McIntyre Tract:
Year Three Monitoring Report

Brunswick County, NC

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Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction 1

2.0 Hydrology 4

2.1 Tidal Cypress Gum Swamp 5
2.1.1 Methods 5
2.1.2 Results 6
2.2 Tidal Marsh/Shrub Scrub 8
2.2.1 Methods 8
2.2.2 Results 9
2.3 Tidal Freshwater Marsh 12
2.3.1 Methods 12
2.3.2 Results 13
2.4 Pre-Construction Data vs. Post-Construction Data 16
2.5 Conclusions 17

3.0 Vegetation 20

3.1 Tidal Cypress Gum Swamp 20
3.1.1 Methods 20
3.1.2 Results 21
3.2 Tidal Marsh/Shrub Scrub 22
3.2.1 Methods 22
3.2.2 Results 23
3.3 Tidal Freshwater Marsh 26
3.3.1 Methods 27
3.3.2 Results 27
3.4 Invasive Species 29
3.5 Conclusions 30

4.0 Summary 31

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Planned and actual acreage for restoration and enhancement areas at McIntyre…. 3
Table 2. List of reference tide gauges, corresponding McIntyre gauges, and habitat type present……...……..… 4
Table 3. Percent differences between reference gauges and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the cypress gum swamp habitat. ……...…… 7
Table 4. Salinity data for reference gauges and McIntyre gauges located in cypress gum swamp habitat…….…… 7
Table 5. Percent differences between reference gauge 1R and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat……10
Table 6. Percent differences between reference gauge 3R and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat ……..… 10
Table 7. Percent differences between reference gauge 5R and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat ……...…10
Table 8. Salinity data for reference gauge 1R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat ……...… 11
Table 9. Salinity data for reference gauge 3R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat ……..…… 12
Table 10. Salinity data for reference gauge 5R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat ……..…… 12
Table 11. Percent differences between reference gauges and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal freshwater marsh habitat……..… 14
Table 12. Salinity data for reference gauge 4R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat …… 15
Table 13. Salinity data for reference gauge 6R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat …… 15
Table 14. Salinity data for reference gauge 21R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat …… 15
Table 15. Average pre-construction tidal amplitudes, post-construction tidal amplitudes, and resulting p-values). ……...…… 17
Table 16. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between two reference gauges at the impact site (Rat Island). …… 19
Table 17. Trees planted within restored cypress/gum swamp habitat at McIntyre……. 20
Table 18. Species and number of trees observed within cypress/gum swamp vegetation monitoring plots……..…… 21
Table 19. Shrubs and herbaceous plants planted within restored sections of the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat at McIntyre…… 22
Table 20. Number of occupied plots and sum of B-B values for each species observed in the tidal marsh/shrub scrub plots……..… 24
Table 21. List of herbaceous plants planted within restored sections of the tidal freshwater marsh habitat at McIntyre…… 26
Table 22. Number of occupied plots and sum of B-B values for each species observed in the tidal freshwater marsh plots. …….…… 28

Figure 1. Vicinity map…… 34
Figure 2. Location of habitat types, hydrology gauges, and cypress gum vegetation plots at the McIntyre tract……...…… 35
Figure 3. Location of reference gauges at Rat Island…….… 36

Appendices

Appendix A. Pictures of site

Appendix B. Graphs of hydrology data:
- Figure B.1. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 1R, 8, & 9
- Figure B.2. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 2R & 12
- Figure B.3. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 3R, 14E, & 18E
- Figure B.4. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 4R & 19
- Figure B.5. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 5R, 7, & 10
- Figure B.6. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 5R, 15E, & 17
- Figure B.7. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 6R, 11, & 16
- Figure B.8. Hydrology Monitoring, Gauges 21R, 13, & 20

Appendix C. Statistical analyses of pre-construction vs. post-construction tidal amplitude data.

Appendix D. Data sheets for vegetation monitoring at the McIntyre Tract for 2003.

Appendix E. Protocol for the Braun-Blanquet method of vegetation sampling.

McIntyre Third Year Monitoring Report
Brunswick County, NC

1.0 Introduction

As part of the mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts associated with the construction of the Wilmington Bypass by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, ECOBANK proposed to restore 12.3 acres of tidal cypress/gum swamp, 23.1 acres of tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat, and 25.18 acres of tidal freshwater marsh at the McIntyre Tract in Brunswick County, North Carolina (Figure 1). In addition, ECOBANK proposed to enhance 79.68 acres of tidal marsh/shrub scrub. Details of this mitigation are located in the Revised Compensatory Mitigation Plan for the McIntyre Tract dated December 7, 2000.

Located along the Cape Fear River, this tract has been manipulated as a result of previous river transportation projects. Spoil material generated from dredging sections of the river had been placed on this tract over time, creating four upland islands throughout the site. In addition, an old railroad bed and an old roadbed were located on the tract. This fill material altered tidal amplitudes over a majority of the site. Therefore, the mitigation work at this site consisted primarily of re-contouring spoil islands, the railroad bed, and the old roadbed to the natural grade of adjacent wetlands and establishing meandering tidal sloughs within the tract, thereby reestablishing optimal tidal flushing. In addition, flooding breaks were established through an earthen berm on the southern end of the property, which restored both tidal freshwater marsh and tidal marsh/shrub scrub behind the berm. All graded areas were planted with appropriate vegetation. Trees were planted in the tidal cypress/gum swamp habitat and woody shrubs and herbaceous plants were planted in the tidal freshwater marsh and marsh/shrub scrub areas. Hydrological and vegetation monitoring will occur annually for a minimum of five years or until deemed successful, whichever is longer.

