedges and lilies.

Marsh A frequently or continually inundated non-forested wetland characterized by emergent herbaceous vegetation adapted to saturated soil conditions.

Mesocosm An experimental approach to quantify the responses of a whole plant and animal community.

Mesohaline Term to characterize waters with salinity of 5 to 18 parts per thousand, due to ocean-derived salts.

Microorganism A microscopic organism, including bacteria, protozoans, yeast, viruses and algae.

Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) The point at which further withdrawals would cause significant harm to the water resources.

Muck Dark, organic soil derived from well-decomposed plant biomass.

National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) A nationally established reference for elevation data.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) An agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides technical assistance for soil and water conservation, natural resource surveys and community resource protection. Formerly the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

Nekton Macroscopic organisms swimming actively in water, such as fish (contrast to plankton).

Nitrification The oxidation (as by bacteria) of ammonium salts to nitrites and the further oxidation of nitrites to nitrates.

Nitrogen Fixation The metabolic assimilation of atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia by soil microorganisms and especially rhizobia.

Nonpoint source Source originating over broad areas, such as areas of fertilizer and pesticide application or leaking sewer systems, rather than from discrete points.

North American Vertical Datum (NAVD) The official civilian vertical control datum (reference for elevation data) for surveying and mapping activities in the United States.

Nutrient Cycle The cyclic conversions of nutrients from one form to another within the biological communities. A simple example of such a cycle would be the production and release of molecular oxygen (O_2) from water (H_2O) during photosynthesis by plants and the subsequent reduction of atmospheric oxygen to water by the respiratory metabolism of other biota. The cycle of nitrogen is much more complex, with the nitrogen atom undergoing several changes in oxidation state (N_2 , NO_3^- , $R-NH_2$ and NH_4 , among others) during the cycling of this element through the biological community, and into the air, water or soil and back.

Nutrients Organic or inorganic compounds essential for the survival of an organism. In aquatic environments, nitrogen and phosphorus are important nutrients that affect the growth rate of plants.

Oligohaline Term to characterize water with salinity of 0.5 to 5.0 parts per thousand, due to ocean-derived salts.

Oligotrophic An aquatic environment depleted of nutrients, resulting in low plant productivity.

Organics Involving organic or products of organic life; relating to or composed of chemical compounds containing hydrocarbon groups.

Outflow The act or process of flowing out of.

Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) A special category of water bodies within the state that have been defined by FDEP, based on Section 403.0619270, F.S., to be worthy of special protection because of their natural attributes.

Pelagic Zone Open water zone.

Per Capita Use Total use divided by the total population served.

Periphyton The biological community of microscopic plants and animals attached to surfaces in aquatic environments. Algae are the primary component in these assemblages, which naturally reduce phosphorus levels in water and serve a key function in Stormwater Treatment Areas.

Performance Measure Performance measures quantify how well or how poorly an alternative meets a specific objective. Good performance measures are quantifiable, have a specific target, indicate when a target has been reached, and measure the degree to which the goal has been met.

Permeability Defines the ability of a substrate to transmit fluid.

Phosphorus (P) An element that is essential for life. In freshwater aquatic environments, phosphorus is often in short supply; increased levels can promote the growth of algae and other plants.

Photosynthesis The process in green plants and certain other organisms by which carbohydrates are synthesized from carbon dioxide and water using light as an energy source.

Phytoplankton The floating, usually minute, plant life of a body of water.

Planktonic The free-floating or weakly swimming minute animal and plant life of a body of water.

Point Source Any discernible, confined and discrete conveyance from which pollutants are or may be discharged, including, but not limited to, any pipe, ditch, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, concentrated animal feeding operation or vessel or other floating craft. This term does not include agricultural stormwater discharges and return flows from irrigated agriculture.

Pollutant Loading Influx of a chemical or nutrient that contaminates air, soil or water.

Pollutant Load Reduction Goal (PLRG) Targeted reduction in pollutant loading to a water body needed to achieve watershed management goals.

Potable Water Water that is safe for human consumption.

Potentiometric Head The level to which water will rise when a well is pierced in a confined aquifer.

Potentiometric Surface An imaginary surface representing the total head of groundwater.

Public Water Supply (PWS) Utilities that provide potable water for public use.

Public Water Supply Demand All potable water supplied by regional water treatment facilities with pumpage of 0.5 million gallons per day or more to all customers, not just residential.

Rationing Mandatory restrictions of a resource sometimes used under drought or other emergency conditions.

Reasonable-Beneficial Use Use of water in such quantity as is necessary for economic and efficient utilization for a purpose, which is both reasonable and consistent with the public interest.

Reclaimed Water Water that has received at least secondary treatment and basic disinfection and is reused after flowing out of a domestic wastewater treatment facility.

RECOVER A comprehensive monitoring and adaptive assessment program formed to perform the following for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program: restoration, coordination and verification.

Recreational Self-Supplied Water Demand The water used for landscape and golf course irrigation. The landscape subcategory includes water used for parks, cemeteries and other irrigation applications greater than 0.1 million gallons per day. The golf course

subcategory includes those operations not supplied by a public water supply or regional reuse facility.

Reduced Threshold Areas (RTAs) Areas established by the District for which the threshold separating a General Permit from an Individual Permit has been lowered from the maximum limit of three million gallons per month (100,000 gallons per day) to 600,000 gallons per month (20,000 gallons per day). These areas are typically resource depleted areas with an established history of substandard water quality, saline water movement into ground or surface water bodies, or the lack of water availability to meet projected needs of a region.

Reference Condition. A representation of historic conditions that previously existed in the Loxahatchee River watershed. In this case, the reference condition is based on District staff's interpretation of a set of historical aerial photography and previous vegetation studies that describe the distribution of plant communities along the Northwest Fork at the time that the Loxahatchee was designated as a Wild and Scenic River (1985).

Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) Detailed water supply plan developed by the District under Section 373.0361, F.S. , providing an evaluation of available water supply and projected demands, at the regional scale. The planning process projects future demand for 20 years and develops strategies to meet identified needs.

Reservations of Water (see *Water Reservations*)

Reservoir A man-made or natural water body used for water storage.

Residential Self-Supplied Water Demand (*Same as Domestic Self-Supplied Water Demand*) The water used by households whose primary source of water is private wells and water treatment facilities with pumpages of less than 0.5 million gallons per day.

Restoration Vision. A narrative description of the desired distribution and extent of the physical components and ecological communities that constitute a restored ecosystem (compare to *achievable restoration*).

Restudy Shortened name for C&SF Restudy.

Retrofit The replacement of existing equipment with equipment of higher efficiency.

Retrofitting The replacement of existing water fixtures, appliances and devices with more efficient fixtures, appliances and devices for the purpose of conservation.

Reuse The deliberate application of water that has received at least secondary treatment, in compliance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and water management district rules, for a beneficial purpose.

Reverse Osmosis (RO) A membrane process for desalting water using applied pressure to drive the feedwater (source water) through a semipermeable membrane.

Rolling (Moving) Average The arithmetic average of a sequence of data within a data set moved and calculated sequentially to smooth the data and reveal trends (e.g., five-year rolling total phosphorus concentrations).

Saline Water Water with a chloride concentration greater than 250 mg/L, but less than 19,000 mg/L.

Saline Water or Saltwater Interface The hypothetical surface of chloride concentration between fresh water and seawater where the chloride concentration is 250 mg/L at each point on the surface.

Saline Water or Saltwater Intrusion The invasion of a body of fresh water by a body of salt water, due to its greater density. It can occur either in surface water or groundwater bodies. The term is applied to the flooding of freshwater marshes by seawater, the upward migration of seawater into rivers and navigation channels, and the movement of seawater into freshwater aquifers along coastal regions.

Salinity Of or relating to chemical salts (usually measured in parts per thousand, or ppt).

Sapling Juvenile tree that is shorter than canopy height, but taller than breast height.

Save Our Rivers (SOR) In 1981, the Florida Legislature created the Save Our Rivers program for the water management districts to acquire environmentally sensitive land. The legislation produced Section 373.59, F.S., known as the Water Management Lands Trust Fund.

Seawater Water which has a chloride concentration equal to or greater than 19,000 mg/L.

Secchi Disk A black and white disk used to measure the transparency or clarity of water by lowering the disk into the water horizontally and noting the greatest depth at which it can be seen.

Sedimentation The action or process of forming or depositing sediment.

Seedling Juvenile tree shorter than breast height.

Self-Supplied The water used to satisfy a water need, not supplied by a public water supply utility.

Seepage Irrigation Irrigation that conveys water through open ditches. Water is either applied to the soil surface (possibly in furrows) and held for a period of time to allow

infiltration, or is applied to the soil subsurface by raising the water table to wet the root zone.

Semi-confining Layers Layers with little or no horizontal flow, restricting the vertical flow of water from one aquifer to another. The rate of vertical flow is dependent on the head differential between the aquifers, as well as the vertical permeability of the sediments in the semi-confining layer.

Sensitivity Analysis An analysis of alternative results based on variations in assumptions (a “what if” analysis).

Serious Harm As defined in Rule 40E-8, F.A.C., the long-term loss of water resource functions resulting from a change in surface or groundwater hydrology.

Significant Harm As defined in Rule 40E-8, F.A.C., the temporary loss of water resource functions, which result from a change in surface or groundwater hydrology, that takes more than two years to recover, but which is considered less severe than serious harm. The specific water resource functions addressed by a MFL and the duration of the recovery period associated with significant harm are defined for each priority water body based on the MFL technical support document.

Silica Silicon dioxide (SiO_2). It occurs in crystalline (quartz), amorphous (opal) or impure (silica sand) forms.

Sinusoidal The real or complex function $\sin(u)$ or any function with analogous continuous periodic behavior.

Slough A channel in which water moves sluggishly, or a place of deep muck, mud or mire. Sloughs are wetland habitats that serve as channels for water draining off surrounding uplands and/or wetlands.

South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM) An integrated surface water-groundwater model that simulates the hydrology and associated water management schemes in the majority of south Florida using climatic data from January 1, 1965, through December 31, 1995. The model simulates the major components of the hydrologic cycle and the current and numerous proposed water management control structures and associated operating rules. It also simulates current and proposed water shortage policies for the different subregions in the system.

Spodic A soil horizon characterized by illuviation of amorphous substances.

Stage The height of a water surface above an established reference point (datum or elevation).

Standard Project Flood (SPF) A mathematically derived set of hydrologic conditions for a region that defines the water levels that can be expected to occur in a basin during

an extreme rainfall event, taking into account all pertinent conditions of location, meteorology, hydrology and topography.

State Facilities Parks, rest areas, visitor welcome centers, buildings, college campuses and other facilities.

Storm Water Surface water resulting from rainfall runoff that does not percolate into the ground or evaporate.

Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) A system of constructed water quality treatment wetlands that use natural biological processes to reduce levels of nutrients and pollutants from surface water runoff.

Stump Sprouts Damaged adult trees that have re-sprouted from a trunk.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Wetland plants that exist completely below the water surface.

Subregional Groundwater Model A computer model that is used to simulate impacts on a smaller scale than the SFWMM, such as effects within public water supply service areas and impacts of individual wellfields.

Subsidence The loss of soil-bulk caused by the oxidation, decomposition and shrinkage of organic material.

Supply-side Management The conservation of water in Lake Okeechobee to ensure that water demands are met while reducing the risk of serious or significant harm to natural systems.

Surface Water Water that flows, falls or collects above the soil or substrate surface.

Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan A plan prepared pursuant to Chapter 373, F.S.

Surficial Aquifer System (SAS) Often the principal source of water for urban uses within certain areas of south Florida. This aquifer is unconfined, consisting of varying amounts of limestone and sediments that extend from the land surface to the top of an intermediate confining unit.

Swamp A frequently or continuously inundated forested wetland.

Tidal Rivers Water bodies that receive freshwater from areas other than runoff (from the upstream watershed), are flushed to some extent during a tidal cycle, and are subject to saltwater intrusion from downstream areas.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) The maximum allowed level of pollutant loading for a water body, while still protecting its uses and maintaining compliance with water quality standards, as defined in the *Clean Water Act*.

Trophic Level One of the hierarchical strata of a food web characterized by organisms which are the same number of steps removed from the primary producers

Transmissivity A term used to indicate the rate at which water can be transmitted through a unit width of aquifer under a unit hydraulic gradient. It is a function of the permeability and thickness of the aquifer, and is used to judge its production potential.

Tributary A stream that flows into a larger stream or other body of water.

Truck Farming The horticultural practice of growing one or more vegetable crops on a large scale for shipment to distant markets.

Turbidity The measure of suspended material in a liquid.

Tussock A compact hummock of generally solid ground in a bog or marsh, usually covered with and bound together by the roots of low vegetation, such as grasses or sedges.

Uplands An area with a hydrologic regime that is not sufficiently wet to support vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil conditions; nonwetland; upland soils are non-hydric soils.

Valued Ecosystem Component (VEC) A resource-based management strategy similar to a program developed by the EPA as part of the National Estuary Program. For the purposes of this study, the VEC approach is based on the concept that management goals for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River can best be achieved by providing suitable environmental conditions that will support certain key species, or key groups of species, that inhabit the system.

Vertical Migration The vertical movement of oil, gas, contaminants, water or other liquids through porous and permeable rock.

Wastewater The waterborne discharge from residences, commercial buildings, industrial plants and institutions together with any groundwater, surface runoff or leachate that may be present.

Water Budget An accounting of total water use or projected water use for a given location or activity.

Water Conservation Reducing the demand for water through activities that alter water use practices, e.g., improving efficiency in water use, and reducing losses of water, waste of water and water use.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) Part of the original Everglades ecosystem that is now diked and hydrologically controlled for flood control and water supply purposes. These are located in the western portions of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, and preserve a total of 1,337 square miles, or about 50 percent of the original Everglades.

Water Control District (see *Drainage District*)

Water Preserve Areas (WPA) Multipurpose water-holding areas located along the western border of southeast Florida's urbanized corridor.

Water Reservations State law on water reservations, in Section 373.223(4), F.S., defines water reservations as follows: "The governing board or the department, by regulation, may reserve from use by permit applicants, water in such locations and quantities, and for such seasons of the year, as in its judgment may be required for the protection of fish and wildlife or the public health and safety. Such reservations shall be subject to periodic review and revision in the light of changed conditions. However, all presently existing legal uses of water shall be protected so long as such use is not contrary to the public interest."

Water Resource Caution Areas Areas that have existing water resource problems or are placed where water resource problems are projected to develop during the next 20 years (previously referred to as Critical Water Supply Problem Areas).

Water Resource Development The formulation and implementation of regional water resource management strategies, including the collection and evaluation of surface water and groundwater data; structural and nonstructural programs to protect and manage the water resources; the development of regional water resource implementation programs; the construction, operation and maintenance of major public works facilities to provide for flood control, surface and underground water storage and groundwater recharge augmentation; and related technical assistance to local governments and to government-owned and privately-owned water utilities.

Water Reuse (see *Reuse*)

Watershed A region or area bounded peripherally by a water parting and draining ultimately to a particular watercourse or body of water.

Watershed Management Goals Goals that encompass any one or all of the major water management district responsibilities: flood protection, water supply, water quality and environmental system protection and enhancement. The goals provide the general direction for developing cohesive strategies to manage water resources within a drainage basin, subbasin or segment of a drainage basin or subbasin.

Water Shortage Declaration If there is a possibility that insufficient water will be available within a source class to meet the estimated present and anticipated user

demands from that source, or to protect the water resource from serious harm, the governing board may declare a water shortage for the affected source class. (Rule 40E-21.231, F.A.C.) Estimates of the percent reduction in demand required to match available supply is required and identifies which phase of drought restriction is implemented. A gradual progression in severity of restriction is implemented through increasing phases. Once declared, the District is required to notify permitted users by mail of the restrictions and to publish restrictions in area newspapers.

Water Supply Development The planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of public or private facilities for water collection, production, treatment, transmission or distribution for sale, resale or end use.

Water Year The 12-month period, May 1 through April 30. The water year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends. Therefore, the 2004 water year ends on April 30, 2004

Weir A barrier placed in a stream to control the flow and cause it to fall over a crest. Weirs with known hydraulic characteristics are used to measure flow in open channels.

Wetland An area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater with vegetation adapted for life under those soil conditions (e.g., swamps, bogs and marshes).

Wetland Drawdown Study Research effort by the South Florida Water Management District to provide a scientific basis for developing wetland protection criteria for water use permitting.

Wild and Scenic River A river as designated under the authority of the of Public Law 90-542, the wild an Scenic Rivers Act as amended, as a means to preserve selected free-flowing rivers in their natural condition and protect the water quality of such rivers. The Loxahatchee River was federally designated as the first Wild and Scenic River in Florida on May 17, 1985.

Xeric Of or pertaining to a habitat having a low or inadequate supply of moisture, or of or pertaining to an organism living in such an environment.

XeriscapeTM Landscaping that involves seven principles: proper planning and design; soil analysis and improvement; practical turf areas; appropriate plant selection; efficient irrigation; mulching; and appropriate maintenance.

Zooplankton The passively floating or weakly swimming, usually minute, animal life of a body of water.

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Appendix A

1975 Agreement between the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District and the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District

A G R E E M E N T

The Agreement dated this the 11TH day of MARCH, 1975, between the CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN FLORIDA FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT, hereinafter termed "DISTRICT", and the LOXAHATCHEE RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL DISTRICT, hereinafter termed "LRECD".

W I T N E S S E T H :

WHEREAS, the DISTRICT and LRECD desire to maintain the environmental quality of the Northwest Fork Loxhatchea River and are agreed that one means to accomplish this objective is to supplement fresh water flows to the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River by deliveries of water from the DISTRICT'S Canal 18; and

WHEREAS, it has been established as a result of a study conducted by the U. S. Geological Survey that a minimum flow rate of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) should be maintained for this purpose if at all possible; said flow rate also representing a maximum supplemental water delivery rate; and

WHEREAS, the DISTRICT is in the process of negotiating an agreement with the South Indian River Drainage District which will permit the conveyance of supplemental flow maintenance water from C-18 to the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River in the vicinity of Indiantown Road (SR No. 706); and

WHEREAS, in the event that such agreement is successfully negotiated the DISTRICT proposes to install in its Canal 18 a 54" gated corrugated metal pipe (CMP) culvert for the purpose of releasing water from C-18 to the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is agreed between the DISTRICT and LRECD that:

1. The DISTRICT will notify LRECD in writing of the execution of the agreement between DISTRICT and the South Indian River Drainage District concerning the conveyance of water between Canal 18 and the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River. Upon receipt by LRECD of such notification the following provisions of this agreement will go into full force and effect.
2. Upon completion of construction of the 54" gated CMP culvert installation LRECD will immediately accept the responsibility, at no cost to the DISTRICT, for the physical operation of the culvert installation in regard to releases of supplemental water from Canal 18 to the Northwest Fork Loxahatchee River. The DISTRICT will notify LRECD in writing thirty (30) days prior to completion of construction and upon completion of construction.
3. Operation by LRECD of the culvert installation will be in accordance with the attached "C-18 Culvert Operation Manual", dated September, 1974, which is made

a part of this Agreement.

4. The DISTRICT, if so requested by LRECD, will instruct LRECD'S agent or agents in the proper operation of the culvert installation.

5. LRECD shall have the right to enter upon the Canal 18 right of way at any time for the purpose of operating the culvert installation.

6. DISTRICT will be responsible, at its sole costs, for the routine maintenance, repair and replacement of the culvert installation and its appurtenant features.

7. LRECD will hold and save harmless the DISTRICT from any damages to C-18, the C-18 right of way, or downstream areas resulting from LRECD'S operation of the said culvert installation.

8. The DISTRICT reserves the right to operate said culvert installation at any time for any purpose but specifically

(a) if gate settings are not in accordance with the operational criteria and procedures; and

(b) under emergency conditions, after first notifying LRECD.

9. LRECD shall provide the DISTRICT, on a monthly basis, a daily operations log for the culvert installation on forms to be supplied by the DISTRICT and approved by LRECD.

10. If there is evidence of non-operation by LRECD of the culvert installation during a period when releases from C-18 are necessary, or if there is evidence of continued mis-operation of the culvert installation in the opinion of the DISTRICT, the culvert gate will be closed by the DISTRICT and will be maintained in a closed position until such time as LRECD furnishes assurances satisfactory to the DISTRICT that proper operation will be provided.

11. If such assurances are not provided within sixty (60) days after receipt by LRECD of written notification by DISTRICT of its action under Paragraph 10., above, this Agreement shall become null and void.

12. The culvert gate initially will be operated manually, but will be capable of adaptation to mechanical or electrical operation. Such modification if desired by LRECD, will be permitted subject to approval of the DISTRICT and at the sole cost of LRECD.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be signed,

the day and year first above written.

(Corporate Seal)

Executed in the presence of:

Thomas J. [Signature]
Patricia A. [Signature]
 As to DISTRICT

LECD: Jim Approved
 FGD Office of Council

By [Signature] Date 3/13/75

Executed in the presence of:

Peter L. [Signature]
Richard C. [Signature]
 As to LRECD

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN FLORIDA FLOOD
 CONTROL DISTRICT, BY ITS GOVERNING
 BOARD

By [Signature]
 Chairman

ATTEST:

By [Signature]
 Secretary

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL
 CONTROL DISTRICT

By [Signature]
 Chairman

ATTEST:

By [Signature]
 Title ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Appendix B

1982 Consent Decree

SJN/ep
C-18

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR
PALM BEACH COUNTY

CASE NO. 79-1910 CA (L) 01 C

FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION,
Non-Profit Florida Corporation,

Plaintiff,

vs

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION and
THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT,

Defendants.

Handwritten notes:
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FINAL ORDER

This Court, having considered the "Stipulation for Consent Decree" signed by all of the parties to this cause, and being otherwise fully advised in the premises herein finds and it is thereupon

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED as follows:

1. The aforesaid "Stipulation for Consent Decree", attached hereto, is hereby adopted as the Order of this Court, said Stipulation constituting a final disposition of all matters at issue in this case.
2. This Court reserves jurisdiction to ensure compliance with the terms of this Order.

DONE and so ORDERED in Chambers at the Palm Beach County Courthouse,
West Palm Beach, Florida, this 19 day of July, 1982.

Handwritten signature of Timothy P. Poulton
TIMOTHY P. POULTON
Judge of Circuit Court

Copies furnished to: Thomas J. Schwartz, Esquire
Thomas E. Kingeade, Esquire
Alfred J. Malefatto, Esquire

SJN/ph
C-18

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF
FLORIDA, IN AND FOR PALM BEACH
COUNTY

CASE NO. 79-1910 CA (L) 01 C

FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION,
Non-Profit Florida Corporation,

Plaintiff,

VS

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION and
THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT,

Defendants.

STIPULATION FOR CONSENT DECREE

The parties, FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION; STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION (hereinafter "the DER") and the SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (hereinafter "the District"), by and through the undersigned attorneys, hereby stipulate to the entry of a Final Order in the above-styled case in accordance with the following terms and conditions:

1. Subject to the approval of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the District shall maintain an operating schedule for the S-46 gated spillway, so that the "dry season" operating schedule is maintained on a year round basis. This schedule provides for automatic opening of the structure when water levels in the C-18 canal reach a level of 15 feet msl. The structure becomes stationary at 14.5 feet msl and closes at 14 feet msl. In the event of an impending hurricane, tropical storm or other significant rainfall event, the District may in its discretion make releases from the S-46 gated spillway in anticipation of any such event, which may lower the water elevation in the C-18 Canal below the agreed operating level.

2. The District shall schedule the program for control of aquatic weeds within the C-18 canal right of way so as to minimize the use of herbicides, subject to cost considerations regarding alternative methods of aquatic weed control. Those herbicides as are used by the District shall be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and permitted by the Florida Department of Natural Resources.

3. The District shall ascertain the ownership of the "Lainhart Dam" and shall, as soon as possible utilize District forces, exercise all due diligence to arrange for the restoration of the Dam to the structural condition that would control discharge conditions

as described in the District's C-18 Culvert Operation Manual of September 1974. This shall be for the purpose of maintaining higher groundwater stages in the area tributary to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and to facilitate the transfer of water from the "diversion culvert" presently existing at the junction of the District's C-18 canal and the South Indian River Drainage District's C-14 canal to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

4. Subject to the presence of available water supplies, the District shall in cooperation with ENCON, make releases through the aforesaid "diversion culvert" which are adequate to maintain a minimum flow of approximately 50 cfs in the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The determination as to availability of water supplies shall be within the sound discretion of the District, based upon rainfall conditions.

5. The District shall use existing inflow culverts, modified as necessary, to maintain water levels within the area commonly known as the "Loxahatchee Slough" at such levels as are adequate to maintain the existing natural wetland ecosystem in the subject area. The parties recognize that the District shall have reasonable discretion to vary the period during which water levels are maintained at maximum levels, depending upon rainfall conditions, flood control considerations and environmental factors; and that in order to maintain natural conditions and vegetation in the subject area, it will be necessary for the District to lower water levels during the "dry season", with the precise time period thereof being within the reasonable discretion of the District.

6. The District's Governing Board, shall recommend to the United States Army Corps of Engineers that the existing federally authorized project be modified to return, to the maximum extent possible, to the natural regimen that existed in regard to the tributaries to the Loxahatchee River prior to the construction of the C-18 canal and the S-46 gated spillway. This involves diverting surface water flows to the "Northwest Fork" of said river to its maximum carrying capacity prior to making surface water discharges to the "Southwest Fork" of the river. The District shall recommend that the aforesaid objective be accomplished through the following modifications to the federal project:

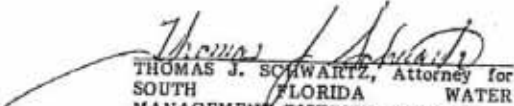
- a) Developing the capability to divert a greater flow of surface water runoff from C-18 to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.
- b) Maintenance of a water retention area for the purpose of accommodating surface water runoff from those lands within the Loxahatchee Slough area and areas tributary to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

7. The parties recognize that the aforesaid project modifications are contingent upon approval by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and appropriate federal, state and local regulatory agencies. The District agrees to exercise all due diligence to acquire the property rights and obtain all necessary permits.

8. The parties also recognize that the District shall continue to make discharges through the S-46 gated spillway for flood control purposes before, during and after certain rainfall events, but that in the event the federal project is modified to permit discharges to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, the District shall utilize the Northwest Fork as its primary discharge facility and shall operate the water control system so as to maximize the use of said Northwest Fork prior to making discharges through the Southwest Fork, with the exception that discharges may still be made at the Southwest Fork prior to exceeding the maximum carrying capacity of the Northwest Fork in anticipation of extreme rainfall events.

9. Each party shall bear its own respective costs and attorneys fees for all proceedings in this case.


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Appendix C

1989 Agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the South Indian River Water Control District

LL060501

AGREEMENT
BY AND BETWEEN
SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
AND
SOUTH INDIAN RIVER WATER CONTROL DISTRICT (SIRWCD)
CONCERNING
THE SIRWCD SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
AND
THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND FLOOD PROTECTION OF
THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER NORTHWEST FORK

IT IS HEREBY AGREED by and between SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT, hereinafter referred to as "SFWMD", and SOUTH INDIAN RIVER WATER CONTROL DISTRICT, hereinafter referred to as "SIRWCD", as follows:

1. Both parties seek to provide for the Environmental Enhancement and Flood Protection of the Loxahatchee River Northwest Fork and for Beneficial Water Management and Flood Protection for the Area served by the SIRWCD. It is the intent of the participating agencies to operate in a manner consistent with the surface water management regulations of the SFWMD and the restoration objectives outlined in the Loxahatchee River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan as adopted by the Governing Board of the SFWMD and the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida.

2. The overall operational objective will be to enhance water quantity and quality of the Loxahatchee River Northwest Fork, reduce the frequency of direct discharges to tide water through S-46, improve local groundwater storage, and provide increased flood protection through storm water management. To accomplish this goal, the SFWMD has replaced the older G-92 structure with a larger capacity structure capable of diverting S-46 discharges, and redirecting these flows, up to four hundred cubic feet per second (400 cfs), to the Loxahatchee River Northwest Fork. To the extent feasible, a minimum base flow of fifty cubic feet per second (50 cfs) will be maintained to the Loxahatchee River Northwest Fork throughout the year. However, the restoration goal is to sustain flows above this level whenever possible and when consistent with environmental objectives. The G-92 structure has also been designed to allow flood waters from SIRWCD to backflow to C-18 under certain conditions.

3. In consideration for the above-described benefits to be derived from implementing an improved water management system, SFWMD has agreed to pay for the construction of the low head capacity pump station and water control structures described in paragraph 6. The purpose of the pump station and water control structures is to remove and store excess runoff from the SIRWCD

drainage system, to reduce overdrainage, provide groundwater recharge, and provide for enhancement of water quality and base flows to the Northwest Fork.

4. Operation and maintenance of G-92 will be the responsibility of SFWMD. Gate operation will be remotely operated and under the direct control of SFWMD Operations Staff at the West Palm Beach headquarters. Facilities to manually override the automatic systems will be provided to the SIRWCD for emergency purposes. During emergency conditions, SIRWCD shall seek to notify SFWMD of its intended action before making any operational changes in G-92 in accordance with criteria established in the operating permit. In non-emergency conditions, prior approval from SFWMD is required before any changes in gate status are attempted by SIRWCD staff.

5. Gate adjustments and discharge through G-92 will be governed by the structure headwater and tailwater stages, to be determined by SFWMD, with information supplied to SIRWCD. Equipment will be installed and maintained by SFWMD to remotely monitor these stages from SFWMD headquarters. This stage data will be obtained continuously and made available to SIRWCD. For purposes of river flow augmentation, SFWMD will be allowed to discharge from C-18 of SFWMD to C-14 of SIRWCD through G-92, a quantity of water in cubic feet per second (cfs) equivalent to the maximum discharge capacity of the structure or four hundred

cubic feet per second (400 cfs), whichever is less, and with the provision that the C-14 stage shall not exceed 14.5 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) during operation. For purposes of flood control SFWMD shall operate S-46 and G-92 so as to give maximum opportunity for flow from C-14 to C-18 when the water in C-14 at G-92 exceeds 15.0 feet NGVD. Flood control operations will continue until the stage recedes to 14.5 feet NGVD in C-14 or to the C-18 stage, whichever occurs first.

6. SFWMD will pay for construction of a pump station with a minimum capacity of 100 cubic feet per second (100 cfs) at the southern perimeter of the SIRWCD Lateral Canal #7. Water pumped from the SIRWCD Canals will be discharged to the Slough Management Area as described in conceptual surface water management permits submitted by SIRWCD (02255-D) and Foundation Land Company (12102-A) and approved by SFWMD Governing Board and any subsequent modifications thereof. Operation of the pump station, when completed, will be in accordance with a management plan mutually acceptable to SFWMD and SIRWCD as reflected in the construction and operation permits therefor. SFWMD agrees that any improvements in the C-18 works, including levee and culvert modifications, will be the responsibility of SFWMD. SFWMD will pay for construction of lateral canal water control structures as permitted in DER Permit Number 501075426. SIRWCD will design, construct, assume ownership, all liability, and costs of operation and maintenance of the pump station and control

structures. The total cost of the pump station and water control structures including engineering design and services during construction shall not exceed \$750,000. Disbursement of funds shall be to SIRWCD upon submission of payment requests for completed work approved by the SIRWCD Engineer.

7. SIRWCD shall grant to SFWMD a perpetual Flowage Easement over C-14 from G-92, north to the limits of SIRWCD. SFWMD shall not restrict, reduce or otherwise limit any rights of SIRWCD from discharging surface waters into C-14 except as set forth in the construction and operation permit referenced in paragraph 6.

8. SFWMD agrees to provide SIRWCD access to the SFWMD C-18 right-of-way along both East and West sides of the Canal from the newly constructed C-14 Bridge located at the intersection of 157 Street and C-18, North to the Reese Bridge crossing C-18. SIRWCD assumes all liability for and agrees to maintain levee and berm surfaces for those portions of the SFWMD C-18 right-of-way used by SIRWCD. SIRWCD further agrees to assume responsibility for security of the C-18 right-of-way which it uses, including maintenance of all SFWMD security gates used by SIRWCD personnel to gain entry to the C-18 right-of-way. SIRWCD will supply all necessary locks and ensure that duplicates of all lock keys are transmitted to the SFWMD including duplicates for any lock

replacements. SFWMD will have a continued, non-restricted right of access throughout the entire C-18 right-of-way, including those portions utilized by SIRWCD.

9. SFWMD agrees to transfer ownership of the C-14 Bridge and related property to SIRWCD. SIRWCD agrees to assume ownership, liability, security and maintenance of the C-14 Bridge and hold SFWMD harmless in all respects.

10. SFWMD agrees to provide SIRWCD the exclusive use of the Reese Bridge, until such time that the Donald Ross Road Extension is completed across C-18. Upon completion of the Donald Ross Road Extension, use of the Reese Bridge by SIRWCD will terminate and the Bridge may be removed at the discretion of the SFWMD. SIRWCD agrees to assume all liability for and maintenance of the Reese Bridge while it is used exclusively by SIRWCD and hold SFWMD harmless in all respects.

11. The use of the District facilities provided for herein shall be deemed to constitute a permit for the utilization of works or lands of the District pursuant to Chapter 40E-6, Florida Administrative Code, and shall be subject to the provisions thereof, except when in specific conflict with the terms of this agreement, in which event the terms of the agreement shall prevail.

12. The obligations of SFWMD and SIRWCD as set forth in this agreement are contingent upon:

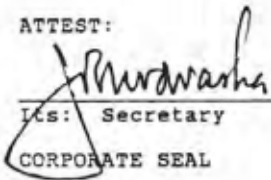
- A) SFWMD and SIRWCD reaching an agreement with the landowner of the "slough" referred to in paragraph 6 for receiving discharge from the pump station,
- B) SIRWCD securing or determining that it has the necessary authority to own, operate and maintain the pump station and water control structures referred to in paragraph 6.
- C) Issuance of the construction and operation permit referred to in paragraph 6.

Prior to satisfying the above conditions both SFWMD and SIRWCD agree to temporarily operate G-92 as set forth in paragraph 5.

12. Modifications or deviations from the basic intent of the above agreements must be approved by both parties. Requests for modifications or alterations must be submitted in writing.

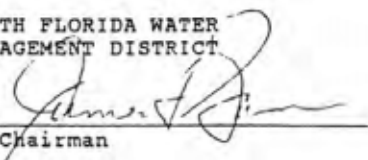
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be executed by their officers thereunto duly authorized, and their Corporate Seals to be affixed, and attested to by their Secretaries, on this the day and year below written.

ATTEST:


Its: Secretary

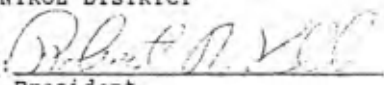
CORPORATE SEAL

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

By: 
Chairman

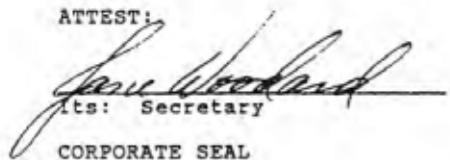
DATE: 7/13/89

SOUTH INDIAN RIVER WATER
CONTROL DISTRICT

By: 
President

DATE: 7-11-89

ATTEST:


Its: Secretary

CORPORATE SEAL

Appendix D

Water Quality, Tide and Salinity Monitoring Information

Table D-1. Loxahatchee River District (LRD) RiverKeeper Water Quality Parameters and Units.

RiverKeeper Water Quality Parameters	Units
Date	
Time	
Depth	Meters
Alkalinity, Bicarbonate as CaCO ₃	mg/l
BOD, Biochemical oxygen demand	mg/l
Chlorophyll a, uncorrected for pheophytin	mg/l
Depth, Secchi disk depth	m
Dissolved oxygen (DO)	mg/l
Dissolved oxygen saturation	%
Light %	at 1Meter
Light %	at 2Meters
Nitrogen, Ammonia	mg/l
Nitrogen, Kjeldahl	mg/l
Nitrogen, Nitrite (NO ₂) + Nitrate (NO ₃)	mg/l
Nitrogen, Organic	mg/l
Nitrogen, Total	mg/l
pH	None
Phosphorus	mg/l
Phosphorus, ortho	mg/l
Salinity	ppt
Secchi	Meters
Specific conductance	umho/cm
Temperature, water	deg C
Tide	Stage
Total Organic Carbon	mg/L
Total Coliform	#/100ml
Total Fecal Coliform	#/100ml
Total Suspended Solids (TSS)	mg/l
True Color	PCU
Turbidity	NTU

Table D-2. Loxahatchee River District (LRD) RiverKeeper Station ID and Locations.

RiverKeeper Stations	Assigned Nos.	NW Fork River Miles
Jupiter Inlet	10	0
ICW - S.R. 707	20	
ICW - M.M. 43	25	
ICW - S.R. 706	30	
Marine SC	32	
ICW – Donald Ross Rd.	35	
River RR Track	40	
Pennock Point	42	2.44
NF - Tequesta Dr.	51	
NF - Countyline Rd.	55	
NF - JD State Park	57	
NF - Power Line	58	
NF - Bridge Rd	59	
NWF - Bay	60	1.48
NWF – Island Way Rd.	62	
NWF - Osprey Nest	63	
NWF - JD Park Beach	64	
NWF - Kitching Cr.	65	8.13
NWF - Hobe Grove	66	9.07
NWF - Trapper's	67	10.50
NWF - I - 95	68	12.76
NWF - S.R. 706	69	14.93
SWF - Jones Cr.	71	
SWF - Lox. River Rd.	72	
SWF - Sim's Creek	73	
C18 - S.R. 706	81	
B- Inflow from C-18	83	
H- Outflow to C-14	84	
G- Wood Bridge Outflow	85	
C14 - D. stream of G92	92	
Canal -1- Jupiter Farms	95	
Cypress - NWF	100	
Jenkins Canal	101	
North Wetland	102	
South Wetland	103	
Hobe Grove Canal	104	
Cypress -Grove Canal	105	
Kitching Creek	106	
River's Edge Slough	107	
Kitching Creek North	109	
Bridge Road Sod Farm	110	
Kitching Ck. @ 138 th St.	111	
Kitching Ck. @ Bridge Rd.	112	

USGS TIDE AND SALINITY MONITORING STATIONS

Table D-3. USGS Long-term Tide and Salinity Monitoring Sites.

Coordinates ^a		Site		Description
X (feet)	Y (feet)	Station ID	River Mile	
955325	951200	CG	0.7	USGS Coast Guard
949538	950648	PD	1.77	USGS Pompano Drive
935708	965258	BD	5.92	USGS Boy Scout Dock
931399	966948	KC	8.13	USGS Kitching Creek
929733	964696	RM9	9.12	USGS River Mile 9.1

^a State Plane Florida East NAD83.

Table D-4. Parameters of USGS Long-term Tide and Salinity Monitoring Sites.

Station ID	River Mile	Period of Record	Parameters Monitored
CG	0.7	Since Nov 2002	Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity at two depths.
PD	1.77	Since Nov 2002	Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity.
BD	5.92	Since Nov 2002	Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity at two depths.
KC	8.13	Since Nov 2002	Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity.
RM9	9.12	Since Oct 2003	Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity at two depths.

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER DISTRICT (LRD) TIDE AND SALINITY MONITORING STATIONS

Table D-5. Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Long-term Tide and Salinity DataSonde Monitoring Sites.

Coordinates ^a		Site		Description
X (feet)	Y (feet)	Station ID	River Mile	
		DSNB	1.48	LRD North Bay
		DSPP	2.44	LRD Pennock Point
		DSKC	8.12	LRD Kitching Creek
		DS66	9.5	LRD RM 9.5
		DS69	14.93	LRD RM 14.93

^a State Plane Florida East NAD83.

Table D-6. Parameters of Loxahatchee River District (LRD) Long-term Tide and Salinity DataSonde Monitoring Sites.

Station ID	River Mile	Period of Record	Parameters Monitored
DSNB	1.48	Since May 2004	Water surface elevation, temperature at two depths, salinity at two depths, conductivity.
DSPP	2.44	Since May 2004	Water surface elevation, temperature at two depths, salinity at two depths, conductivity.
DSKC	8.12	Since Jan 2000	Water surface elevation, temperature at two depths, salinity at two depths, dissolved oxygen at two depths and pH.
DS66	9.5	May 1, 2004 – August 12, 2004	Water surface elevation, temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen and pH.
DS69	14.93	Since Jan 2000	Water surface elevation, temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen and pH.

Appendix E

2003 Vegetation Survey –

Forest Type Summaries

Table E-1. Transect #1 (NW01; RM 14.7) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type		Plot #	Forest Type
1 (T 1-1)	Mesic Hammock		10 (T 1-2)	Rblh1
2	Mesic Hammock		11	Rsw1
3	Upland/Mesic Hammock		12	Rsw1
4	Hydric Hammock		13	Rsw1
5	Rsw1		14	Rsw1
6	Rsw1		15	Rsw1/Hydric Hammock
7	Rsw1			
8	Rsw1			
9	Rsw1			

Table E-2. Transect #2 (NW02; RM 13.5) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type		Plot #	Forest Type
16 (T 2-1)	Rblh1		23 (T 2-2)	Mesic Hammock
17	Rsw1		24	Mesic Hammock
18	Hydric Hammock/Rsw1		25	Mesic Hammock
19	Rsw1		26	Hydric Hammock/Rsw1
20	Hydric Hammock/Rsw2		27	Rsw1
21	Hydric Hammock		28	Rsw2
22	Hydric Hammock			

Table E-3. Transect #3* (NW03; RM 12.1) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type		Plot #	Forest Type
29 (T 3-1)	Rblh2		40 (T 3-2)	Upland/Hydric Hammock
30	Rblh3		41	Rblh2
31	Rsw2			
32	Rsw2			
33	Rsw1			
34	Rsw2			
35	Rsw2			
36	Rsw1			
37	Rsw2			
38	Rsw2			
39	Rsw2			
* Selective logging occurred in this area.				