Because of this site's isolated location off of the Cape Fear River, the coordination of these mitigation activities was challenging. All mechanical equipment had to be barged over to the tract. In addition, approximately twenty employees working

on grading and planting activities were transported to and from the site daily by boat. The mitigation project took approximately one month (working six days a week) to complete.

A majority of the construction activities were consistent with the mitigation plan. As stated in the Final Construction and Planting Report (July 2001), construction activities commenced at the McIntyre site on May 15, 2001 with the mobilization of equipment by barge and personnel by boat across the Cape Fear River to the McIntyre site. Grading activities began at several areas and consisted of removing spoil piles, recontouring existing spoil piles, constructing 8,850 linear feet of tidal sloughs, and constructing 11 tidal berm breaks. Grading was complete June 20, 2001. Proper elevations were maintained per the topographic map and verified using laser survey instrumentation. Installation of silt fences started on June 1 and the installation of over 3.5 miles of silt fence was completed by June 27. The silt fence crew also burned brush piles and did general site clean up. The trees and potted plants arrived on June 7. One shipment of herbaceous plants arrived on June 8 and the second shipment arrived on June 10. Two more shipments of herbaceous plants arrived on June 14. Tropical Storm Allison slowed the planting the week of June 10-15. Additional shipments were received on June 20 and 22, with the final shipments arriving on June 23. The planting crew started on June 10 and had all plantings done on June 27.

Because of the scope of the project and unforeseen circumstances, certain deviations from the plan were necessary. Changes to the original plan include the following:

1) Because the material excavated from the eastern section of the property was greater than anticipated, there were more spoil mounds along this slough than depicted in the figures from the mitigation plan. This excess material could not be shipped onto a barge because of its precarious location and it could not be burned because it was too wet. All spoil mounds within the tract were surveyed after construction and their size was subtracted from the mitigation acreage totals.

2) A GPS survey of the property was conducted after mitigation activities occurred and found that actual acreage values of the cypress/gum swamp, tidal marsh shrub scrub, and tidal freshwater marsh habitat types were less than the anticipated values. In August of

2001, sections of the cypress/gum swamp and the tidal freshwater marsh community types were extended to make up for this deficit. Vegetation sampling occurred throughout both the original and extended areas. However, the shrub scrub restoration habitat was unable to be enlarged (Table 1). The actual size of the shrub scrub restoration area is 17.02 acres (6.08 acres smaller than anticipated) and the actual size of the shrub scrub enhancement area is 85.76 acres (6.08 acres larger than anticipated).

Table 1. Planned and actual acreage for restoration and enhancement areas at McIntyre.

Habitat	Planned Acreage	Actual Acreage
Tidal Marsh / Shrub Scrub Restoration	23.1	**17.02**
Tidal Cypress/Gum Swamp Restoration	12.3	12.3
Tidal Freshwater Marsh Restoration	25.18	25.18
Tidal Marsh/Shrub Scrub Enhancement	79.68	**85.76**
Spoil Mounds	~ 5	2.74

3) Some of the planted vegetation arrived in unsuitable condition. To compensate for this, the nurseries shipped additional plants and plant species. In addition to the species listed in the mitigation plan, *Hibiscus moscheutos, Scirpus robustus, S. validus, S. americanus, and S. pungens* were planted. Although the mitigation plan stated that approximately 325,000 plants would be planted, over 345,000 were planted.

Other actions that have occurred throughout the third year of monitoring include general maintenance activities, such as removal of the silt fence material that was originally placed along the tidal creeks and the spoil mounds, upkeep of the dock off of the Cape Fear River, and the construction of a small foot bridge over one of the tidal creeks to provide passage during high tide. A CAMA Minor Permit Modification was obtained from DCM prior to performing the latter two activities.

Additionally, as a contingency measure, 300 5-gallon bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and 100 1-gallon water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) trees were obtained from Bruton Nurseries (Fremont, NC) and planted in the cypress-gum areas in March of 2003 since the vegetation success criterion was not met in this habitat type during the year two monitoring event. To improve the likelihood of success within the replanted area, the

supplemental trees were older, planted in cooler weather, and the base of the trees was encircled with spoil material to provide a solid foundation.

2.0 Hydrology

Hydrological monitoring for all restoration and enhancement areas concentrated on matching tidal wetland hydrology of restored and enhanced sites to mature reference areas. Fourteen automated tide gauges were installed throughout the mitigation site and seven gauges were installed in reference marsh areas adjacent to the mitigation site (Figures 2 and 3). Each gauge within the McIntyre tract was assigned a reference gauge to which its data were compared (Table 2). These assignments were based largely on similarities in proximity to the Cape Fear River and its tidal creeks, landscape position, and the surrounding vegetation. The hydrology success criterion for the site was the establishment of a hydroperiod that falls within 10% of the tidal amplitudes and duration of the reference areas. In addition, the salinity of the water at each restored gauge must match that of its corresponding reference gauge.

Table 2. List of reference gauges, the gauges at the McIntyre tract that correspond with them, and habitat type in which they are found. R = reference and E = enhancement.

Reference Gauge	Corresponding McIntyre Gauge	Habitat Type
1R	8, 9	Shrub Scrub Habitat
2R	12	Cypress Gum Swamp
3R	14E, 18E	Shrub Scrub Habitat
4R	19	Tidal Freshwater Marsh
5R	7, 10, 15E, 17	Shrub Scrub Habitat
6R	11, 16	Tidal Freshwater Marsh
21R	13, 20	Tidal Freshwater Marsh

Gauges were installed between October of 2000 and July of 2001. Prior to September of 2001, most gauges were reading at different times and varied from four times a day to 48 times a day. In August of 2001, all gauges were programmed to read 24 times a day, at the top of each hour. Because each gauge's memory can store 520 readings, the gauges were reprogrammed to read 16 times a day (every 90 minutes) in January of 2002 in order to allow each gauge to be downloaded once a month. The elevation of each gauge as it relates to mean sea level (MSL; 1929 datum) and to the

ground surface were determined by a local surveying company. Both of these elevation offsets are used in the graphing procedure (Appendix B). The salinity of water at each gauge is also measured and recorded at this time if standing water is present during the reading.

2.1 Tidal Cypress/Gum Swamp

Water reaches the tidal cypress/gum swamp during exceptionally high spring tidal cycles. Therefore, these areas are irregularly inundated. The hydrological success criterion for this habitat type is to match the tidal amplitude and salinities of the cypress/gum sections of the restoration site to the reference site. Gauge number 12 is located within the restored cypress/gum habitat (located on the boundary of cypress/gum habitat and tidal freshwater marsh habitat; Figure 2). The gauge located within reference cypress/gum swamp habitat is number 2, which is found near the Wilmington Bypass Impact site (Rat Island; Figure 3).

2.1.1 Methods

In order to mathematically compare the tidal hydrology in restored cypress/gum areas to reference cypress/gum areas, the raw hydrology data collected by each gauge were first calibrated to MSL by adding its calculated offset. The difference between the corrected water level data from a McIntyre gauge and its corresponding reference gauge was taken for each hourly reading. The absolute value of this number was then divided by the reference gauge value to arrive at the percent difference of the two water level values. The average percent difference was then calculated for each month (Table 3).

The mitigation plan requires the salinity of the water within the restored cypress gum swamp habitat to match the salinity of the water at the reference cypress gum habitat. However, the word ‘match’ is not specific. The dictionary definition of the word is “to equal or be similar to another” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition; 1997). The definition of the word ‘similar’ is “having characteristics in common;

strictly comparable". Therefore, some subjective interpretation of the salinity data was needed to determine if this criterion was achieved. Differences in salinity from one station to the next are inevitable due to upstream climatic conditions and the exact time at which each reading is taken. The time at which salinity data are read may vary from gauge to gauge by several hours due to the logistics of traveling to the various stations. This may result in different readings being taken at different tidal stages and could influence salinity. It is more meaningful to evaluate salinity *ranges* and *patterns* to determine how well the McIntyre site is matching the reference areas.

Salinity readings were taken monthly at each gauge location within the McIntyre tract and within the reference areas. For each habitat type, an average difference between salinity readings within the McIntyre tract and the reference areas was calculated. In addition, patterns of salinity fluctuations within the McIntyre tract and corresponding reference areas were noted to determine if these fluctuations 'matched'.

Salinity values taken at the mitigation site and corresponding reference areas are listed in Table 4.

2.1.2 Results

Nine months of hydrology and salinity data have been compiled and compared for this report (January through September of 2003). During this time period, tidal amplitudes recorded at gauge 12 were within an average of 18.44% of the tidal amplitudes of reference gauge 2 (Table 3).

Table 3. Percent difference of tidal amplitudes between reference gauge 2R and its corresponding McIntyre gauge 12 within the cypress/gum swamp habitat in 2003.

Month	**2R vs. 12** % diff
Jan	20.52
Feb	21.51
Mar	18.56
Apr	18.80
May	19.24
Jun	19.01
Jul	18.54
Aug	17.33
Sep	12.52
Average	**18.45**

Between January and September of 2003, the salinities of the gauge located within the restored cypress gum swamp habitat at McIntyre and its corresponding reference gauge ranged from 0 ppt to 5 ppt (Table 4). The average salinity difference for this habitat type was 2.2 ppt. In 2002, a larger range in salinity values was observed (5 ppt to 16 ppt) and the average difference in salinities was slightly lower (1.5 ppt).

It should be noted that there are many gaps in salinity data because of varying tides during the readings. Because it took several hours to travel throughout the site and read salinity, several locations were reached during low tide when no water is available to measure salinity.

Table 4. Salinity data for reference gauge 2R and its corresponding mitigation gauge 12 located in cypress/gum swamp habitat. Data given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	**2R**	**12**
1/16/03	-	-
2/19/03	4	2
3/31/03	-	1
4/30/03	-	2
5/30/03	-	2
7/1/03	-	-
8/1/03	3	0
8/25/03	-	0
9/26/03	5	3.5

Note: R = Reference gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level.

2.2 Tidal Marsh/Shrub Scrub

The hydrology criterion for this habitat type is to match the tidal amplitude and salinities of the tidal marsh/shrub scrub sections of the mitigation site to the reference sites, including the impact area at Rat Island. The gauges located within restored tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat include numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17 (Figure 3). Gauges 14E, 15E, and 18E are located within enhanced tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat. Gauge numbers located within reference shrub scrub habitat are 1R, 3R and 5R (Figures 2 and 3).