Table E-4. Transect #4 (NW04; RM 11.18) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type
42 (T 4-1)	Mesic Hammock
43	Rsw1
44	Rsw1
45	Rblh2
46	Rsw1
47	Rsw1
48	Rsw1
49	Rblh2
50	Rblh3
51	Rsw2
52	Rsw1
53	Rblh2

Table E-5. Transect #6* (NW06; RM 8.4) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type
68 (T 6-1)	Upland
69	Upland
70	Rsw1
71	UTsw3
72	UTsw3
73	UTsw3
74	UTsw3
75	UTsw3
76	UTmix
77	UTsw1
78	UTsw1
79	UTsw1
80	UTsw1
81	UTsw3
82	UTsw1
83	UTsw1
* Selective logging occurred in this area.	

Table E-6. Transect #7* (NW07; RM 9.1) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type
84 (T 7-1)	Mesic Hammock/Rsw1
85	Rsw1
86	Rsw1
87	Rmix
88	Rmix
89	Rmix
90	Rmix
91	Rmix
92	UTsw1
93	UTsw1
94	UTsw1
95	UTsw1
96	UTsw2
97	UTsw2
98	UTsw2
* Selective logging occurred in this area.	

Table E-7. Transect #9 (NW09; RM 6.46) Forest Types for Each 10m X 10m Plot Based on Relative Basal Area (RBA).

Plot #	Forest Type
111 (T 9-1)	Upland
112	Hydric Hammock
113	LTsw2
114	LTsw2
115	LTsw2
116	LTmix
117	LTsw2
118	LTsw2
119	LTsw2
120	LTsw2
121	LTsw2
122	LTsw2
123	LTsw2
124	LTsw2
125	LTsw2
126	LTsw2
127	LTsw1
128	LTsw1
129	LTsw1
130	LTsw1

Appendix F

2003 Vegetation Survey – Forest Canopy Species by Transect

Table F-1. 2003 Vegetation Survey Canopy Plant List and Code List.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Code Name
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple	AR
<i>Annona glabra</i>	Pond apple	AG
<i>Carya aquatica</i>	Water hickory	CA
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush	CO
<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i>	Cocoplum	CI
<i>Citrus</i> sp.	--	CS
<i>Ficus aurea</i>	Strangler ficus	FA
<i>Fraxinus caroliniana</i>	Pop ash	FC
<i>Ilex cassine</i>	Dahoon holly	IC
<i>Laguncularia racemosa</i>	White mangrove	LR
<i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Wax myrtle	MC
<i>Persea borbonia</i>	Red Bay	PB
<i>Persea palustris</i>	Swamp bay	PP
<i>Pinus elliotii</i>	Slash pine	PE
<i>Psidium cattleianum</i>	Strawberry guava	PC
<i>Quercus laurifolia</i>	Laurel oak	QL
<i>Quercus myrtifolia</i>	Myrtle oak	QM
<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Live oak	QV
<i>Rhizophora mangle</i>	Red mangrove	RM
<i>Roystonea regia</i>	Royal palm	RR
<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Cabbage palm	SP
<i>Salix caroliniana</i>	Carolina willow	SaC
<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	Brazilian pepper	ST
<i>Syzygium cumini</i>	Java plum	SC
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Bald cypress	TD

Transect #1 (RM 14.7)
Total Tree Trunks >5cm=78

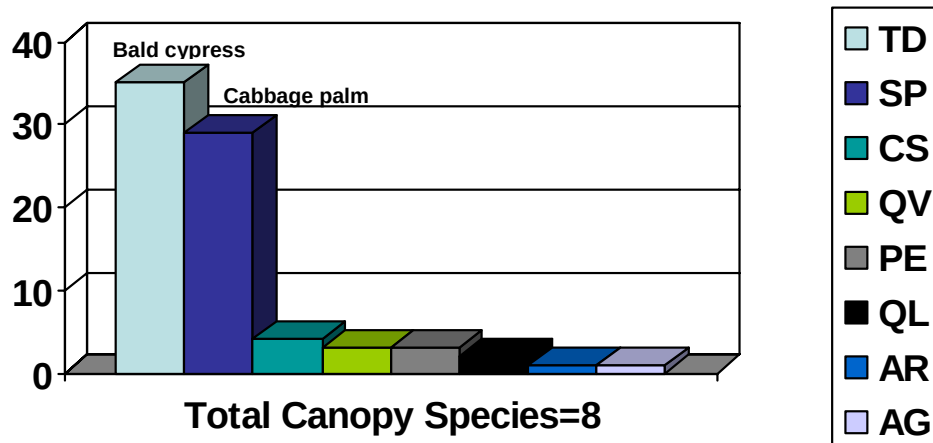


Figure F-1. Transect #1 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

Transect #2 (RM 13.5):
Total Tree Trunks >5cm=83

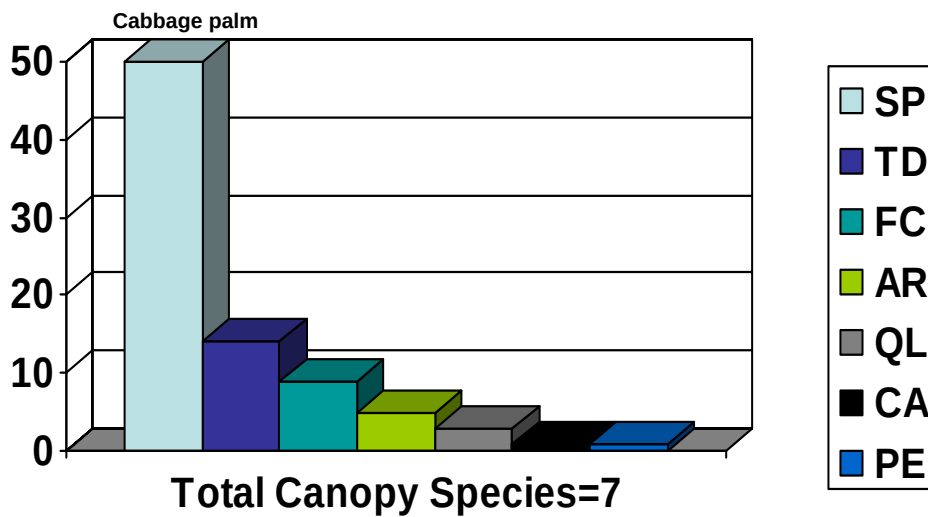


Figure F-2. Transect #2 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

**Transect#3 (Rivermile 12):
Total Tree Trunks >5cm= 106**

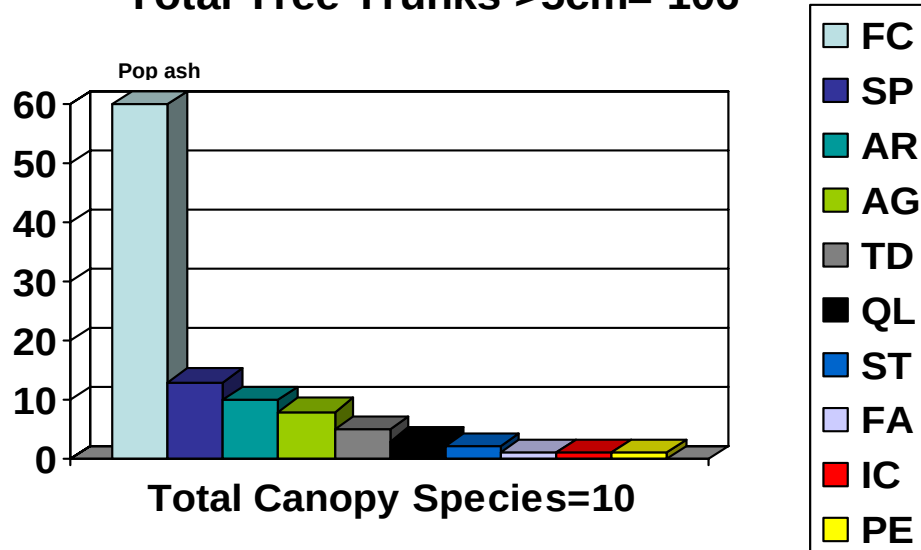


Figure F-3. Transect #3 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

**Transect#4 (Rivermile 11):
Total Tree Trunks >5cm=95**

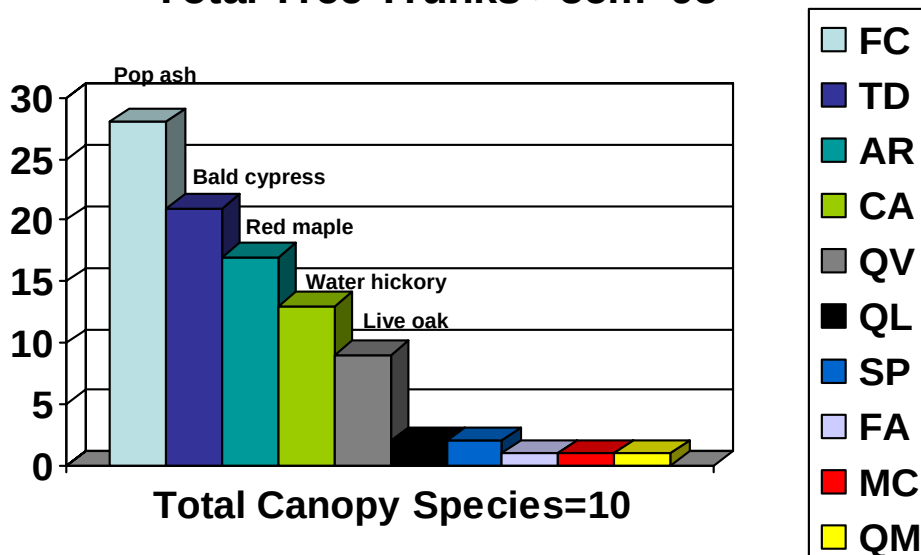


Figure F-4. Transect #4 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

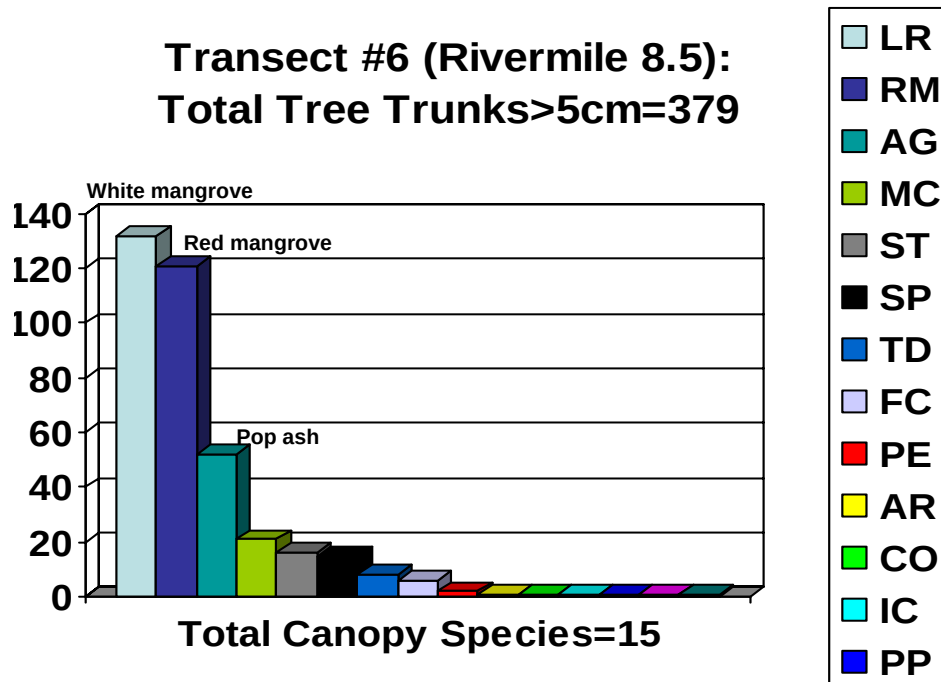


Figure F-5. Transect #6 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

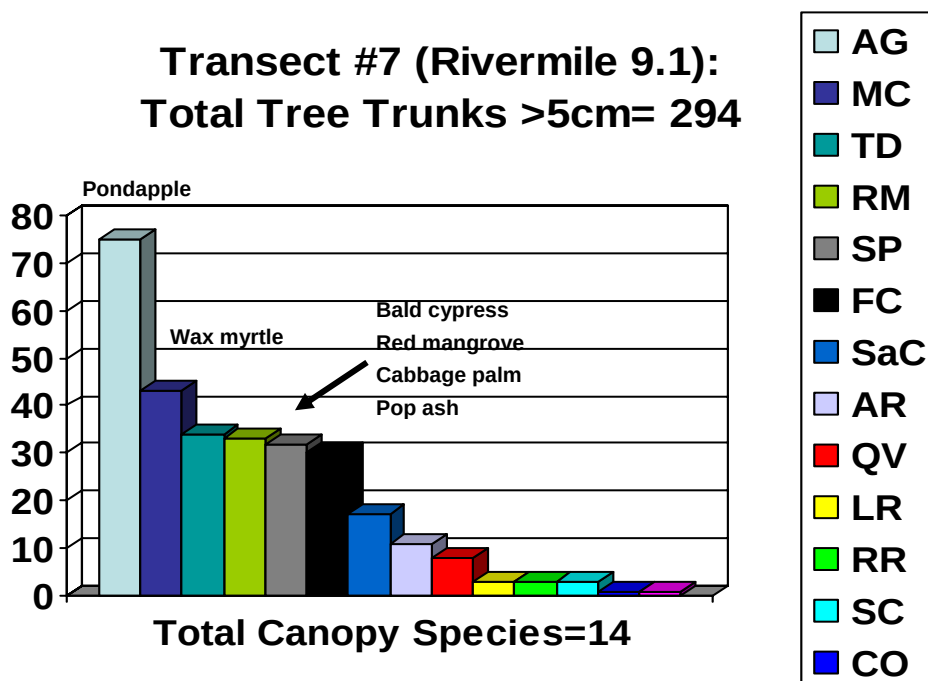


Figure F-6. Transect #7 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

**Transect#9 (Rivermile 6.6):
Total Tree Trunks >5cm=414**

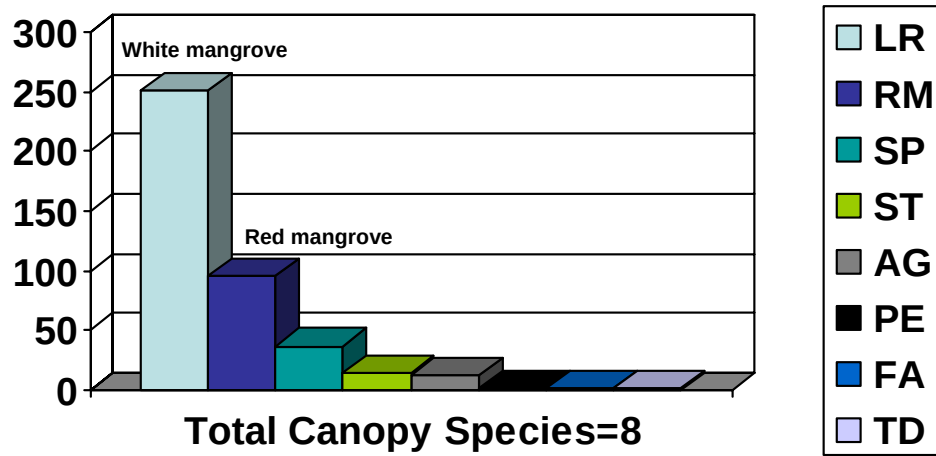


Figure F-7. Transect #9 - Number of Trunks (> 5cm) by Canopy Species.

Appendix G

2003 Vegetation Survey – Transect Profiles

Transect 1

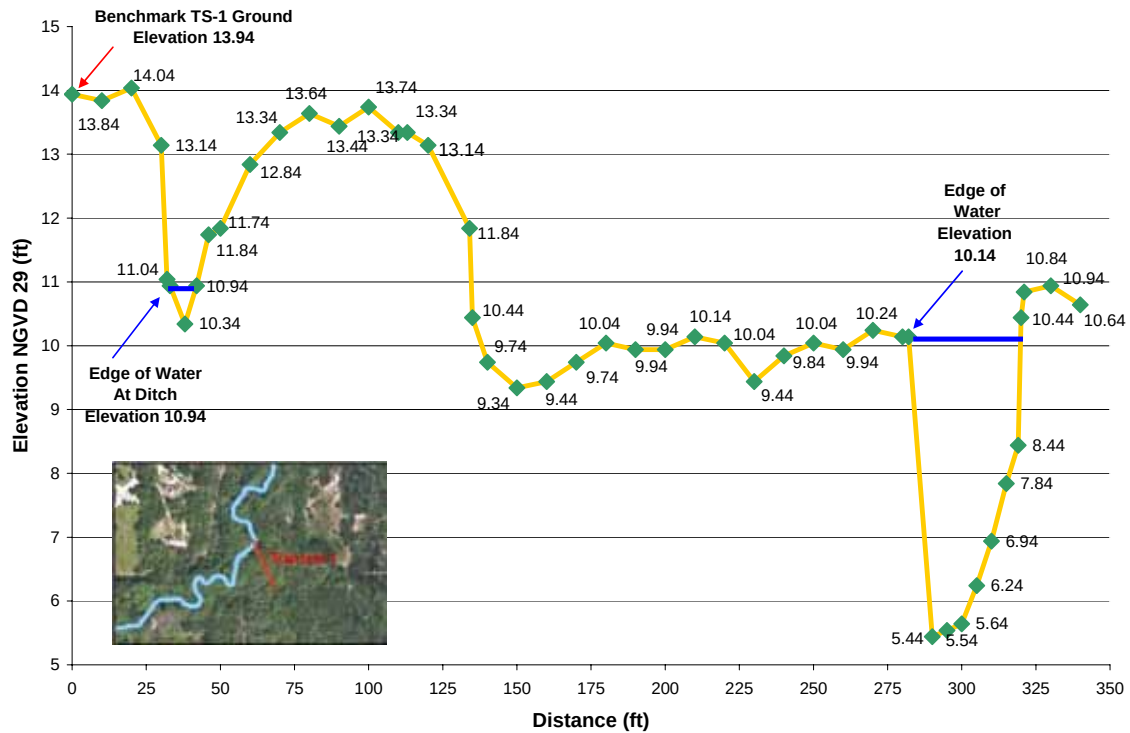


Figure G-1. Transect #1 (RM 14.5) Profile.

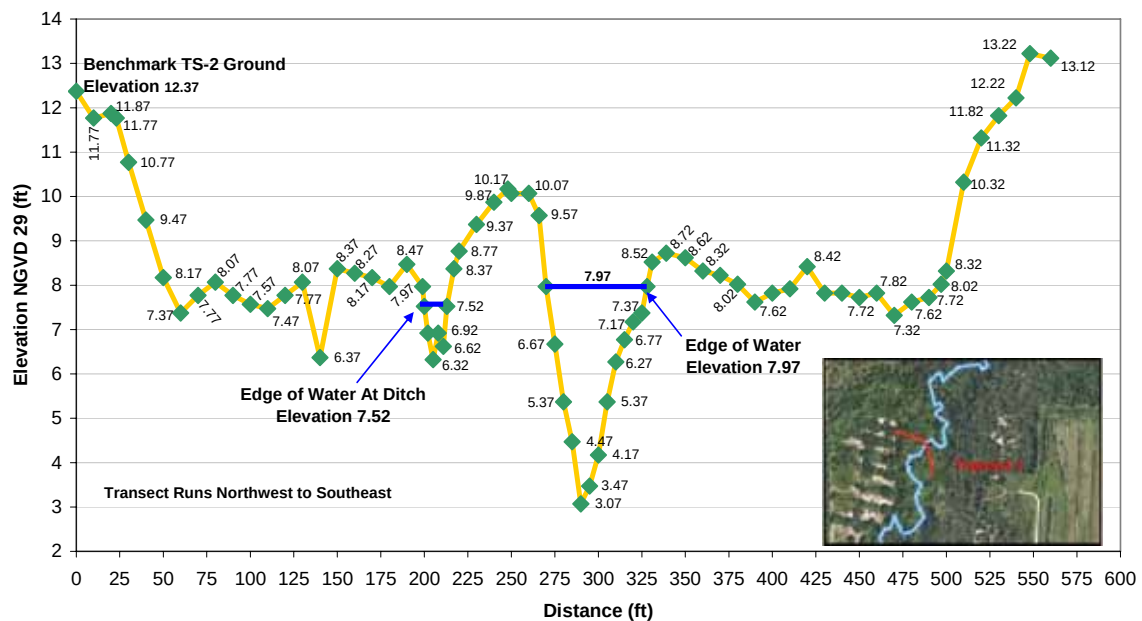
Transect 2
Surveyed In 1983

Figure G-2. Transect #2 (RM 13.5) Profile.