2.2.1 Methods

In order to mathematically compare the tidal hydrology in restored and enhanced tidal marsh/shrub scrub areas and reference tidal marsh/shrub scrub areas, the raw hydrology data collected by each gauge were first calibrated to MSL by adding its calculated offset. The difference between the corrected water level data from a McIntyre gauge and its corresponding reference gauge was taken for each hourly reading. The absolute value of this number was then divided by the reference gauge value to arrive at the percent difference of the two water level values. The average percent difference was then calculated for each month (Tables 5, 6, and 7).

The mitigation plan requires that the salinity of the water within the restored and enhanced tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat "match" the salinity of the water at the reference tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat. However, because the word 'match' is not specific, some subjective interpretation of the salinity data was needed to determine if this criterion was achieved. Differences in salinity from one station to the next are inevitable due to upstream climatic conditions and the tidal stage at the time of the reading. It is more meaningful to evaluate salinity *ranges* and *patterns* to determine how well the McIntyre site is matching the reference areas.

Salinity readings were taken monthly at each gauge location within the McIntyre tract and within the reference areas using a refractometer. An average difference between salinity readings taken from gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat at the McIntyre tract and the corresponding reference areas was calculated. In addition, patterns of salinity fluctuations within the McIntyre tract and corresponding reference areas were noted to determine if these fluctuations matched.

Salinity values taken at the mitigation site and corresponding reference areas are listed in Tables 8, 9, and 10.

2.2.2 Results

The average percent difference per month between the hydrology of gauges located in restored and enhanced shrub scrub habitat and the hydrology of gauges located in reference shrub scrub habitat was summarized in Tables 5, 6, and 7. Three gauges documented an average percent difference within 10%. Gauges 8 and 9 were within 6.98 % and 8.41% of reference gauge 1R and gauge 15E was within 8.91% of reference gauge 5R. Gauges 7 and 10 differed from reference gauge 5R by 22.00% and 17.21%, respectively. Gauges 14E and 18E differed from their corresponding reference gauge (3R) by approximately 30%. Gauge 17 differed from its reference by 53.22%. As in 2001 and 2002, all of these gauges except for Gauge 7 had, on average, higher water level readings than their corresponding reference gauge (see Appendix B).

Table 5. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between reference gauge 1R and its corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat.

Month	**1R vs. 8** (% diff)	**1R vs. 9** (% diff)
Jan	7.48	8.15
Feb	6.79	8.17
Mar	4.92	8.97
Apr	7.82	10.57
May	5.68	7.52
Jun	7.18	7.47
Jul	6.19	8.86
Aug	7.58	7.63
Sep	9.18	8.38
Average	**6.98**	**8.41**

R= Reference gauge.

Table 6. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between reference gauge 3R and its corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat.

Month	**3R vs. 14 E** (% diff)	**3R vs. 18E** (% diff)
Jan	34.36	31.09
Feb	39.14	38.84
Mar	27.05	27.06
Apr	37.70	31.49
May	24.17	23.59
Jun	*	19.41
Jul	27.76	23.52
Aug	43.31	34.95
Sep	17.77	16.26
Average	**31.41**	**27.36**

R= Reference gauge. E= Enhancement gauge. * Calculator malfunctioned. Data lost.

Table 7. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between reference gauge 5R and its corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat.

Month	**5R vs. 7** (% diff)	**5R vs. 10** (% diff)	**5R vs. 15E** (% diff)	**5R vs. 17** (% diff)
Jan	26.24	19.42	7.52	58.61
Feb	22.44	15.88	8.74	61.92
Mar	18.99	18.02	6.70	50.97
Apr	17.39	18.05	7.17	50.43
May	19.32	18.36	6.42	50.67
Jun	25.22	16.40	7.43	49.38
Jul	20.02	14.96	*	50.55
Aug	21.41	13.60	8.79	51.62
Sep	26.96	20.23	18.48	54.85
Average	**22.00**	**17.21**	**8.91**	**53.22**

R= Reference gauge. E= Enhancement gauge. * Calculator malfunctioned. Data lost.

Between January and September of 2003, the salinities of gauges located within the restored and enhanced shrub scrub areas at McIntyre and their corresponding reference gauges were measured. It should be noted that there are many gaps in salinity data because of varying tides during the readings. Because it takes several hours to travel throughout the site and read salinity, several locations are reached during low tide when no water is available to measure salinity. Therefore, only limited data were measured and used in this analysis.

Salinity values for shrub scrub areas ranged from 0 ppt to 5 ppt in 2003. The average salinity difference for this habitat type was 1.0 ppt. Both the salinity range and average difference were lower than what was documented in 2002 (range: 4 ppt -19 ppt; avg. diff: 1.7 ppt). Although the data are limited, they show that salinity patterns in restored, enhanced, and reference areas match. In general, as the reference salinity data increased on a particular day, the corresponding restored and enhanced salinity data also increased to match this fluctuation.

Table 8. Salinity data for reference gauge 1R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh / shrub scrub habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	1R	8	9
1/16/03	-	-	-
2/19/03	1	3	1
3/31/03	2	-	1
4/30/03	-	-	1
5/30/03	-	-	-
7/1/03	1	-	-
8/1/03	0	-	1
8/25/03	0	-	-
9/26/03	4	-	-

Note: R = Reference gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level.