Transect 3

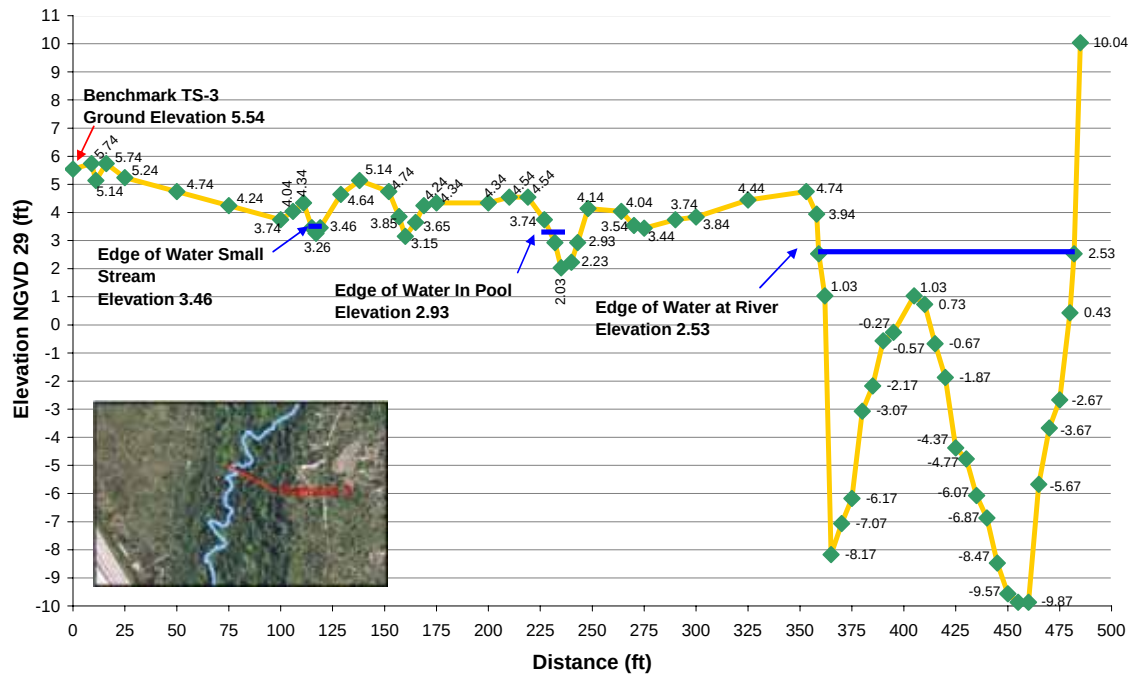


Figure G-3. Transect #3 (RM 12.1) Profile.

Transect 4

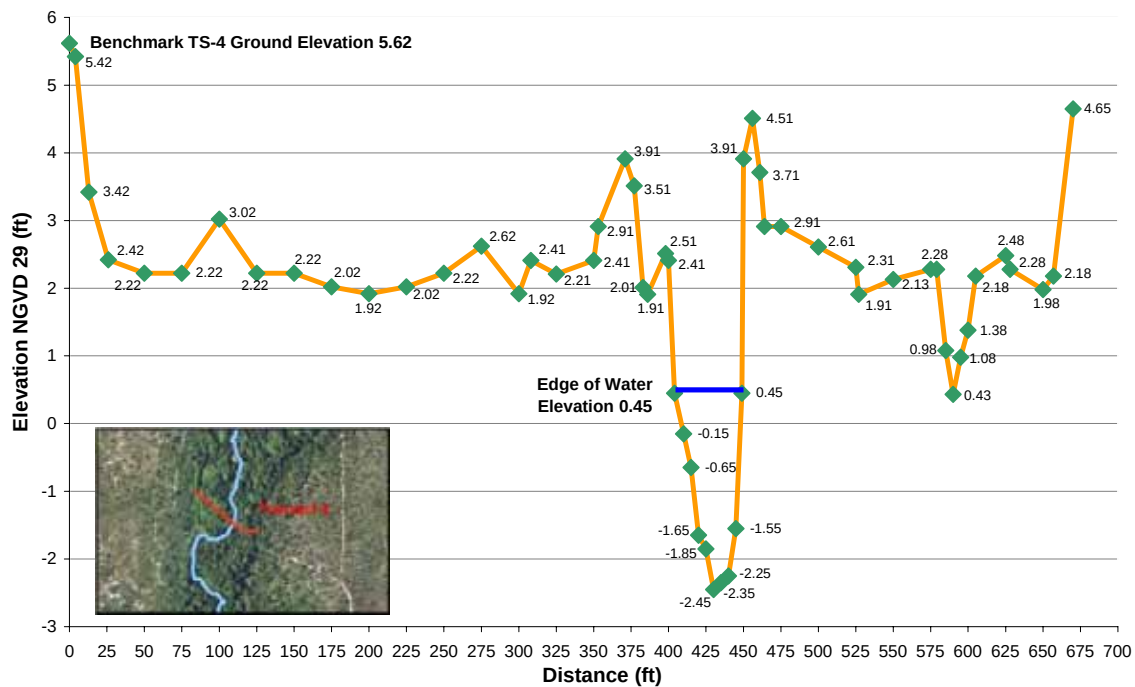


Figure G-4. Transect #4 (RM 11.18) Profile.

Transect 6

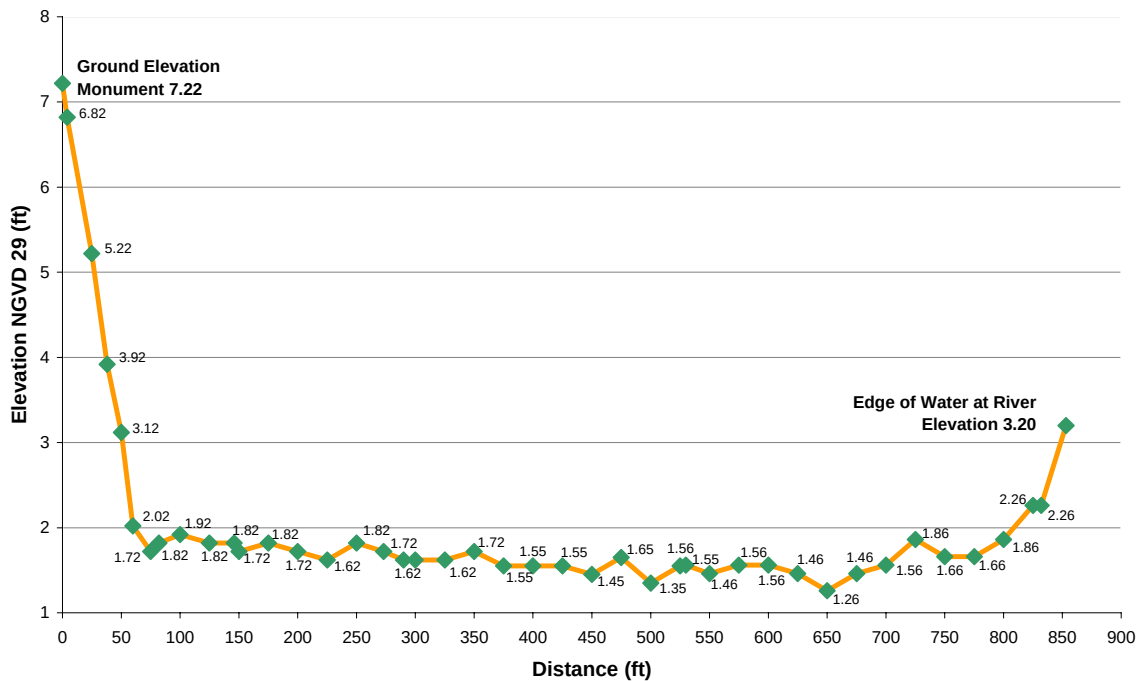


Figure G-5. Transect #6 (RM 8.43) Profile.

Transect 7

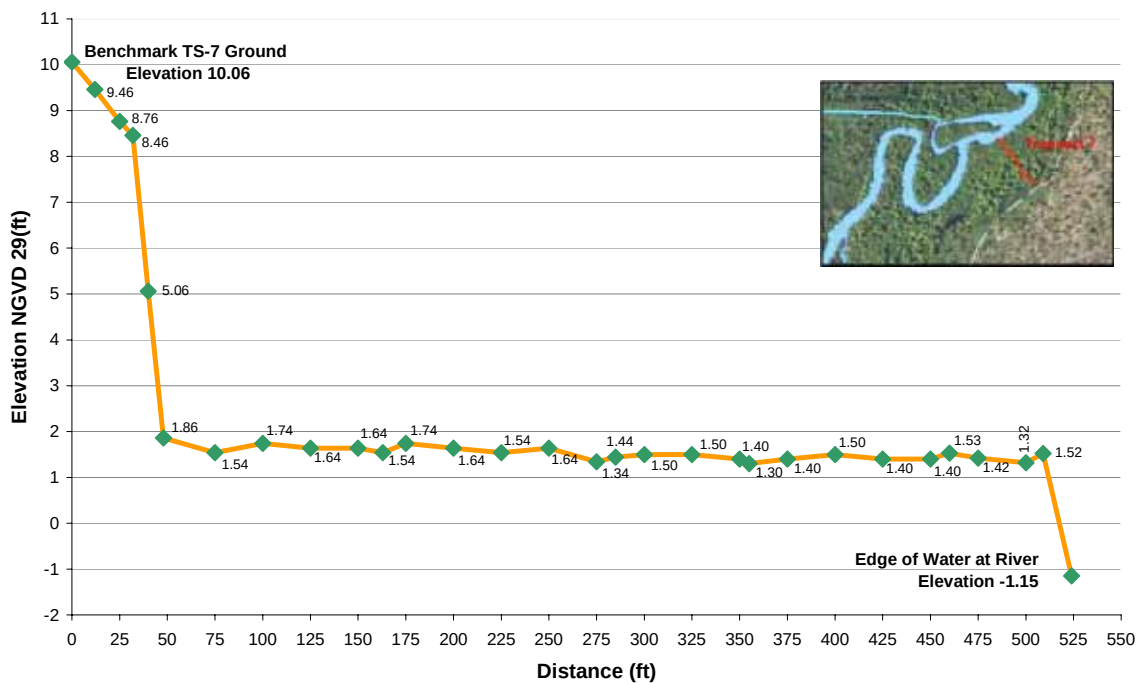


Figure G-6. Transect #7 (RM 9.1) Profile.

Transect 9

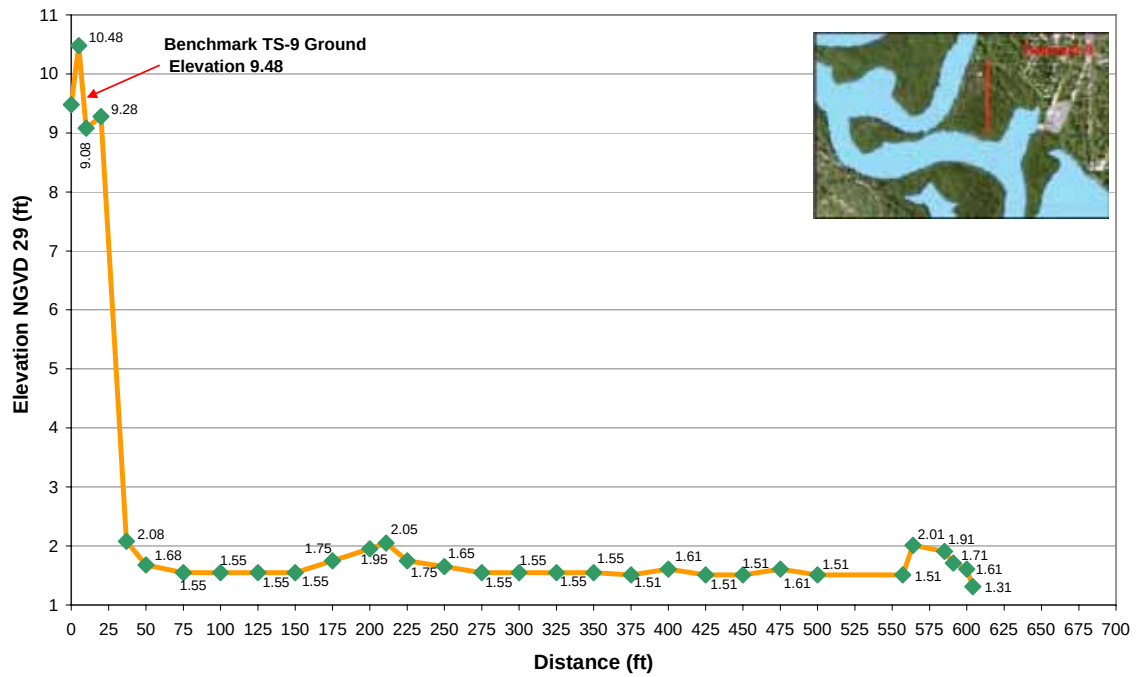


Figure G-7. Transect #9 (RM 6.46) Profile.

Appendix H

Fish Larvae Studies

Introduction

This fish larvae study was undertaken during the dry season (May and June 2004) to determine the influence of the low salinity zone (LSZ) in the Northwest Fork has on larvae recruitment and abundance as well as species composition (Shenker et al. 1983; Houde 1994; Blaber 2000; Dege and Brown 2004). Larvae were sampled weekly from four locations from the Boy Scout Camp Dock to the Trapper Nelson's historical site. The results of this study will be used to determine the flow at which the influx of larvae utilizing the Loxahatchee LSZ may be stressed.

Methods

Four regions between River Miles 6 and 10 were chosen for the initial collections in this portion of the Loxahatchee River (**Figure H-1**). Each region centered on/around RM 7, RM 8, RM 9, and RM 10 with a single replicate tandem plankton tow from 20m to 50m of the previous tow creating eight paired stations: Stations #1 and #2 (RM 10), Stations #3 and #4 (RM 9), Stations #5 and #6 (RM 8) and Stations #7 and #8 (RM 7). During late June (25th) and early July (6th) Stations 1 and 2 were abandoned due to extremely low water levels.

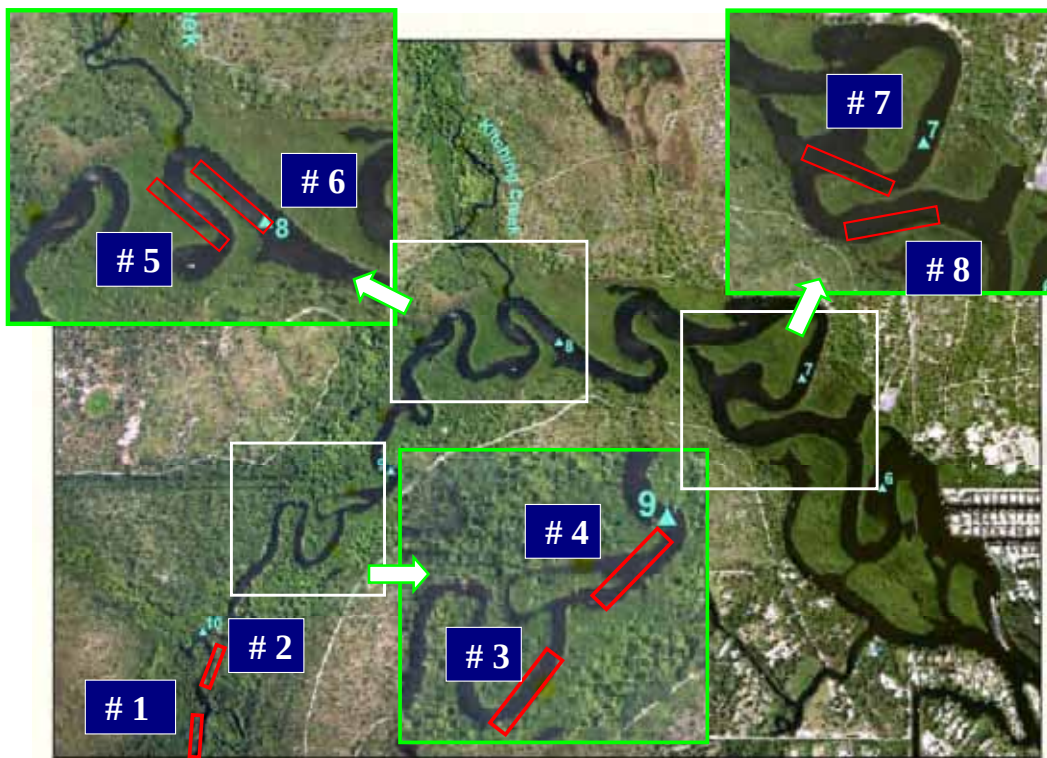


Figure H-1. Location of Zooplankton Transects. Blue Numbers Indicate River Mile, White Numbers on Blue are Station Numbers. East, Downstream is to the Right.

The mid to late dry season was chosen for study to determine the extent of saline intrusion into the Loxahatchee River relative to zooplankton, particularly fish larvae. Previous work in tropical American estuaries had indicated that major migrations of fish larvae occur from the ocean or estuary into riverine ecosystems during the dry season each spring, just before the wet

season begins. Initial experimental collections were made on 17 May 2004 to determine practical limitations in sampling frequency, location and gear behavior. The first routine samples were made during a flooding tide on 17 June. All samples were taken between 1912 and 0030 hours 17 June through 6 July. Nocturnal plankton tows were made using a 0.5-m diameter, 500 micron mesh plankton net pulled 50 m behind a the boat. A 1.0 to 2.0 minute tow was made at each site at standard boat rpm rate of 1,500 rpms, which translated to 0.832 - 1.13 m/sec, or 49 to 136 m per tow. Samples were fixed in 10% buffered formalin for 1 week then rinsed in freshwater and placed in 35% isopropyl alcohol for preservation. All specimens were sorted and identified using a Wild M5 stereo-microscope and placed in species specific containers for permanent storage in 35% isopropyl alcohol.

Water quality information was collected during sampling, however, the most robust data were obtained from continuously recording USGS water quality monitoring sites located from 0 m to 200 m of the tow site. The primary data of interest were salinity and water level information as these parameters were most likely to reveal salinity frontal boundaries and water flow/level conditions, factors which have great influence on biota distribution in the water column and river channel.

Temporal and spatial variations in fish larval and planktonic invertebrate communities were examined statistically using non-parametric statistics due to a variety of data limitations, most notably temporal and sample intensity constraints. Non-parametric statistics were used to determine spatial, temporal and physical parameter relationships with the zooplanktonic community. The PRIMER (Plymouth Routines In Multivariate Ecological Research) statistical program was used for data analyses.

Results

2004 ZOOPLANKTON COLLECTIONS

Total Zooplankton Community Definition: Nineteen 1-2 minute plankton tows captured 124,436 zooplankters on June 17, 25 and July 6, 2004. These samples were sorted and identified with emphasis on larval fish, however, every invertebrate was kept for documentation. Larval fish were often identifiable to species except for eleotrids and gobies. There are at least thirteen larval gobioid fishes (Gobiidae and Eleotridae) that occur within the Loxahatchee River. The larval stages of a number of these have not been described, most notably the tropical *Ctenogobius* species (*C. pseudofasciatus* and *C. fasciatus*), *Awaous banana*, *Gobiomorus dormitor* and *Gobioides brousonettii*. Complete developmental series of *Gobiosoma bosc* were captured and the eleotrid, *Dormitator maculatus* was well represented. However, for these analyses familial and superfamily level classifications were most practical. The only larval pipefish captured were opossum pipefish, *Microphis brachyurus lineatus*. This is the first time larval opossum pipefish were captured as they migrated seaward from their release in freshwater tributaries.

A total of 27 different taxonomic groups were separated for this analysis. Crustaceans dominated the samples accounting for 80% to 96% of the number of individuals captured **Figure H-2**. Larval fish abundance increased from >1% of the catch to 4%. No eggs were collected on June 17, but 1,092 of at least three types were collected at Stations 7 and 8 on June 25; on July 6, 20 eggs were collected at Station 3 and 27 eggs were collected at Station 8. This indicated spawning activity in late June and upstream and downstream in early July. Circular eggs with oil droplets were attributed to fish spawning activity.