Table 9. Salinity data for reference gauge 3R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh / shrub scrub habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	3R	14E	18E
1/16/03	5	4	5
2/19/03	1	2	2
3/31/03	1	1	2
4/30/03	*	*	2
5/30/03	*	-	-
7/1/03	-	-	*
8/1/03	1	0	0
8/25/03	-	-	-
9/26/03	4	5	4

Note: R = Reference gauge. E = Enhancement gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level. * Could not read salinity because of broken refractometer.

Table 10. Salinity data for reference gauge 5R and corresponding McIntyre gauges located in tidal marsh / shrub scrub habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	5R	7	10	15E	17
1/16/03	4	2	2	4	5
2/19/03	2	2	1	2	3
3/31/03	3	1	2	1	2
4/30/03	*	1	2	*	2
5/30/03	2	*	3	1	1
7/1/03	3	*	*	3	*
8/1/03	0	1	1	0	0
8/25/03	1	-	-	1	1
9/26/03	4	0	0	4	3

Note: R = Reference gauge. E = Enhancement gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level. * Could not read salinity because of broken refractometer.

2.3 Tidal Freshwater Marsh

Tidal amplitude and salinity data collected from restored sections of this habitat type between January and September of 2003 were compared to similar areas within the reference site. The gauges located within restored tidal freshwater marsh habitat include numbers 11, 13, 16, 19, and 20. Gauge numbers located within reference freshwater marsh are 4R, 6R, and 21R.

2.3.1 Methods

In order to mathematically compare the tidal hydrology in restored tidal freshwater marsh areas and reference tidal freshwater marsh areas, the raw hydrology data collected by each gauge were first calibrated to

MSL by adding its calculated offset. This places each well at MSL. The difference between the corrected water level data from a restored gauge and its corresponding reference gauge was taken for each hourly reading. The absolute value of this number was then divided by the reference gauge value to arrive at the percent difference of the two water level values. The average percent difference was then calculated for each month (Table 11).

The mitigation plan requires that the salinity of the water within the restored tidal marsh habitat "match" the salinity of the water at the reference tidal marsh habitat. Because the word 'match' is not specific, some subjective interpretation of the salinity data was needed to determine if this criterion was achieved. Differences in salinity from one station to the next are inevitable due to upstream climatic conditions and tidal stages at the time of the reading. It is more meaningful to evaluate salinity *ranges* and *patterns* to determine how well the McIntyre site is matching the reference areas.

Salinity readings were taken monthly at each gauge location within the McIntyre tract and within the reference areas using a refractometer. For each habitat type, an average difference between salinity readings within the McIntyre tract and the reference areas was calculated. In addition, patterns of salinity fluctuations within the restored tidal marsh habitat and corresponding reference areas were noted to determine if these fluctuations matched.

Salinity values taken at the mitigation site and corresponding reference areas are listed in Tables 12, 13, and 14.

2.3.2 Results

During 2003, the average percent differences of water levels of most of the gauges located within the restored tidal freshwater marsh habitat compared closely to their relative reference gauges and were similar to results from 2001 and 2002. Three of the five gauges in this habitat type were within 10% of their corresponding reference gauge.

Gauge numbers 13 and 20 documented percent differences of 3.49% and 4.38% of reference gauge 21R and gauge 11 was within 6.57% of reference gauge 6R. The average tidal amplitude of gauge 19 was 19.10% different than reference gauge 4R. The percent difference between gauge 16 and reference gauge 6R was 18.78%.

Table 11. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between reference gauges and corresponding McIntyre gauges within the tidal freshwater marsh habitat.

Month	**4R vs. 19** (% diff)	**6R vs. 11** (% diff)	**6R vs. 16** (% diff)	**21R vs. 13** (% diff)	**21R vs. 20** (% diff)
Jan	17.92	6.33	14.60	3.82	3.70
Feb	23.14	9.34	16.71	3.13	4.11
Mar	17.18	8.95	16.66	4.78	4.95
Apr	18.04	6.19	17.67	5.08	5.88
May	20.33	6.04	18.40	3.51	3.29
Jun	18.55	6.36	22.27	3.09	5.35
Jul	21.08	4.53	20.94	1.85	3.94
Aug	19.80	4.80	21.21	2.63	3.80
Sep	15.90	*	20.55	*	*
Average	**19.10**	**6.57**	**18.78**	**3.49**	**4.38**

Between January and September of 2003, the salinities of gauges located within the restored tidal freshwater marsh areas at McIntyre and their corresponding reference gauges ranged from 0 ppt to 6 ppt (Tables 12, 13, and 14). Average salinity difference for this habitat type was 0.8 ppt. These values are lower than what was measured in 2002 (range: 1 ppt to 16 ppt; avg. diff. 1.7 ppt), It should be noted that there are many gaps in salinity data because of varying tides during the readings. Because it takes several hours to travel throughout the site and read salinity, several locations are reached during low tide when no water is available to measure salinity.

The data show that salinity patterns in restored and reference areas match. As the reference salinity data increased on a particular day, the corresponding restored salinity data also increased to match this fluctuation.

Table 12. Salinity data for reference gauge 4R and its corresponding mitigation gauge located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Month	4R	19
1/16/03	4	4
2/19/03	2	2
3/31/03	1	2
4/30/03	*	3
5/30/03	*	-
7/1/03	-	-
8/1/03	-	1
8/25/03	-	-
9/26/03	5	-

Note: R = Reference gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level.
* Could not read salinity because of broken refractometer.

Table 13. Salinity data for reference gauge 6R and corresponding mitigation gauges located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	6R	11	16
1/16/03	4	-	6
2/19/03	2	2	3
3/31/03	3	1	1
4/30/03	*	-	2
5/30/03	2	-	-
7/1/03	3	*	*
8/1/03	0	-	-
8/25/03	1	-	0
9/26/03	3	-	2

Note: R = Reference gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level.
* Could not read salinity because of broken refractometer.

Table 14. Salinity data for reference gauge 21R and corresponding mitigation gauges located in tidal freshwater marsh habitat. Data are given in parts per thousand (ppt).

Date	21R	13	20
1/16/03	5	5	5
2/19/03	2	2	3
3/31/03	-	1	2
4/30/03	1	1	3
5/30/03	2	2	1
7/1/03	1	*	*
8/1/03	0	-	1
8/25/03	1	0	1
9/26/03	2	2	4

Note: R = Reference gauge. - Could not read salinity because of low water level. * Could not read salinity because of broken refractometer.

2.4 Pre-Construction Data vs. Post Construction Data

As a requirement of the McIntyre mitigation plan, hydrology data collected prior to mitigation in the tidal cypress/gum swamp habitat (Gauge 12), the tidal freshwater marsh habitat (Gauges 16, 19, and 20), and the shrub scrub enhancement areas (Gauges 14E and 18E) were to be compared to post-construction data collected from these gauges to prove that the mitigation activities did in fact provide additional flushing to these areas and increase average tidal amplitudes. This was especially important to document because the elevations of these areas were not altered during construction. Instead, several breaks were installed throughout the berm along the southern edge of the property and tidal creeks were created to increase flushing in these areas. Because this mitigation project was on a fast-paced schedule, only between three and five months of pre-construction hydrology data were collected.

It was determined that the tidal data had a skewed distribution with outliers, therefore, a nonparametric test (Wilcoxan) was performed. The two datasets for each gauge were compared and a p-value was formed. This value represented the probability that the post-construction data set was not significantly higher than the pre-construction data set (null hypothesis).

In the year two monitoring report, pre-construction data was compared to post-construction data collected in 2002. All of the comparisons formed p-values less than 0.0001, which indicated that the post-construction data sets were significantly higher than the pre-construction data sets for these gauges. In year three, the pre-construction data sets were compared to post-construction data sets from 2003. Four of the six comparisons formed p-values less than .0001 (Table 15). Gauge 12 had a p-value less than 0.05, which is still considered significant. Gauge 14E had a slightly lower average post-construction tidal amplitude than that of the pre-construction data, therefore, the null hypothesis in this case could not be disproven.

This analysis compared the pre-construction data obtained for 14E (November of 2000 - February of 2001) and year three post-construction data obtained within the same months (November of 2002 – February of 2003). It is

visible from the hydrographs in Appendix B that Gauge 14E did not form strong tidal peaks in January and part of February of 2003. This was noted by several other gauges within the site and reference areas and is due to abnormally low tides during this time period. Because 2002 post-construction data were significantly higher than pre-construction data for all six gauges (including 14E) and because the project area experienced abnormally low tides during the year three data period, it can be concluded that the mitigation activities significantly increased tidal flushing within the cypress gum swamp, tidal freshwater marsh, and shrub scrub enhancement areas.

Table 15. Average pre-construction tidal amplitude, average post-construction tidal amplitude, and p-values for gauges located in tidal cypress gum habitat, tidal freshwater marsh habitat, and shrub scrub enhancement areas (see Appendix C for statistical analyses).

Gauge Number	**Mean Pre-construction Tidal Amplitude (in)**	**Mean Post-construction (2003) Tidal Amplitude (in)**	**P-value**
12	39.56	39.76	.0484
16	38.04	41.61	<.0001
19	36.86	38.20	<.0001
20	36.30	42.52	<.0001
14E	33.46	32.96	-
18E	29.89	32.87	<.0001

2.5 Conclusions

The hydrology success criterion established in the mitigation plan required restored and enhanced hydrology to be within 10% of reference hydrology. Results of the year three monitoring resembled results from years one and two, although there were some differences. Six gauges (8, 9, 11, 13, 15E, and 20) met this criterion and 10 gauges (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15E, 16, 19, and 20) were within 20%. Four gauges (7, 14E, 17, and 18E) exceeded 20%. As in previous years, all McIntyre gauges except for gauge 7 had hydrology that was greater (or wetter) on average, than their corresponding reference gauges (see Appendix B). Gauge 7 is located along the slope of a tidal creek, in very sandy soils. Although this area is ponded much of the time, this gauge still had slightly lower readings, on average, than reference gauge 5R. This is because water is able to seep out of the sandy soils much quicker and more effectively than the muddier substrate located in the

reference area. As the graphs show, high tides at gauge 7 are higher than gauge 5R, however low tides are lower as water quickly moves out of the soil and into the adjacent creek. The biggest difference was again between gauge 17 and reference gauge 5R, which was 53.22%. Gauge 17 is located along a tidal creek, just south of the easternmost spoil pile. This area is extremely wet and is flooded a majority of the time. Data show that gauge 17 is much wetter than any other gauge at McIntyre or the reference areas.