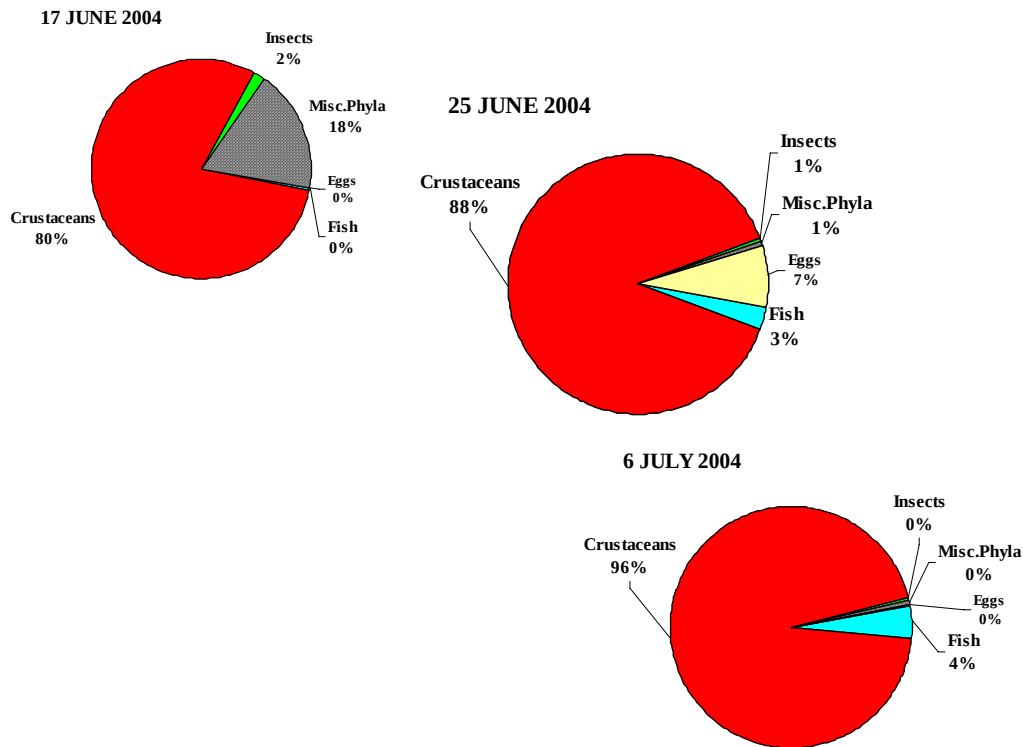


Figure H-2. Composition of Entire Zooplankton Collection Based on Number of Individuals Captured.

The “meroplankton,” which are temporary zooplankton consisting primarily of the larval stages of various non-planktonic aquatic or aerial/terrestrial organisms, were separated from the “holoplankton,” which are those planktonic groups that spend their entire life history in a planktonic environment. Several mysid morphologies were observed and placed in the holoplankton category.

The holoplankton consisted primarily of mysids (at least two species), cumaceans and copepods (**Figure H-3**). Relative numbers of mysids increased significantly, an order of magnitude from 17 June, 45% (111 individuals), to 25 June, 91% (1,899 individuals), then decreased to 77% (1,594 individuals) by 6 July (**Figure H-3**). Mysids were consistently most abundant at Station 6, at the mouth of Kitching Creek. Cumaceans declined in relative abundance, contribution to the entire sample, but total numbers remained about the same or increased as well as an increase in the number of sites they were captured, one to four of six stations from 17 June to 6 July. Cumacean populations were most abundant at the higher salinity locations, Stations 5, 6, 7, and 8. Copepods were not most effectively captured with a 505 micron mesh plankton net, so accurate numbers were not obtained. However, nearly all copepods were captured at the

highest salinities at Stations 7 and 8, increasing numbers from 17 June, 69 individuals to 322 individuals on 6 July.

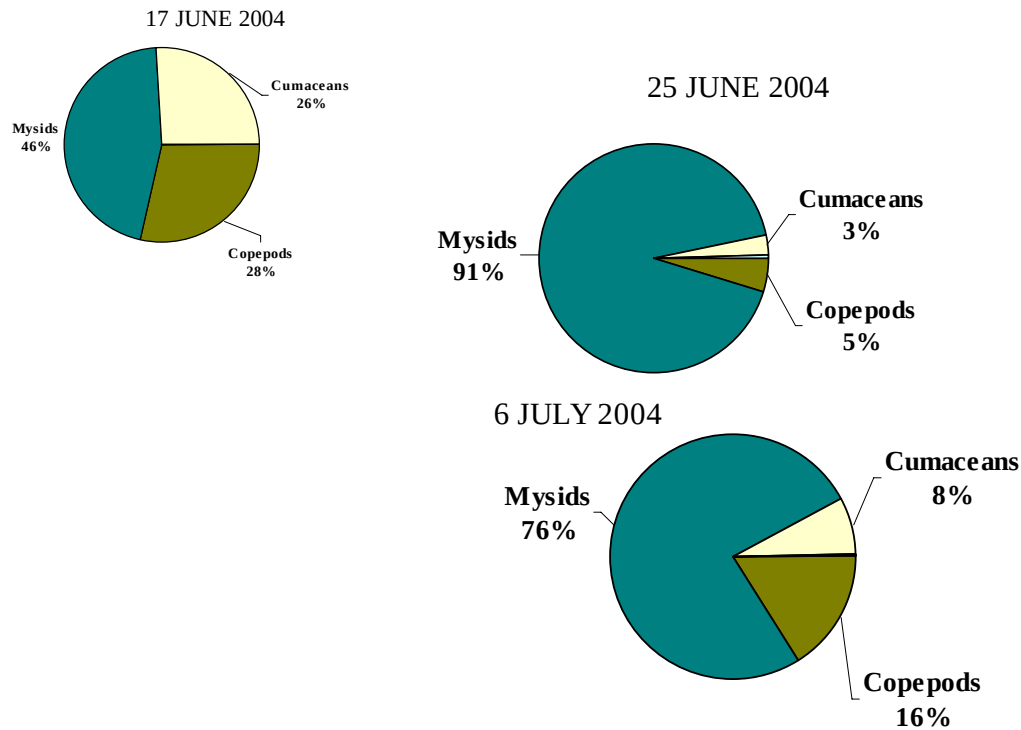


Figure H-3. Crustacean Holoplankton Contribution Based on Densities (number/m³).

Temporal analysis of the meroplankton was divided between crustacean and teleostean taxa. Crustacean meroplankton consisted of brachyuran crab larvae, zoea, megalopa and palaemonid shrimp, as well as cyprid, barnacle parts (**Figure H-4**). Also included were peracaridean crustaceans, amphipods (three species) and isopods (two species). Judging from the number of amphipod tubes and benthic isopods captured it is possible that these latter taxa were brought up from the bottom by turbulence from the boat passage or with net contact with the bottom, however, the majority of individuals were captured at the deeper higher salinity stations downstream, Stations 7 and 8, where it was least likely that the net or boat motor turbulence came in contact with the bottom. Amphipods contributed 7% to 26% of the total crustacean meroplankton catch, increasing in numbers captured from 668 17 June to 2,911 on 6 July. Zoea larvae contributed the largest relative number of individuals to the meroplankton, 49% (1,264 individuals) 17 June increasing to 84% of the catch (9,307 individuals) on 25 June, then declining to 64% (7,337 individuals) by 6 July. The majority of zoea larvae were captured at Station 5 on 17 June, but at Station 6, 25 June and 6 July surrounding the mouth of Kitching Creek. The majority of megalopa larvae were captured at Stations 5 and 6 around the mouth of Kitching Creek, particularly at Station 6; 25 June and 6 July.

When comparing overall abundance of meroplankton versus holoplankton it is obvious that the temporary increase in larval forms of crustaceans and teleosts makes the greatest overall contribution to the zooplankton of the Loxahatchee River using a 505 micron mesh net.

Fish contributed a relatively small percentage of the meroplankton and total zooplankton, 0.01% to 4% in our collections (**Figure H-3**). Station and monthly trends in ichthyoplankton abundance follows that of the meroplankton with increases in overall fish abundance from

10 individuals captured on 17 June to 423 and 461 on 25 June and 6 July. The majority of fish larvae captured on 25 June and 6 July were captured at Station 6, which is just downstream of Kitching Creek. The most numerous taxa were gobioid fishes (gobiidae and eleotridae). The most abundant identifiable species was the naked goby, *Gobiosoma bosc*, a benthic species that typically associates with benthic structures such as oyster reefs. At least five other species of gobies contributed to our gobioid larval collections, but these species have not been definitively identified. There are fifteen additional gobies known to occur in the Loxahatchee River. These gobies are the freshwater tolerant species. Gobies by far outnumber all other ichthyoplankton families in biomass, numbers and species. They represent the richest and most productive fish larval component in the Loxahatchee River ecosystem. The Loxahatchee, St. Lucie and St. Sebastian Rivers contain the richest gobioid fish fauna within the continental United States (Hastings 1979; Gilmore in prep.).

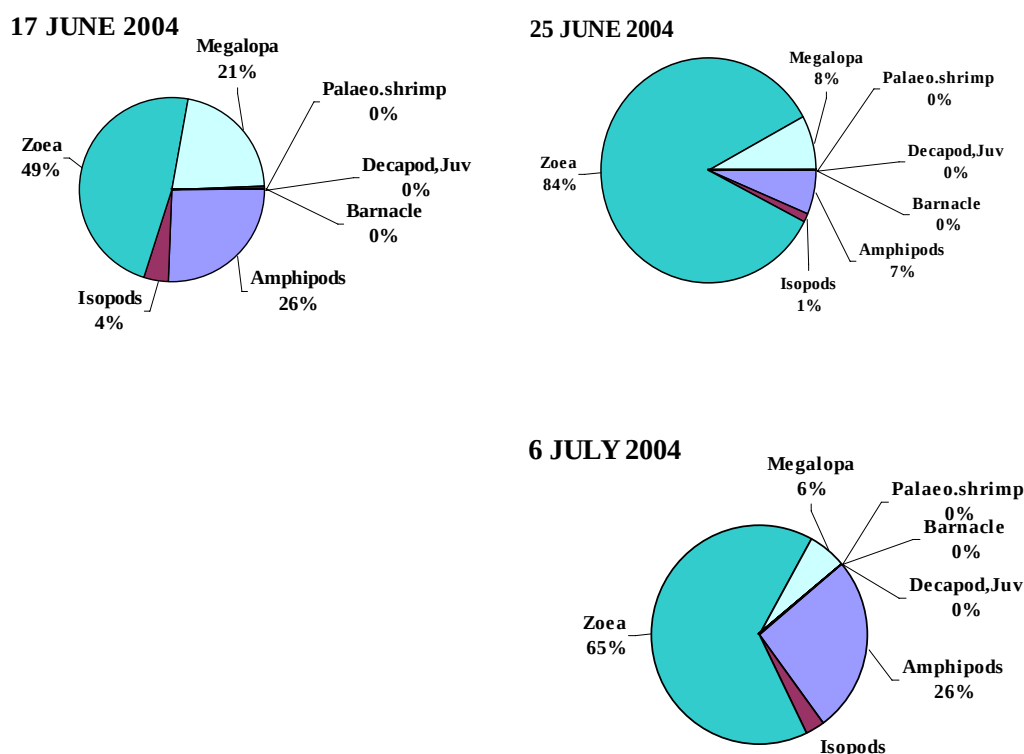


Figure H-4. Crustacean Meroplankton Composition Based on Densities.

The next most abundant fish larvae were the anchovies (engraulidae) which also substantially increased in abundance from 17 June (1 individual) to 6 July (86 individuals), over 75% of these being taken at Station 6, near the mouth of Kitching Creek. *Anchoa mitchilli* was the only species for which a definitive identification was made. Other *Anchoa* species that have been recorded from the Loxahatchee River and adjacent estuary are *A. hepsetus*, *A. cubana*, and *A. lyolepis*.

Syngnathid larvae were also consistently captured each month increasing from 1 to 7 between 17 and 25 June, declining to 2 on 6 July. All syngnathid larvae were identified as the tropical opossum pipefish, *Microphis brachyurus lineatus*, which is the only catadromous fish species in the Loxahatchee River besides the American eel, *Anguilla rostrata* (not collected). Opossum pipefish juvenile metamorphose to adults in freshwater and spawn in freshwater. The larvae drift

downstream to the ocean where they develop for an undetermined period before returning to freshwater to mature and mate. They were first described by Gilmore (1977a,b).

Silversides, atherinidae, were fourth in relative abundance. Four atherinid species occur in the Loxahatchee River and adjacent estuary, *Membras martinica*, *Menidia beryllina*, *M. peninsulae* and *Labidesthes sicculus*.

Other notable fish larvae captured include larval tarpon, *Megalops atlantica*, (megalopidae) captured upstream at Station 3 on 6 July and mojarra larvae (gerreidae) captured downstream at Station 7 on 17 June. Though there are at least eleven gerreid species occurring in the Loxahatchee River and adjacent estuary, only four routinely enter freshwater, *Diapterus auratus*, *Eugerres plumieri*, *Eucinostomus harengulus* and *E. gula*. Larvae of these species cannot be identified as no descriptions have been published. A larval soleid, *Trinectes maculatus* was taken at Station 6, 25 June.

Notably absent from the Loxahatchee River collections were the larvae of the common snook, *Centropomus undecimalis*. Many larval snook were captured in a plankton tow made in the Jupiter Inlet on 2 July, 2004 where spawning adult snook were noted. However, since our riverine collections were made when local snook populations were spawning, it appears that snook larvae do not enter the Loxahatchee River. However, seine collections made during June and July in the Loxahatchee River not only captured small juvenile stages of the common snook, but also a new record to the continental United States, the smallscale fat snook, *Centropomus mexicanus*.

Also notably absent from these ichthyoplankton collections were any primary freshwater fish species, cyprinids, catastomids or centrarchids. They were totally absent even at the low salinity (<1.0 ppt) stations taken in mid June. They all are known to spawn at this time of year in warm temperate and temperate rivers further north and on Florida's Gulf coast. It appears the Loxahatchee river ichthyofauna is numerically dominated by fish species with marine affinities. Most are diadromus species and tropical.

HISTORICAL 1986-1988 ZOOPLANKTON COLLECTIONS

Zooplankton collections were made within the Loxahatchee River and Estuary from January 1986 to January 1988 by Robert Chamberlain of SFWMD. Monthly zooplankton samples were taken with 5 minute standard tows of a 0.5 m, 505 micron mesh net set from a boom off the side of a boat. These samples were all taken at night on a flooding tide. The two stations whose data were used to compare with the 2004 data were located below Loxahatchee RM 8. Station 28 was located at the same general location as Stations 7 (RM 7.0) and 8 (RM 6.8) taken in 2004. Station 25 was located at RM 5.3. All fish larvae captured during 1986-1988 were identified to species whenever possible. However, these data were used in this study at the family level only. One of the major reasons for this is that the majority of larval gobioid fishes which dominate the Loxahatchee River ichthyoplankton, have not been described as larvae. The potential for a variety of tropical species to occur in the collections is great.

The 1986-1988 study allowed a qualitative and quantitative comparison to be made with 2004 zooplankton collections. From this comparison the Loxahatchee River ichthyoplankton community is defined.

The only location that completely overlapped between the 2004 and the 1986-1988 studies was our Stations 7 and 8 with Chamberlain's Station 28. These sites were identical. For this reason all the monthly collections at Station 28 were used for most of the quantitative analyses in this study. The most complete monthly collection year was 1987. The relative composition of the various fish families to the collections at Station 28 are presented in **Figures H-5 and H-6**. It is obvious that the same families dominated in the same order of numerical abundance in 1987 as it did in our limited collections in 2004: gobioids first (30% - 93% of the April to July 86-87 fish

fauna), engraulids second (5%-69%), syngnathids third (0.4%-52%). These three families were the only ones to have 100% occurrence in zooplankton samples in 2004 and April to July in 1986-1987.

Atherinids were common (0 - 5%) in the 25 June 1986 samples as they were in the 25 June 2004 samples (1%). However, clupeids (0-5%) and sciaenids (0-2%) were more abundant in the historical collections on a year round basis. This is undoubtedly due to their spawning activity in fall, winter and spring, periods we missed in our collections.

Chamberlain's Station 25 was examined, as it would give us some indication of potential change in zooplankton densities with salinity. Ichthyoplankton concentrations and species composition was considerably lower at Station 25 when compared to Station 28. This difference is a major factor under examination in the next section, where physical attributes of the water column are examined relative to fish larval abundance.

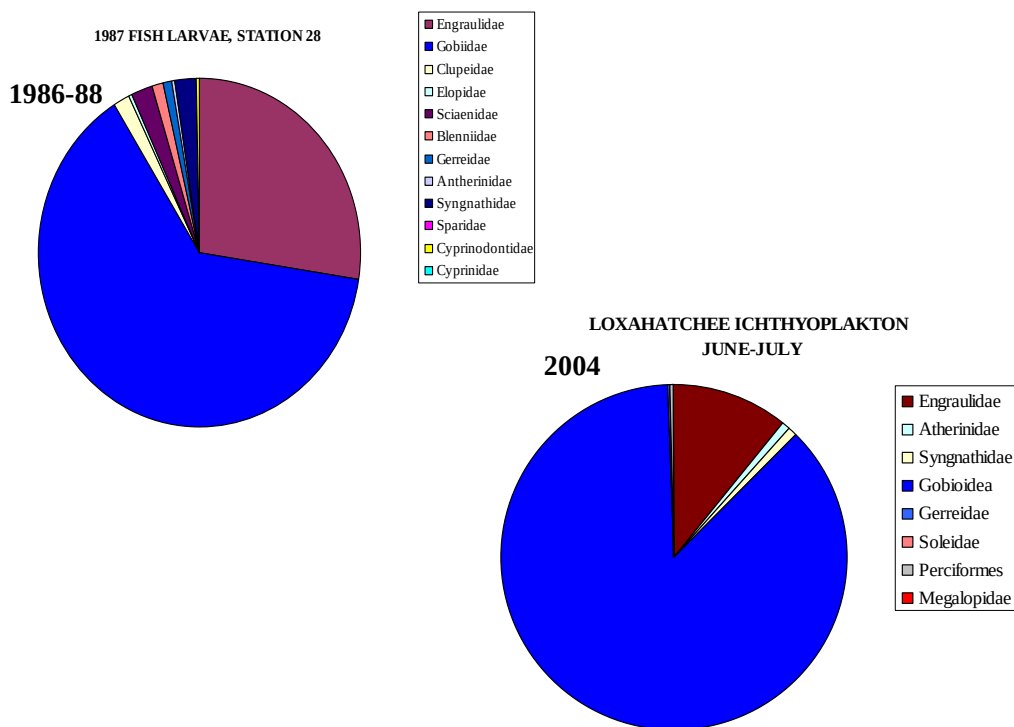


Figure H-5. Ichthyoplankton Composition: All Collections Combined for 1986-1988 and 2004.

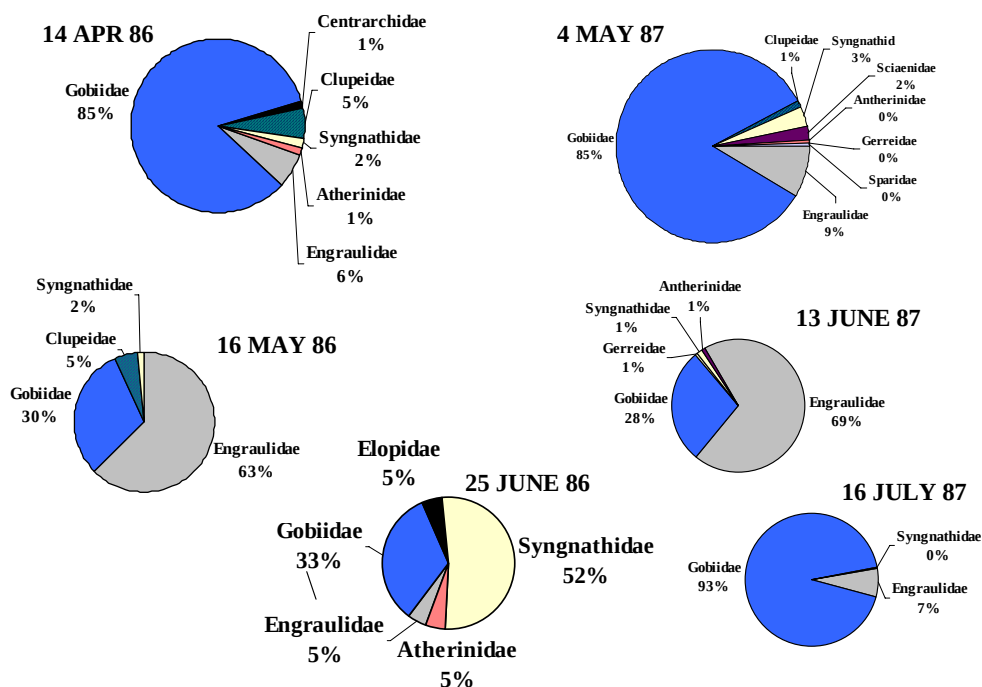


Figure H-6. 1986-1988 Data Showing Seasonal Change in Relative Abundance of Ichthyoplankton During the Spring-Early Summer, Dry-Wet Season Transition.