In 2001 and 2002, nine (7, 8, 10, 12, 14E, 16, 17, 18E, and 19) of the fourteen wells did not meet the hydrology success criterion established in the mitigation plan. In 2003, eight gauges (7, 10, 12, 14E, 16, 17, 18E, and 19) did not meet this criterion. However, because all but one gauge (7) experienced wetter hydrology than the reference, the mitigation at McIntyre has achieved its ultimate goal of restoring and enhancing tidal flushing to this disturbed area. Frequent visits to the site during varying times of the tidal cycle indicate that the restored elevations of this tract and the tidal creeks are allowing water to inundate the site repeatedly during high tide and return to drier conditions during low tide (Appendix A). As stated in the previous monitoring reports, it appears that the hydrology success criterion of no greater than 10% difference between average tidal amplitudes of the McIntyre tract and the reference areas is too restrictive. Furthermore, when comparing hydrology data from two different reference gauges located at the impact site of Rat Island (2R and 3R) between January and September of 2003, the average difference is 23.89% (Table 16). If the impact site itself cannot achieve the established success criterion, a more appropriate and realistic criterion may need to be developed by the agencies.

Table 16. Percent differences of tidal amplitudes between two reference gauges at the impact site (Rat Island).

Month	**2R vs. 3R** (% diff)
Jan	23.89
Feb	27.19
Mar	23.23
Apr	27.65
May	20.94
Jun	21.45
Jul	22.97
Aug	27.89
Sep	19.80
Average	**23.89**

Salinity data taken at each gauge show that salinity readings within the McIntyre tract were similar to readings taken within reference areas. Salinity readings taken within the tract prior to construction resulted in values between 0 and 2 ppt. After construction (2001 and 2002), salinity values increased from between 5 and 16 ppt. However, salinity decreased to between 0 ppt and 6 ppt in 2003. The increase in salinity after construction is most likely attributable to increases in tidal flushing. The decrease in salinity in 2003 is probably a result of rainfall. Large amounts of precipitation may temporarily dilute the salinity in the river and 2003 was an exceptionally wet year. Average salinity differences for the three habitat types at the McIntyre tract and the reference areas were 2.2 ppt (cypress/gum), 1.0 ppt (shrub scrub), and 0.8 ppt (freshwater marsh). Differences between readings taken on the same day may be a result of tidal cycles at the time of the readings and rainfall that occurred immediately prior to the readings (Appendix B). More important than the difference between values taken from the McIntyre tract and those taken from reference areas is the actual range of values. Values taken within the McIntyre tract ranged from 0 ppt – 6 ppt (post-project) while values taken within reference areas ranged from 0 ppt – 5 ppt (post-project).

Based on natural variation of salinity readings in any aquatic habitat, the salinity differences between the McIntyre site and reference areas are small enough to fulfill the salinity success criterion of ‘matching’.

A comparison of pre-construction hydrology data and post-construction hydrology data determined that average post-construction tidal amplitudes were significantly higher than average pre-construction tidal amplitudes for five of the six gauges. Abnormally low tides were experienced within the project area during the post-construction data period, which was likely the reason that gauge 14E did not meet this objective in 2003.

3.0 Vegetation

In June of 2001, wetland vegetation planting occurred within the three different types of habitat that were restored at the McIntyre site: tidal cypress/gum swamp, tidal marsh/shrub scrub, and tidal freshwater marsh. Trees were planted in the tidal cypress/gum swamp habitat, woody shrubs and herbaceous plants were planted in the tidal marsh/shrub scrub areas, and herbaceous plants were planted in the tidal freshwater marsh. Additional bald cypress and black gum trees were planted in the spring of 2003. Year three vegetation data were collected on September 25th and September 26th of 2003 (Appendix D). The year three monitoring events were delayed by Hurricane Isabel.

3.1 Cypress/Gum Swamp

Within the 12.3 acres of restored cypress/gum habitat, bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and swamp black gum (*Nyssa biflora*) trees were planted on a 20' spacing, which is approximately 120 trees per acre (Table 17). Although the mitigation plan stated that *N. aquatica* seedlings would be planted, because of limited nursery availability, *N. biflora* was used. The trees planted were obtained from a certified nursery and were received in one-gallon containers.

Table 17. Trees planted within restored cypress/gum swamp habitat at McIntyre in 2001.

Species Planted	Common Name	# Planted/acre	Total Planted
Taxodium distichum	Bald cypress	80	984
Nyssa biflora	Swamp black gum	40	492
Total		**120**	**1476**

3.1.1 *Methods*

Vegetation monitoring within the cypress/gum habitat comprised of establishing three circular plots, each one-tenth acre in size, within restored sections of this community type and counting all woody trees within these plots (Figure 3). According to the McIntyre Mitigation Plan, the minimum success criterion is to obtain survival of no less than 40 trees per acre, including volunteer cypress and gum.

3.1.2 *Results*

Although other woody species were observed within these plots, the bald cypress and black gum trees were the only species counted toward the 40 trees/acre success criterion.

When including all trees that were observed within each of the three plots, an average of 276.7 trees/acre was achieved. This is less than the 530 trees/acre observed in 2002 and was due to a decrease in the number of volunteer shrubs occurring in Plot #1, such as *Baccharis halimifolia* and *Sapium sebiferum*. When including only the bald cypress and black gum species, the average number was 130 trees/acre (Table 18). This value was significantly greater than the 36.7 trees/acre observed in 2002 and surpassed the success criterion of 40 trees/acre. Therefore, the cypress/gum swamp habitat achieved the vegetation success criterion for 2003.