ICHTHYOPLANKTON DYNAMICS: DIFFERENTIAL INFLUENCE OF WATER LEVEL AND SALINITY

Ichthyofaunal Spatial-Temporal Distribution: Differential Effect of Water Level, Location and Salinity: The major concern in this work was the influence of fresh water versus salt water on ichthyoplankton distribution. Flow rates and turbidity were significant factors. There are several physical parameters for which we had data to compare with our biological collections in the Loxahatchee River. These included dissolved oxygen, various nutrients, water turbidity, flow rates, water level, temperature, tides, lunar phase, pH and salinity. Dissolved oxygen remained relatively high through both 1986-1988 and 2004 collection periods with only a couple of instances of significantly low values. Temperature was more of a seasonal factor and not as much a factor at this latitude as water level and salinity. Since obvious water level effects were observed in this very shallow stream, even to the point of not allowing 0.5 m plankton tows to be made upstream of River Mile 9, this parameter had to be examined.

The three primary parameters to be analyzed for this report are water level, station location and salinity. Once water level factors are understood then salinity effects can be clearly defined. Although salinity was chosen as a primary parameter, there are other factors associated with salinity and freshwater flows can influence these data. Turbidity, nutrient levels, phytoplankton productivity and species composition can all show direct relationships to salinity levels. Thus salinity can act as a potential indicator of these other factors. Detailed physical parameter data were taken continuously within minutes at the USGS gauging stations; only the mean values were used.

2004 Water Level Effects: Figure H-7 plots the water level variation during the day of zooplankton collections 17, 25 June, and 6 July 2004. The blue shaded box designates the period of actual sample collection, 1900 – 2400 hrs. Collections were made on an incoming flood tide on 17 June with a mean water level of 1.94 m during the sampling period. Collections made 25 June and 6 July were made on an ebbing tide with maximum water levels of 0.3 m on the 25th, possibly less on 6 July. This presented a significant difference in water levels between the 17 June and the later collections which could potentially influence the zooplankton collections.

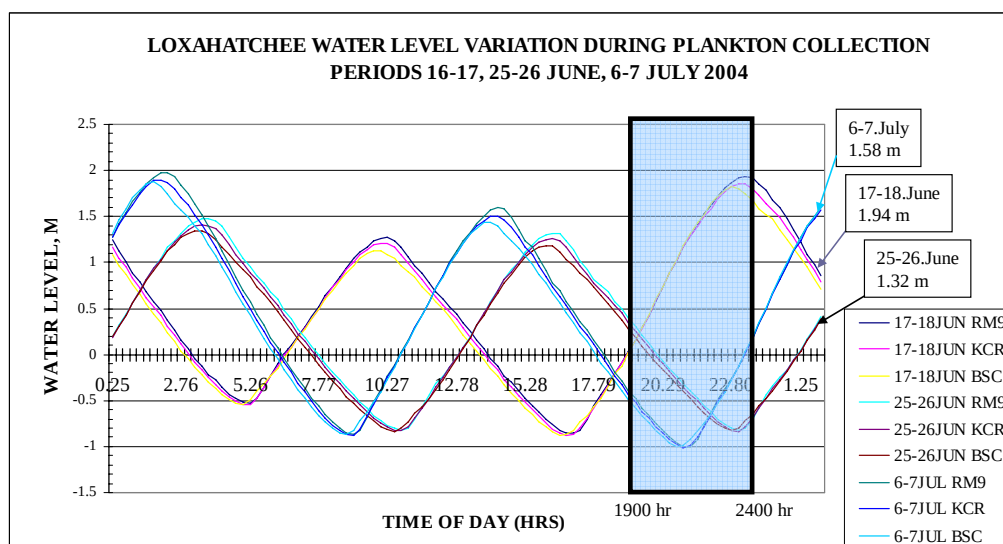


Figure H-7. Water Level Fluctuation Before and During Zooplankton Sampling 17-25 June and 6 July 2004 Taken From All USGS Stations Between RM 6 and RM 9.

Figure H-8 represents a cluster from a similarity analysis using salinity and water level values from all stations. It reveals a closer similarity between stations upstream of RM 8, though the high water collections made on 17 June still show some differentiation. RM 7 shows the greatest distinction from upstream stations using these physical factors. Zooplankton clusters follow a similar pattern.

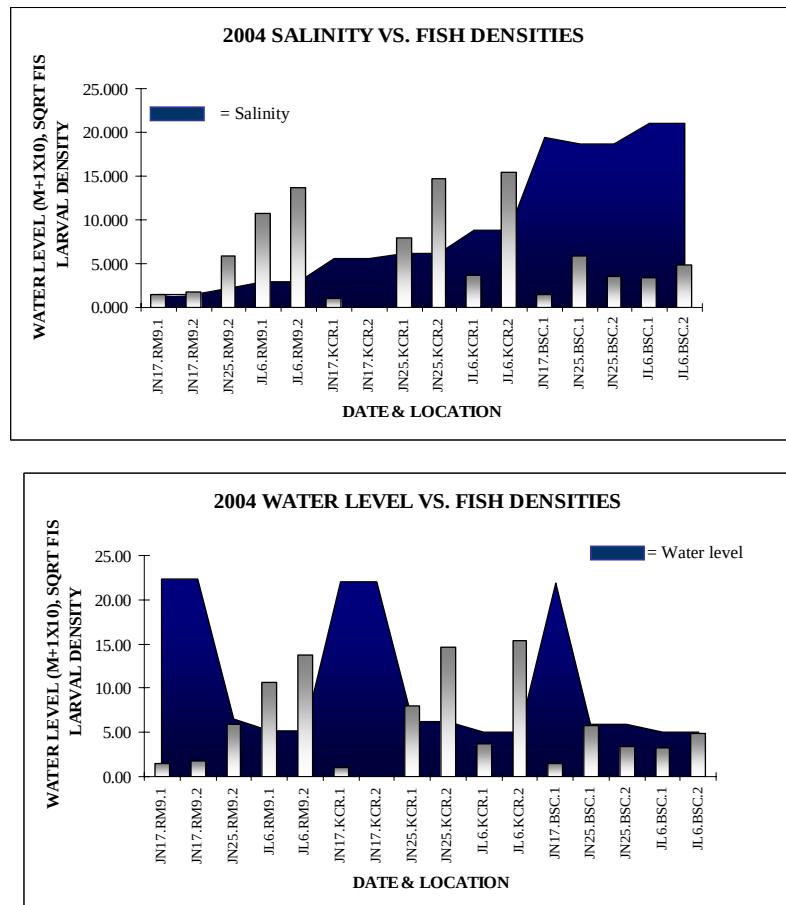


Figure H-8. Mean Fish Density for All 2004 Stations Relative to Water Level (in Meters +1 ×10) and Salinity (ppt).

1986-1988 Water Level Effects: Historical 1986-1988 data from the Loxahatchee River was examined for water level effects. It was anticipated that water level influence would be identical at both Stations 25 and 28 while salinities would differ between the two. A comparison of ichthyoplankton collections reveals a much greater densities of fish larvae at Station 28, than at Station 25, particularly during the dry season, February to July 1987 (**Figure H-9**). As water level fluctuations were not that dissimilar between the two locations it would appear that salinity would have a greater effect. However, at both locations the lowest fish larvae captures occurred during the highest water levels, fall both in 1986 and 1987. This reveals a seasonal water level effect. An unusual dry season peak in water level, March 1987, still revealed high fish larval abundance. This occurrence has implications on water level influence which may be different from that observed in the 2004 work. Reasons for this will be discussed with some comparative documentation in the Results and Discussion section.

A PCA analysis of 1986-1988 fish larval data from Stations 25 and 28 relative to water levels and salinities at both stations reveals close overlap in water level values for both stations and a wide salinity separation with the Station 28 salinity revealing the greatest affinity to the fish larval abundance pattern. The salinity at Station 25 was most divergent from all the other parameters. This implicates salinity as a major factor influencing fish larval abundance.

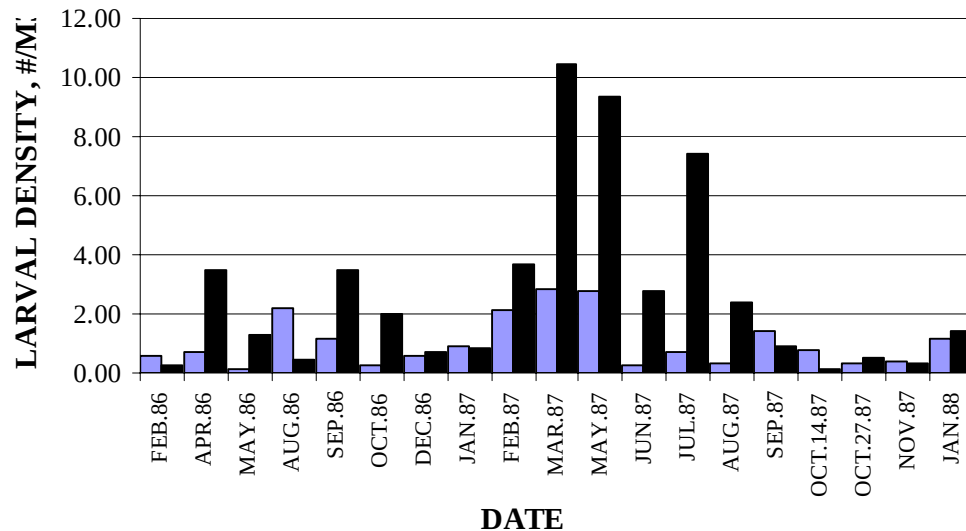


Figure H-9. Comparison of Spatial Variation in Larval Densities from Station 25 (Blue) and Station 28 (Black), 1986-1988.

2004 Salinity Effects: USGS salinity data were analyzed for a 3-month period, 1 June to 31 August 2004 from gauging stations at RM 6, RM 8 and RM 9. The major change in salinity from greater than 15 ppt to less than 10 ppt occurs between RM 6 and RM 8; RM 8 is at the mouth of Kitching Creek. From RM 8 to RM 9 the salinity consistently stays below 5 ppt even during this drought period. The passage of Hurricane Charlie is apparent in August pushing RM 6 post-hurricane salinities to salinities similar to those at RM 8 observed during the drought period. This is significant in that most June and early July larval fish were captured at salinities between 2 ppt and 8 ppt between RM 8 and RM 9.

Figure H-10 presents larval fish and crustacean abundance relative to salinity and collection station in 2004. Two patterns are apparent: 1) both crustacean and fish numbers decline between Stations 5/6 and Stations 7/8; 2) larval fish and crustaceans are most abundant at Stations 5/6, fish from 3 to 6, where salinities ranged from 2 ppt to 8 ppt. **Figure H-11** presents the fish and crustacean data converted as square root number of individuals, showing both fish and crustacean numbers decline considerably at RM 7, Stations 7/8 where salinities exceed 12 ppt.

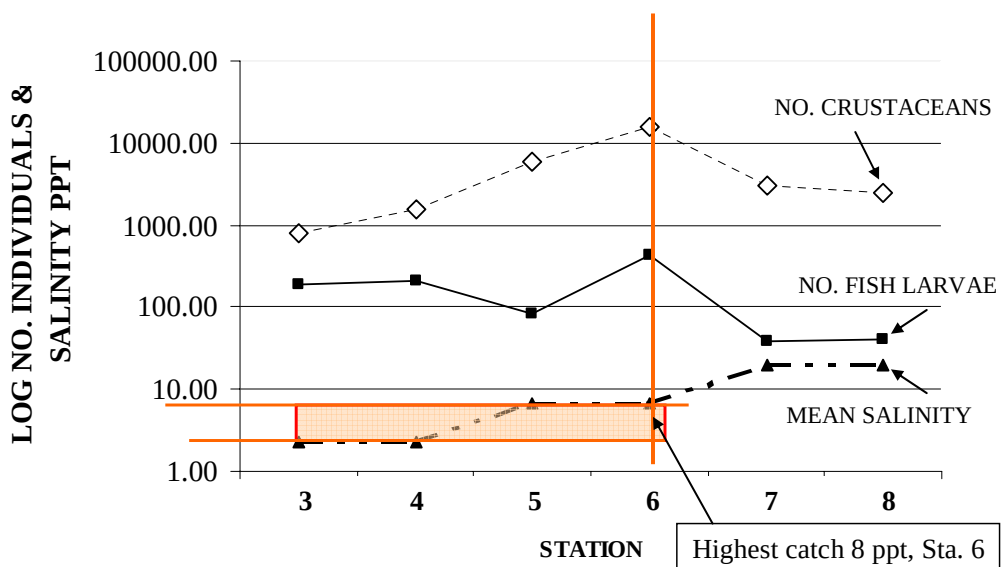


Figure H-10. Larval Fish (sq. root number of individuals) and Salinity for All 2004 Collections Downstream of Stations 1 and 2. Orange Box Surrounds Salinity Region of Greatest Fish Larvae Abundance.

LARVAL FISH AND CRUSTACEANS, LOXAHATCHEE RIVER, JUNE-JULY 2004

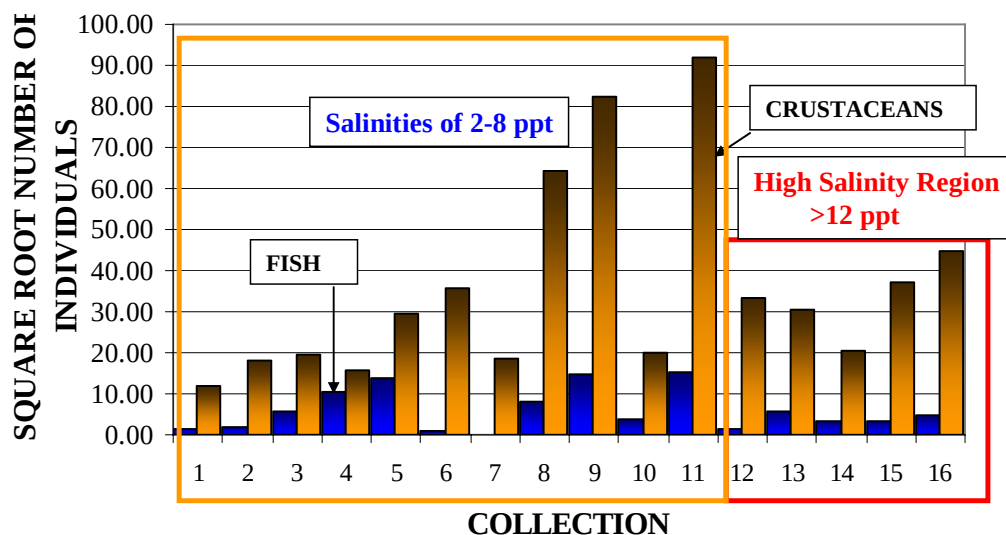


Figure H-11. Larval Fish and Crustacean Abundance from Upstream Collections 1-5 to Downstream Collection 12-16 Revealing Differential Spatial Distribution June-July 2004.

1986-1988 Data: Spatial and Temporal Distribution: Differential Effect of Water Level and Salinity: The 1986-1988 data allows considerable perspective on temporal distribution of both physical and biological parameters. Multiannual, seasonal and monthly patterns in water level and salinity are apparent (**Figures H-12 and H-13**). The 2 ppt to 8 ppt salinity window that coincided with the greatest zooplankton abundance in the 2004 study is marked by a yellow line in **Figures H-12 and H-13**. At Station 28, (RM 7), the general periods when salinities are within the 2-8 ppt range are January-April both in 1986 and 1987 with June and August hovering around 2 ppt. When compared to Station 25 further toward the estuary (**Figure H-13**), the only periods when salinities enter the 2-8 ppt window are in June, August and October. The remainder of the year they are above 8 ppt, typically between 10 and 20 ppt at this location. The typical regional highest water levels associated with high rainfall, river flow and annual sea level rise is observed in the fall in both Stations 25 and 28. However, 1987 appears to be a drier summer-fall year with salinities remaining high in spite of a water level increase. This means during 1987 the freshwater flow component of annual sea level rise (of the three major components, rainfall and freshwater runoff, onshore easterly winds and North Atlantic Ocean basin expansion due to warming) was not very large. Low 1986 summer-fall and winter salinities and freshwater flows in the Loxahatchee River during this period reduced salinities from June 1986 to March 1987. The atypical rise in water level in March 1987 associated with a low salinity at Station 28 must be due either anomalous rainfall at this time or freshwater release from water control structures.

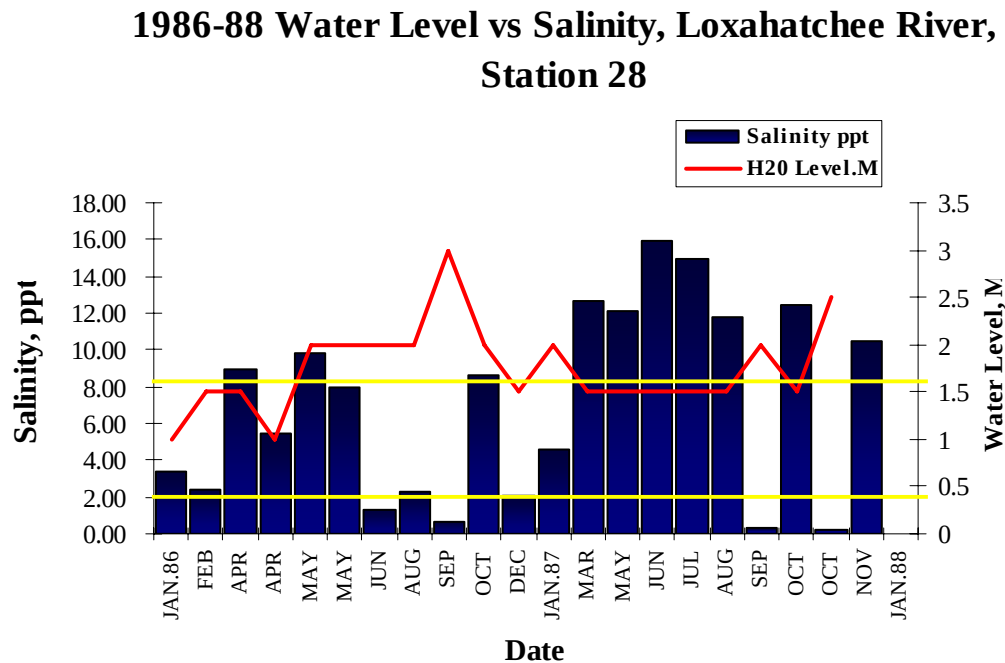


Figure H-12. Water Level and Salinity, Station 28, 1986-1988. Yellow Lines Demark the 2-8 ppt Salinity Preference Observed for Goby Larvae in 2004 and 1986-1988 Data.

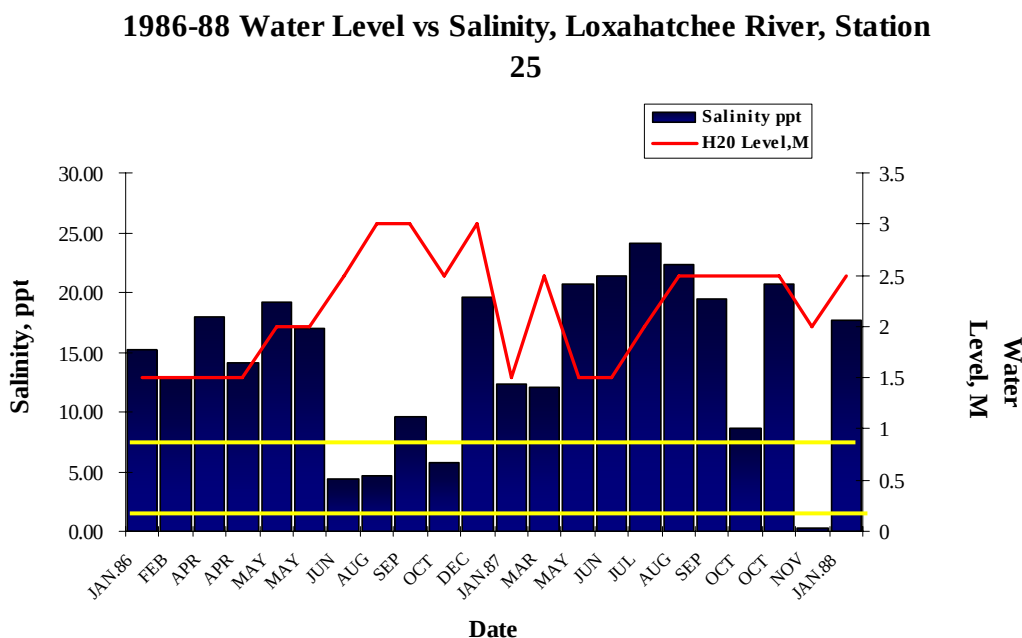


Figure H-13. Water Level and Salinity, Station 25, 1986-1988. Yellow Lines Demark the 2-8 ppt Salinity Preference Observed for Goby Larvae in 2004 and 1986-1988 Data.

Fish larval densities are plotted with the salinities in **Figure H-14**, again with the 2-8 ppt salinity box depicted. Fish densities associated with salinities within the 2-8 ppt range are noted with orange boxes. These periods also mark the time of the highest concentration of fish larvae at Station 28 during the 2-year period. The third highest larval count was taken in July 1987 at salinities above 14 ppt. However, this is the period of the year with the lowest water levels, thus the potential to concentrate larvae, or move larvae downstream from exposed and reduced upstream habitats. Since the majority of the typical wet season in 1987 shows high salinities at Station 28, it is likely that drought conditions were occurring late spring to fall. This would produce low flows, low water levels and higher than average salinities. The result would be little optimum salinity occurrence, 2-8 ppt at Station 28 and few fish larvae. This was the case September 1987 through January 1988.

Fish larval collections were considerably lower at Station 25 than those at Station 28. The ambient salinity pattern at Station 25 is high relative to Station 28 and only showed the optimum 2-8 ppt window June through October 1986. This was the period when most fish larvae were captured in 1986. Numbers of larvae were also captured February through May in 1987 when salinities dropped from 20 ppt to between 10-15 ppt and water levels fell.

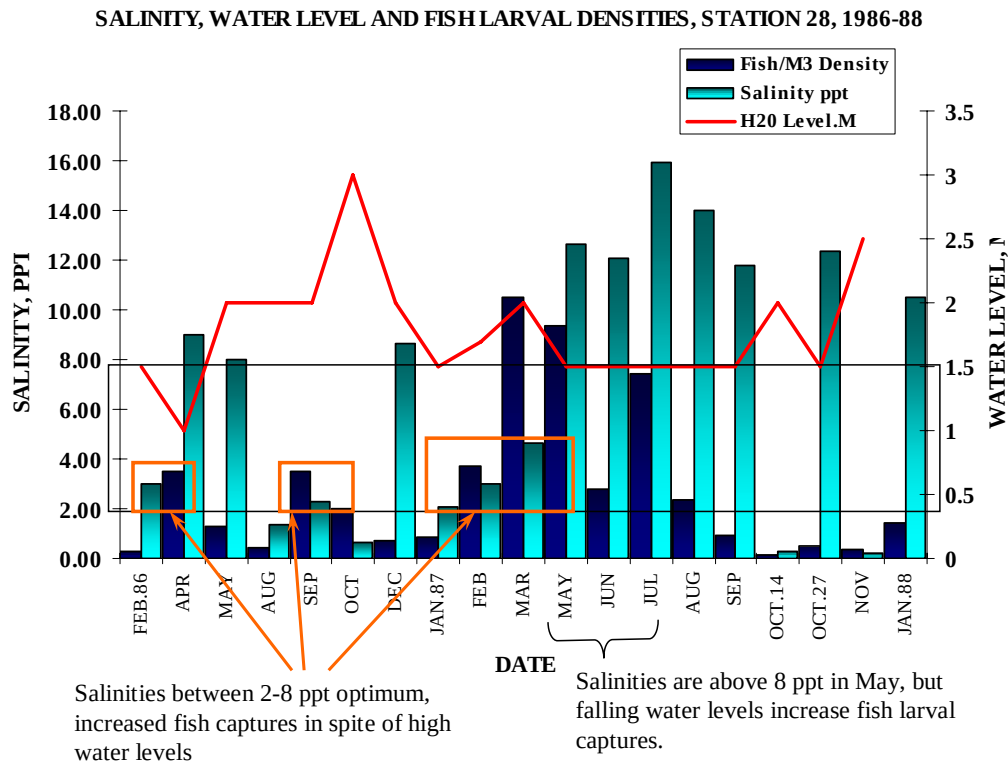


Figure H-14. Plot of Fish Larval Densities from 1986-1988 with Water Level and Salinity for Station 28 Only. Salinity Larval Density Periods of Interest Are Noted.

When salinity for every month at Station 28 is used to produce a similarity matrix and clustered with Bray Curtis group average similarity analysis (**Figure H-15**) the periods of salinity dry and wet seasons are apparent. The highest regional rainfall typically occurs in September to October, Group TW in **Figure H-15** shows this pattern with salinities below 1.0 ppt. The TD group is a dry season group with salinities typically above 8 ppt. The optimum group for fish larvae is the AW group with salinities below 6 ppt, which did in fact have the largest fish larval captures. The same analysis using both Station 25 and Station 28 data reveals a similar cluster in **Figure H-16**.

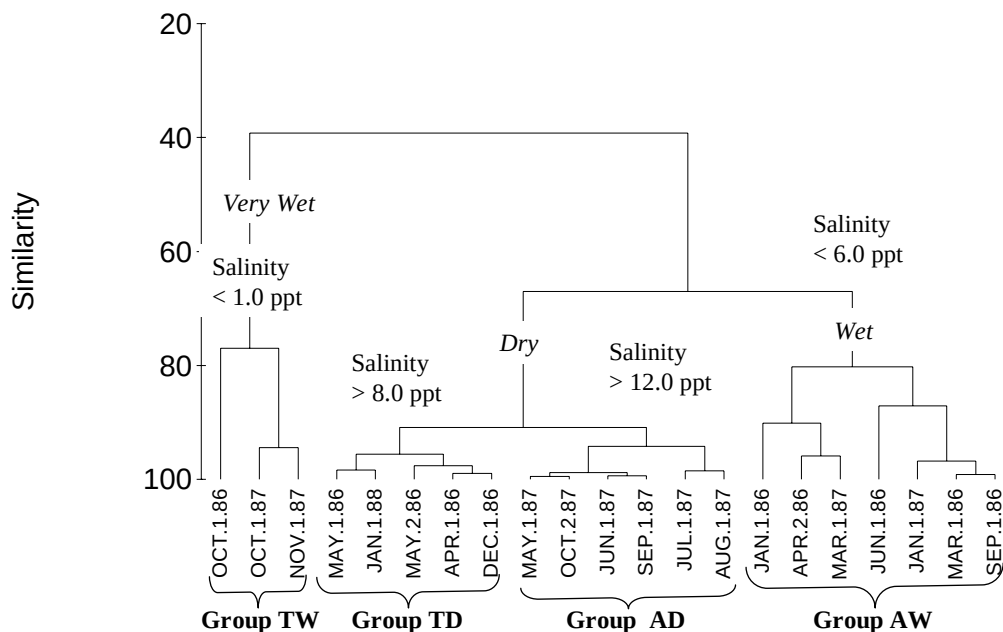


Figure H-15. Cluster Based on a Group Average Similarity Analysis Using Mean Daily Salinity for Station 28, 1986-January 1988. Salinity for Date of Zooplankton Capture.

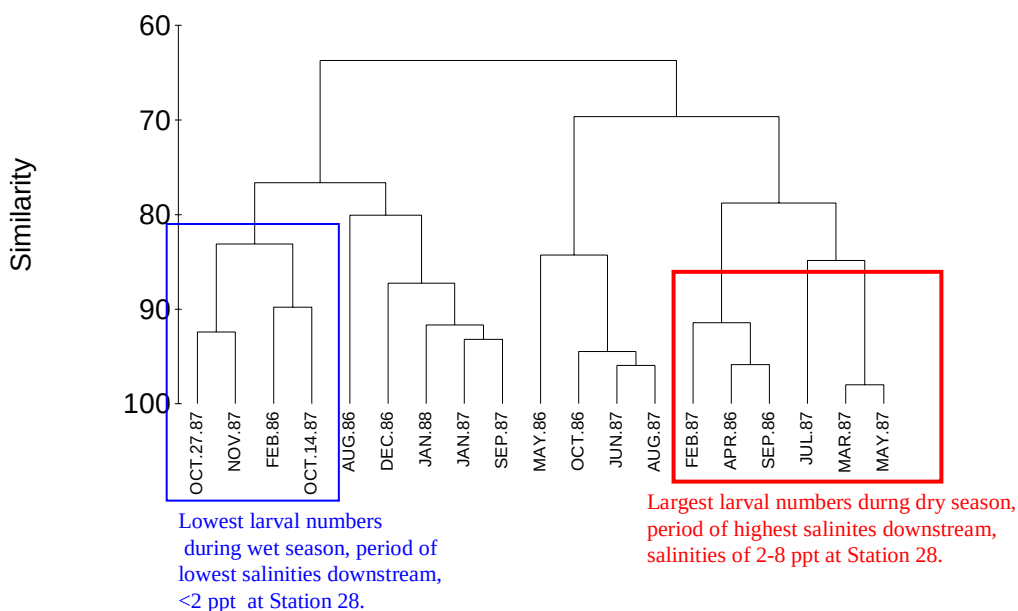


Figure H-16. Similarity Analysis Bray-Curtis Group Average Cluster Plot Based on Fish Larval Density from Station 25 and Station 28, 1986-1988.

Results and Discussion

The optimum natural condition in which to examine the influence of freshwater flow on a riverine fauna is to examine the fauna at the lowest possible flow condition over a broad enough range of salinity within the shortest spatial and temporal (diel) range practical. This would insure temporal continuity between samples, therefore limiting potential impacts from factors that change rapidly during a sampling period, such as water levels and tidal action. Appropriate replication and adequate ancillary data should be acquired. We attempted to include all these considerations in this analysis of dry season larval fish recruitment, zooplankton abundance in the protected portion of the Loxahatchee River during the late spring and early summer 2004. We tested two null hypotheses: 1) “H^o₁ No particular taxon consistently numerically dominates the larval fish communities indigenous to the Loxahatchee River”; and 2) “H^o₂ Fish larval abundance is evenly distributed between RM 6 and RM 10 in the main course of the river during the “dry season” low rainfall, low flow periods, winter to late spring/early summer (December to July).”

“H^o₁” Loxahatchee River Larval Fish Community Defined: Our results demonstrated that a diverse yet predictable larval fish community occurs within the Loxahatchee River and is consistently numerically dominated by three to four fish families. This fauna consists primarily of gobies (gobioids), anchovies (engraulids), pipefishes (syngnathids) and silversides (atherinids) during the dry season. These same taxa numerically dominated samples taken at Station 28 in 1986 to 1988 and in 2004 revealing a long term consistency in fish larval community structure within the Loxahatchee River.

Station 25 collected from 1986 to 1988 was located below RM 6.0 at RM 5.3. Salinities at this location ranged between 1 ppt and 24 ppt, most often between 10 ppt and 20 ppt. The ichthyofauna was richer at Station 25 and revealed a higher diversity at the family level (**Figure H-17**). Gobioids, the most abundant fish larvae in the Loxahatchee River, are known to occur in the freshwater tributaries to the Indian River Lagoon including the Loxahatchee River are listed in **Table H-1**. The relative numerical abundance of various gobioid species is presented from data recently published by Paperno and Brodie (2004).

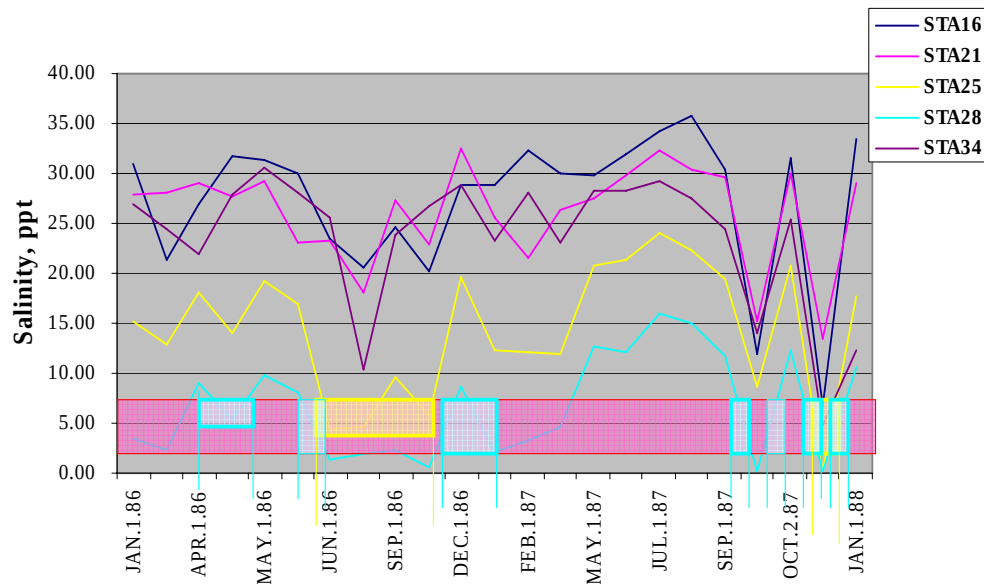


Figure H-17. 1986-1988 Mean 24-Hour Salinity for Date of Zooplankton Capture, Stations 16 through 34 in the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. Periods of Optimum Salinity for Fish Larval Capture Is Indicated with the Red Band, Within Which Optimum Station Captures for Station 25 (Yellow) and Station 28 (Blue) are Boxed, Based on 2004 Capture Data.

Table H-1. Gobioid Species of the Loxahatchee River.

Taxa		Larval Capture	Abundance No. Individuals (% Occurrence)	Spawning Migration Tendency
Eleotridae				
1	<i>Gobiomorus dormitor</i>	?	114 (18)	Freshwater Semi-catadromous
2	<i>Dormitator maculatus</i>	X	374 (21.1)	Freshwater Semi-catadromous
3	<i>Eleotris amplyopsis</i>	?		Freshwater Semi-catadromous
Gobiidae				
4	<i>Awaous banana</i>	?		Freshwater Semi-catadromous
5	<i>Bathygobius soporator</i>	?		Estuarine, non migratory
6	<i>Ctenogobius pseudofasciatus</i>	?	14 (3.9)	Freshwater Semi-catadromous
7	<i>Ctenogobius fasciatus</i>	?		Freshwater Semi-catadromous
8	<i>Ctenogobius schufeldti</i>	?	11 (5.5)	Freshwater
9	<i>Gobioides brousonettii</i>	X		Freshwater Semi-catadromous
10	<i>Gobionellus oceanicus</i>	?		Estuarine, non migratory
11	<i>Gobiosoma bosc</i>	X	165 (15.6)	Estuarine, non migratory
12	<i>Gobiosoma robustum</i>	X		Estuarine, non migratory
13	<i>Gobiosoma macrodon</i>	?		Estuarine, non migratory
14	<i>Lophogobius cyprinoides</i>	?	134 (25.8)	Estuarine, non migratory
15	<i>Evorthodus lyricus</i>	X	464 (27.3)	Freshwater Semi-catadromous
16	<i>Microgobius gulosus</i>	X	123 (23.4)	Estuarine, non migratory

Data from Paperno and Brodie, 2004.

Tropical marine invaders, the Diadromus Domination: The warm Florida Current flows along the lower east coast of the Florida producing a subtropical-tropical coastal oceanographic and climatic/hydrological setting for the Loxahatchee River. A typical tropical coastal climate pattern occurs in the region of the Loxahatchee River (Christensen 1965; Gilmore 1977a,b, 1985; Gilmore and Hastings 1983). A distinct wet season with natural high riverine flow rates occurs during the summer and fall, followed by a dry season low flow high salinity period starting in the late fall extending through the winter and spring (Gilmore 1977; Gilmore and Hastings 1983). This pattern differs significantly from the seasonal freshwater flow periodicity in other southeastern tributaries of the Piedmont coastal plane north of 28° 30' N (Rogers et al. 1984; Peterson and Meador 1994). Climatic and biological conditions in these regions, as well as Gulf coastal Florida, are not representative of southeast Florida tributaries and coastal estuaries (Gilmore et al. 1978; Rakocinski et al. 1992; Gilmore 2001; Streams of Florida). This is largely due to differences in the geomorphology of the Florida peninsula and proximity of warm tropical ocean currents. Most other Florida stream systems on the upper Gulf coast and north of Cape Canaveral, Florida show high stream flows during the fall through winter/spring, and often have drier summers (Rogers et al. 1984; Peterson and Meador 1994). These differences in seasonal flow patterns has some influence on aquatic organism spawning periodicity and larval recruitment as well as levels of primary and secondary productivity, with tropical systems differing significantly from warm temperate systems.

A local geological and geographic setting of the southern Indian River Lagoon and its freshwater tributaries has produced high biodiversity in local aquatic ecosystems. The climatic and ocean frontal boundaries between 26° and 29° N Longitude creates a biogeographic transition zone with significant overlap in tropical and temperate biological elements. Various portions of each biological community are numerically dominated by either warm temperate, temperate or tropical species. Historical documentation of biotas within Jupiter Inlet, Hobe Sound and the Loxahatchee River region revealed a biota that is largely numerically dominated by tropical and warm temperate species (Christensen 1965; Gilmore 1977a,b, 1995). Recent numerical studies of a neighboring small coastal stream system, the St. Sebastian River, produced similar results (Paperno and Brodie 2004).

The dominance of gobioid larvae is typical of tropical estuaries throughout the world. Where gobies have adapted to temperate estuaries they numerically dominate the ichthyoplankton (Shenker et al. 1983). The gobioid fishes can also numerically dominate open ocean ichthyoplankton (Richards 1984; Ahlstrom 1971, 1972; Nellen 1973). This fish family has the most species occurring to ocean depths of 1,500 feet (Gilmore, personal observation) as well as inhabiting freshwater streams and anoxic mangrove forest habitats. They are also the richest fish faunal element in the Loxahatchee River with at least 16 species occurring in this small coastal stream system.

The anchovies, engraulidae, are next in abundance possibly including both tropical and temperate species. They are typically the most numerically abundant marine and coastal estuarine fish as adults. This may be why engraulid larvae numerically dominated ichthyoplankton captures at Station 25, but not at Station 28 during 1986-1988.

Other marine and estuarine species that were common, or occurred, in both historical samples, 1986-1988, and in the 2004 samples, were larval mojarras (gerreidae), drums and croaker (sciaenidae), herrings/sardines/menhaden (clupeidae), silversides (atherinidae), and pipefishes (syngnathidae). The historical collections also included some larval blennies (blennidae), and various flatfishes (soleidae, bothidae and cynoglossidae). These are families which are commonly represented in the ichthyoplankton of tropical freshwater tributaries elsewhere in the world (Blaber 2000).

Noticeably absent were larval snook (centropomids). There are five species of snook in the Loxahatchee River, the common snook, *Centropomus undecimalis*, largescale fat snook, *C. parallelus*, smallscale fat snook, *C. mexicanus*, tarpon snook, *C. pectinatus* and the swordspine snook, *C. ensiferus*. All of these species have been captured as juveniles and adults in the Loxahatchee, St. Lucie and St. Sebastian Rivers. No other stream or river system in Florida has all of these species recorded from it. However, larvae of any species of centropomid were absent from all the historical samples and the 2004 samples. Nevertheless, snook eggs and larvae were abundant in a sample made within Jupiter Inlet on 2 July 2004 indicating that snook were spawning at that time. The eggs and larvae must be carried into habitats which were not sampled.

Larvae of primary freshwater fishes, centrarchids, cyprinids, percids, and catostomids, were also absent from in the 2004 samples. Centrarchids and cyprinids were listed as having been taken in the 1986-1988 samples at Station 28, but did not form a large portion of the larval collections. The primary freshwater fish fauna of the southern Florida peninsula is depauperate relative to northern Florida. Freshwater faunas of the southern peninsula are numerically dominated by euryhaline secondary freshwater families, anguillidae, cyprinodonts, poeciliids and atherinids and many marine invaders particularly in coastal streams. Euryhaline marine/estuarine invaders are present either as juveniles and adults, but not necessarily as larvae. These include bull sharks, ladyfish, tarpon, ariid catfishes, and mullets, snooks, centropomidae, mangrove snapper, burro grunt, sheepshead porgy, sciaenids, cichlids and various flatfishes, bothids, cynoglossids and soleids. Soleid larvae were represented in our 2004 samples. These families and the general invasion of freshwater by adults and juveniles of marine and estuarine phyla is a worldwide tropical phenomenon (Blaber 2000). Spawning is another matter. Very few marine fishes in these families place their eggs and larvae into low salinity waters. Nearly all spawn in the ocean and their larvae require higher salinities to survive. The marine fish families, gobiids, synganthids and engraulids are the top euryhaline spawners.

Tropical island and coastal continental freshwater stream faunas are often numerically dominated by marine and estuarine species that may enter freshwater for extended periods of time. They often depend on freshwater to complete vital developmental or reproductive periods. Diadromy is a common life history strategy for these species (McDowall 1988). The numerical dominance of tropical marine and estuarine species in freshwater habitats is typical of many coastal settings in the tropical Americas and Caribbean islands (Blaber 2000).

“H₂” Fish Larval Dynamics Relative to Salinity and Water Depth: The dynamics of the Loxahatchee river ichthyoplankton community was examined relative to collection sites, salinity, and water level using the 2004 and in the historical 1986-1988 collections. Additional parameters evaluated for the 2004 collections included temperature, dissolved oxygen and water flow rates but since these parameters did not vary significantly between stations during the recent ichthyoplankton survey it appears that salinity is the major factor responsible in influencing densities. However, the major portion of the ichthyofauna was captured at the confluence of the Kitching Creek and the main course of the Loxahatchee River. This could also be a site of nutrient flow, organic materials and consequently, primary productivity which would then produce a microzooplankton bloom of copepods and ostracods that were not captured with the net we used. This microzooplankton bloom would then feed larger invertebrate plankton and fish larvae. Nutrients and organic material concentrations were not examined so the influence of these parameters on fish larval distribution could not be determined. It is also possible that the large low tide captures on an ebbing tide, 25 June and 6 July 2004 could be due to the fact that even though the fish and invertebrate larvae typically migrate to the surface at night, they might not do so on an ebbing tide as they may be carried out into the adjacent estuary. In order to maintain an upstream position they would migrate to the river bottom. The 0.5-m plankton net may have sampled this bottom habitat in upstream waters between RM 8 and RM 9 while the water depth was too great to sample the bottom habitat at Stations 7 and 8 at RM 7. This would produce

higher larval densities upstream simply as a sampling artifact. However, the high tide collection made on 17 June also captured more invertebrates between RM 8 and RM 9 than at RM 7, indicating the 2-8 ppt salinity region and its high ichthyoplankton density was likely not a sampling artifact.

The 1986-1988 collections were always made on a flood or high tide yet revealed the same fish larvae species ranking based on numerical abundance with most larvae captured when salinities were between 2 and 8 ppt for both Stations 28 and 25 (**Figure H-17**) with the greatest abundance at Station 28 at RM 7. Where this salinity range (2 to 8 ppt) occurred, the greatest concentration of fish larvae also occurred in 2004 between RM 8 and RM 9 (**Figure H-18**), with most larvae being captured in the vicinity of the mouth of Kitching Creek at RM 8. The highest density of fish larvae captured in the Pautuxent River (Shenker et al. 1984) were captured between salinities of 2-3 ppt. Similar salinity association patterns were observed in the San Francisco Estuary (Dege and Brown 2004). Apparently, fish larvae concentrate in the Low Salinity Zone of estuarine systems, however, since each system has unique characteristics, field investigations need to document this important low salinity range for each estuary. Thus, the 2 ppt to 8 ppt range, under low flow conditions in the Loxahatchee River, is unique to this estuary. The most downstream location of this salinity range we documented from the historical data is near RM 7. Hence, we cannot show the natural concentration of fish larvae will occur further downstream than RM 7 with increased base flows due to changes in hydrodynamics with increased flows. Increased base flows will reduce the particle residence time within the appropriate salinity range and may affect the formation of a turbidity maximum. Further, as this range progresses downstream the physical attributes of the estuary (i.e., bathymetry, water surface area) will change hydrodynamic conditions possibly needed to facilitate increased zooplankton concentrations in the turbidity maximum. Significant physical changes occur downstream of RM 6. For example, the surface area of water and length of shoreline from RM 7 to RM 6 is 30.7 acres and 92,835 ft in contrast to one mile downstream (RM 6 to RM 5) has 88.8 acres and 152,045 ft of shoreline, respectively (**Chapter 3; Table 3-5**). Additionally, the impact of human influences such as lighting and hardening shorelines which cause the loss of shallow shoreline transitional habitat, increases significantly downstream of RM 6 and has unknown affects on fish larvae recruitment.

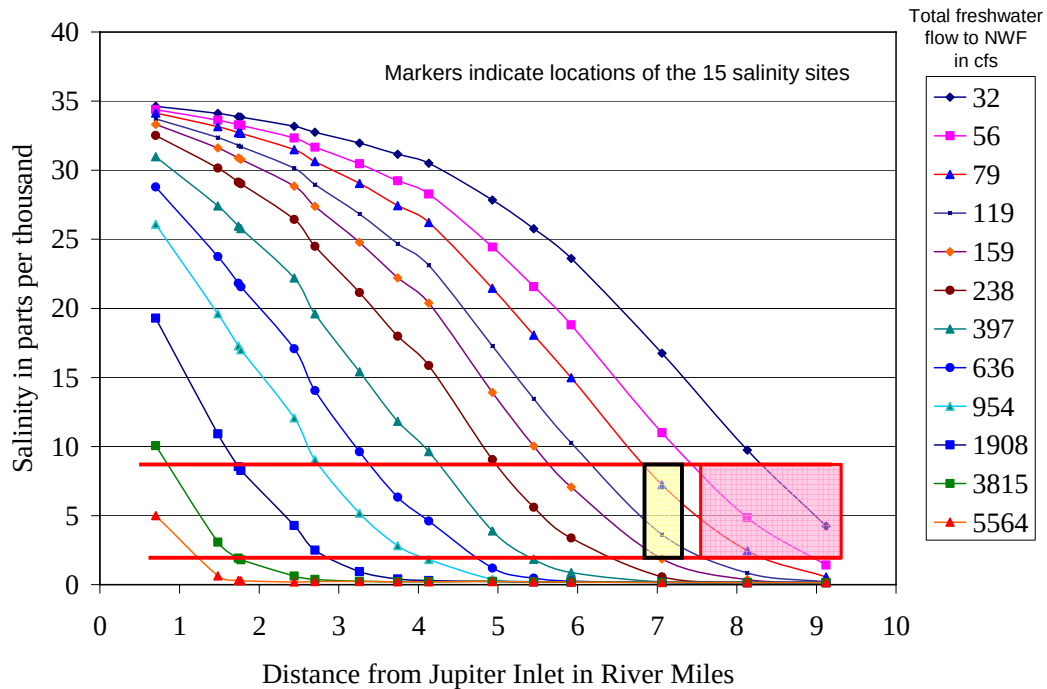


Figure H-18. Red Rectangle Represents Location and Salinity at Which Largest Zooplankton Captures Were Made in June-July 2004, Yellow Rectangle, 1986-1988.

Since these important changes in the estuary occur downstream of RM 6, the preferred salinity range should not extend beyond this location during the dry season when it is most important to fish larvae. **Figure H-18** shows a base flow near 140 cfs (Scenario **LD65TB65**) provides a salinity of 2 ppt at RM 7.2 and 8 ppt at RM 6. To corroborate these findings, daily salinities for all scenarios at RM 5.92 were examined and the same conclusion was established. Therefore, scenario **LD65TB65** is the maximum flow recommended to avoid significant alteration of conditions favorable to fish larvae in the estuarine area of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

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Appendix I

Vegetation Transects Groundwater and Soils Characteristics

Table I-1. Transect #1 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description (cm)	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T1-1-20	0-20	25	Riviera Series	0-15cm:10YR3/1, fine sand with many uncoated sand grains; 15-20: 10YR5/1 fine sand	0-15: A horizon; 15-60: E1 horizon	>120
T1-1-40	20-40	25	Riviera Series	15-60: 10YR5/1 fine sand	Same as above	>120
T1-1-60	40-60	25	Riviera Series	Same as above	Same as above	>120
T1-1-80	60-80	25	Riviera Series	60-90: 10YR7/1 fine sand	60-90: E2	>120
T1-1-100	80-100	25	Riviera Series	90-120: 10YR4/3 sandy clay loam	90-120: Bt layer	>120
T1-1-120	100-120	25	Riviera Series	Same as above	Same as above	>120
T1-2-20	0-20	65	Fluvaquent	0-30: 5Y2.5/1 clay w/ C2D 10Y5/6 mottles		>120
T1-2-40	20-40	65	Fluvaquent	same as above to 30; 30-50: 5Y3/1 Sandy Clay		>120
T1-2-60	40-60	65	Fluvaquent	same as above to 50; 50-60: change to fine sand, 2.5Y5/2		>120
T1-2-80	60-80	65	Fluvaquent	10YR8/1 fine sand		>120
T1-2-100	80-100	65	Fluvaquent	10YR3/2 loamy sand		>120
T1-2-120	100-120	65	Fluvaquent	Same as above		>120
T1-3-20	0-20	25 (?)		0-22: 5Y3/1 sandy clay loam		100
T1-3-40	20-40	25 (?)		22-45: white sand		100
T1-3-60	40-60	25 (?)		45-100+: change to grey loamy fine sand, 5Y3/1		100
T1-3-80	60-80	25 (?)		Same as above		100
T1-3-100	80-100	25 (?)		Same as above		100
T1-3-120	100-120	25 (?)				100
T1-4-20	0-20	55(?)		10YR4/1 fine sand		110
T1-4-40	20-4	55(?)		20-50:10YR5/3 fine sand		110
T1-4-60	40-60	55(?)		50-90: same as above getting loamier, sandy loam		110
T1-4-80	60-80	55(?)		Same as above		110
T1-4-100	80-100	55(?)		90-120: loamy sand w/ common shell fragments, 5Y7/1		110
T1-4-120	100-120	55(?)		Same as above		110
Samples collected May 20, 2004.						
Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-2. Transect #2 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description (cm)	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T2-1-20	0-20	0-5	unknown	0-10: 10YR3/1 fine sand with many uncoated sand grains; 10-20: 10YR2/2 fine sand	10:Bh (no E)	>120
T2-1-21	20-40	0-5	unknown	Same as above to 30 30-60: 10YR5/4 color change	30: E horizon	>120
T2-1-22	40-60	0-5	unknown	Same as above	E horizon	>120
T2-1-23	60-80	0-5	unknown	10YR6/3 fine sand	E horizon	>120
T2-1-24	80-100	0-5	unknown	80-90: 5Y5/1 sandy clay loam with few fine F1P7.5YR5/8 mottles (red); 90-100:10YR5/2 loamy sand		>120
T2-1-25	100-120	0-5	unknown	Same as above to 110 110-120: 10YR5/2 sandy loam		>120
none	>120	0-5	unknown	10YR3/3 sand		>120
T2-2-20	0-20	55-65	unknown	5Y2.5/1 Sapporic Muck	0-30: A horizon	120
T2-2-40	20-40	55-65	unknown	Same as above to 30 30-40: 5Y4/1 sandy clay loam		120
T2-2-60	40-60	55-65	unknown	sandy clay loam, lighter in texture		120
T2-2-80	60-80	55-65	unknown	5Y5/1 sandy loam, sandier.		120
T2-2-100	80-100	55-65	unknown	5Y5/1sand		120
T2-2-120	100-120	55-65	unknown	same		120
none	>120	55-65	unknown	sandy to 204 cm.		120
T2.2-1-20	0-20	5	unknown	0-10: 10YR3/1 fine sand, many uncoated sand grains; 10-40: 10YR6/2 fine sand	AP horizon	>120
T2.2-1-40	20-40	5	unknown	Same as above		>120
T2.2-1-60	40-60	5	unknown	10YR6/3 fine sand		>120
T2.2-1-80	60-80	5	unknown	Same as above	E horizon	>120
T2.2-1-100	80-100	5	unknown	Same as above to 90; 90-100: 10YR6/3 sandy loam with M12D 10YR5/8 mottles and common C2D 10YR6/2 mottles		>120
T2.2-1-120	100-120	5	unknown			>120
none	>120	5	unknown	10YR5/3 sand to >120		
T2.2-2-20	0-20	35-45	unknown	5Y2.5/1 Sapporic muck		100
T2.2-2-40	20-40	35-45	unknown	Same as above		100
T2.2-2-60	40-60	35-45	unknown	Same as above		100
T2.2-2-80	60-80	35-45	unknown	Same as above		100
T2.2-2-100	80-100	35-45	unknown	5Y2.5/1 Sandy loam		100
T2.2-2-120	100-120	35-45	unknown	Same as above		100
none	160-160+	35-45	unknown	10YR6/2 sand		100
Samples collected May 20, 2004. Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-3. Transect #3 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description (cm)	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T3-1-20	0-20	0	possibly Nettles	0:10YR2/1; 7.6: 10YR3/1 to 33cm	0: A layer, 7.6: E layer	none
T3-1-40	20-40	0	possibly Nettles	Same as above to 33 33-40:10YR6/1	33:E2 Layer	none
T3-1-60	40-60	0	possibly Nettles	Same as above to 55 55-60: 10YR3/2	55: Bh	none
T3-1-80	60-80	0	possibly Nettles	Same as above to 75 75-90: 10YR2/1, weakly cemented	75: Bh2	none
T3-1-100	80-100	0	possibly Nettles	Same as above to 90 90-100: change layer type.	90:Bh3	none
	100-120	0	possibly Nettles	100: 10YR5/3; 115: 5YR5/1	100:E' Layer; 115: Btg	none
T3-2-20	0-20	55	Fluvaquent	10YR2/1 stratified sand/sandy clay loam, various texture		100
T3-2-40	20-40	55	Fluvaquent	10YR2/1 Sandy clay loam		100
T3-2-60	40-60	55	Fluvaquent	7.5YR2/0		100
T3-2-80	60-80	55	Fluvaquent	10YR4/2 Sandy texture		100
T3-2-100	80-100	55	Fluvaquent	10YR5/3 Sand		100
	151	55	Fluvaquent	5GY6/1 Sandy clay		100
T3-3-20	0-20	79	Fluvaquent	10YR2/1 Sandy clay		85
T3-3-40	20-40	79	Fluvaquent	Same as above to 35 35-40: change in texture to 10YR3/1 sand		85
T3-3-60	40-60	79	Fluvaquent	10YR3/1 stratified sand and sandy clay		85
T3-3-80	60-80	79	Fluvaquent	Same as above to 70. 70-80: 10YR4/1 sand		85
T3-3-100	80-100	79	Fluvaquent	Sand 10YR7/1		85
T3-3-120	100-120	79	Fluvaquent	Same as above		85
T3-4-20	0-20	105		10YR3/1	A Layer	70
T3-4-40	20-40	105		24: change to 10YR7/2 fine sand matrix with MPP 2.5YR44 iron red mottling		70
T3-4-60	40-60	105		Same as above		70
T3-4-80	60-80	105		Same as above to 70 70-80 :texture change to 10YR7/1 stratified sandy loam / 2.5YR5/0 sand		70
T3-4-100	80-100	105		10YR3/2, still stratification		70
T3-4-120	100-120	105		115: change to 10YR7/1 sand to 120+		70
Samples collected May 20, 2004. Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-4. Transect #4 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description (cm)	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T4-1-20	0-20	5	Smyrna soil	10YR3/1 fine sand with many uncoated sand grains	A layer	>120
T4-1-21	20-40	5	Smyrna soil	10YR4/2 fine sand	E layer	>120
T4-1-22	40-60	5	Smyrna soil	10YR3/2 fine sand	Bh	>120
T4-1-23	60-80	5	Smyrna soil	Same as above	Bh	>120
T4-1-24	80-100	5	Smyrna soil	Same as above to 90 90: 10R4/3 fine sand	C1	>120
T4-1-25	100-120	5	Smyrna soil	100: 10YR5/3 fine sand; 110: 10YR6/2	100: C2; 110: C3	>120
						>120
T4-2-20	0-20	75-85	Fluvaquent	10YR2/1 Sapporic material		106
T4-2-40	20-40	75-85	Fluvaquent	Same as above to 30 30: fine sandy loam.	30: C layer	106
T4-2-60	40-60	75-85	Fluvaquent	Sandy clay loam		106
T4-2-80	60-80	75-85	Fluvaquent	10YR4/1 fine sandy loam with stratified layers of 10YR6/2 sand		106
T4-2-100	80-100	75-85	Fluvaquent	Same as above		106
T4-2-120	100-120	75-85	Fluvaquent	Same as above		106
none	163-204+	75-85	Fluvaquent	10YR7/2 sand, entire column is stratified.		106
T4-3-20	0-20	115		0: 10YR3/1 fine sand with many uncoated sand grains; 6: stratified 7.5YR3/0 fine sandy loam matrix / 10YR6/2 fine sand / and 5YR3/2 sandy clay loam	6: C layer	
T4-3-40	20-40	115		Same as above		
T4-3-60	40-60	115		Same as above		
T4-3-80	60-80	115		Same as above		
T4-3-100	80-100	115		Same as above to 90 90: sandy clay loam stratified with 5YR3/2 sand		
T4-3-120	100-120	115		Same as above		
none	120-204+	115		Alternating layers of sand / sandy clay loam		
Samples collected May 27, 2004. Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-5. Transect #6 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T6-1-20	0-20	5	Nettles sand	10YR31sand, many uncoated sand grains, few accretions	0: A horizon	not found
T6-1-40	20-40	5	Nettles sand	20-30: 10YR42 fine sand; 30-40:10YR52 fine sand, transition to...		not found
T6-1-60	40-60	5	Nettles sand	10YR52 sand		not found
T6-1-80	60-80	5	Nettles sand	10YR62	60: E horizon	not found
T6-1-100	80-100	5	Nettles sand	Same as above to 110		not found
T6-1-120	100-120	5	Nettles sand	110: 10YR43 sand	110: Bh, not typical horizon, not enough organic carbon to be a spodosol	not found
none	204	5	Nettles sand	sandy to 204 cm+		not found
T6-2-20	0-20	26	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	4
T6-2-40	20-40	26	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	4
no sample	204	26	not viewed	no sand layer found	not viewed	4
T6-3-20	0-20	115	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	33
T6-3-40	20-40	115	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	33
T6-3-60	40-60	115	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	33
no sample	204	115	Terra Ceia Variant	Muck 204+, no sand found		33
T6-4-20	0-20	130	Terra Ceia Variant	5YR2.5/1 Muck	OA-1	15
T6-4-40	20-40	130	Terra Ceia Variant			15
T6-4-60	40-60	130	Terra Ceia Variant			15
Samples collected May 20, 2004.						
Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-6. Transect #7 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description (cm)	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T7-1-20	0-20	0	Hobe series	fine grained sand, 10YR3/1, with many uncoated sand grains	0:E horizon	none
T7-1-40	20-40	0	Hobe series	same as above but 10YR6/1, to 70 cm		none
T7-1-60	40-60	0	Hobe series			non
T7-1-80	60-80	0	Hobe series	70: 10YR4/3	70:Bh	none
T7-1-100	80-100	0	Hobe series	80:loamy fine sand, 10YR2/2; 90:Bh2	90:Bh2	none
T7-1-120	100-120	0	Hobe series			none
none	204	0	Hobe series	sandy to 204+ cm		none
T7-2-20	0-20	15	Terra Ceia Variant inclusion	5YR2.5/1, no sand		10
T7-2-40	20-40	15	Terra Ceia Variant inclusion	5YR2.5/1, no sand		10
T7-3-20	0-20	165	Okeelanta Variant			15
T7-3-40	20-40	165	Okeelanta Variant			15
no sample	180	165	Okeelanta Variant	180:sand layer		15
T7-4-20	0-20	145	Okeelanta	5YR2.5/1		27
T7-4-40	20-40	145	Okeelanta			27
T7-4-60	40-60	145	Okeelanta			27
no sample	130	145	Okeelanta	130:sand layer		
Samples collected May 20, 2004.						
Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						

Table I-7. Transect #9 Soils Characteristics and Groundwater Depth.

Sample ID	Depth (cm)	Length, transect (m)	Soil name	Soil description	Horizon (cm)	Water table depth (cm)
T9-1-20	0-20	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-40	20-40	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-60	40-60	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-80	60-80	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-100	80-100	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-120	100-120	0-10		Pomello Series		not found
T9-1-140	120-140	0-10		Spodic Horizon at 125 cm		not found
T9-2-20	0-20	25-35		Okalanta Muck		46
T9-2-40	20-40	25-35		Okalanta Muck		46
T9-2-60	40-60	25-35		Okalanta Muck		46
T9-2-80	60-80	25-35		Okalanta Muck		46
no sample	155			Mineral layer at 155 cm		46
T9-3-20	0-20	55-65				40
T9-3-40	20-40	55-65				40
T9-3-60	40-60	55-65				40
T9-3-80	60-80	55-65				40
T9-3-100	80-100	55-65		Mineral layer at 90 cm		40
T9-4-20	0-20	175-185				25
T9-4-40	20-40	175-185				25
no sample	168	175-185		Mineral layer at 168 cm		25
Samples collected May 18, 2004.						
Data from "Soils Survey of the Loxahatchee River Floodplains," by Li et al., University of Florida, Gainesville.						