Table 18. Species and number of trees observed within cypress/gum swamp vegetation monitoring plots.

Plot #	Species	Total Number	# Counted Towards Criterion
1	*Taxodium distichum* *Nyssa biflora* *Baccharis halimifolia* *Myrica cerifera*	15 6 40 4	21
2	*Taxodium distichum* *Nyssa biflora*	8 2	10
3	*Taxodium distichum* *Nyssa biflora*	6 2	8
Total		83	39
Total/acre		**276.7**	**130**

3.2 Tidal Marsh/Shrub Scrub

Within the McIntyre tract, 17.02 acres of tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat were restored. In these areas, a combination of woody shrubs and herbaceous plants were planted on a 2' spacing (Table 19). All planted vegetation was obtained from certified nurseries (Pinelands Nursery, Columbus NJ; Central Florida Lands & Timber Nursery, LLC, Mayo, FL; Horticultural Systems, Inc., Parrish, FL). Seedlings were 2" plugs and shrubs were shipped in one-gallon containers. No planting occurred within the 85.76 acres of shrub scrub enhancement.

Table 19. Shrubs and herbaceous plants planted within restored sections of the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat at McIntyre. Because some of the shipped plants arrived in unsuitable condition, the nursery shipped additional plants at no charge. Therefore, numbers planted exceeds values given in the mitigation plan.

Species Planted	Common Name	# Planted/acre	Total Planted
Myrica cerifera	Wax myrtle	110	2541
Iva frutescens	Marsh elder	70	1617
Baccharis halimifolia	Groundsel bush	11	250
Hibiscus moscheutos	Marsh mallow	86	2000
Spartina cynosuroides	Giant cordgrass	4620	106,722
Cladium jamaicense	Saw grass	4620	106,722
Spartina alterniflora	Smooth cordgrass	1650 (along tidal creeks only)	38,115
Scirpus pungens			28,600
Scirpus robustus	Salt marsh bulrush		4700
Scirpus americanus	Common three-square		4750
Scirpus validus	Soft-stemmed bulrush		5150
Total		**11,562**	**267,092**

3.2.1 *Methods*

Vegetation monitoring within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat was performed using techniques developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Braun-Blanquet (B-B) vegetation sampling technique was used to measure

vegetation cover (Braun-Blanquet, 1965; see Appendix E). From the B-B method, cover values ranging between 0.1 and 5 are assigned to each species observed within a plot and are based on the species' density within that plot. Using the sum of the cover values generated from this method, measures of frequency, abundance, and density can be derived.

To collect vegetation data, 15.4 plots that were each $1m^2$ in size were sampled per acre. Since 17.02 acres of tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat were restored, 263 plots were sampled. According to the mitigation plan, these plots were to be randomly located throughout restored sections of this habitat type. However, because a computer program that generated these random latitude/longitude points could not be obtained, the location of plots was determined using a systematic sampling technique, with the consent of the Corps and NMFS. In the office, evenly-spaced transects (approximately 50' spacing) that ran north/south were marked onto a survey map of the site. Four teams each consisting of two people then walked these transects in the field and established a plot every fifty feet.

The vegetation success criterion is the survival of at least 70% of the planted seedlings for the first and each subsequent growing season. As stated on page 13 of the mitigation plan, both planted and volunteer emergent high marsh species (except *Phragmites australis* and *Typha angustifolia*) were counted towards this criterion. The final plant density success criterion is the establishment of 75% plant coverage by the end of the fifth growing season.

3.2.2 *Results*

Of the eleven species planted within this habitat type, all were observed within the sampling plots. An additional 31 species have volunteered into the site since planting occurred in June of 2001. The number of plots in which each species was observed and the sum of the B-B values for that species are given in Table 20.

Table 20. Number of occupied plots and sum of B-B values for each species observed in the tidal marsh/shrub scrub plots.

Species	# of Occupied Plots	Sum of BB
Amaranthus cannabinus	44	66.1
Aster subulatus	63	85.4
Aster tenufolius	2	1.5
Baccharis halimifolia	40	84.4
Bacopa monnieri	2	0.6
Carex spp.	12	36.5
Cicuta maculata	15	35.6
Cladium jamaicense	138	440.5
Cynodon dactylon	6	10
Cyperus strygosis	2	0.6
Cyperus spp.	11	10.5
Echinochloa walteri	15	20.6
Eupatorium capillifolium	8	11.2
Eupatorium spp.	5	6.6
Hibiscus moscheutos	9	5.7
Hypericum spp.	6	4.5
Iva frutescens	16	15.5
Juncus effusus	4	10
Myrica cerifera	5	9.1
Nyssa biflora	1	1
Panicum spp.	16	18.3
*Phragmites australis**	23	64.6
Pluchea rosea	68	66.7
Polyganum hydropiperoides	116	154
Polyganum pennsylvanicum	1	0.5
Pontederia cordata.	2	1.1
Rubus spp.	2	1
Sagittaria latifolia	6	2.2
Sapium sebiferum	4	3.7
Scirpus americanus	20	25.6
Scirpus pungens	23	28.2
Scirpus robustus	76	92.9
Scirpus validus	13	20.7
Scirpus spp. 1	1	0.5
Setaria geniculata	6	6.5
Solidago spp.	20	16.6
Sorghum halepense	6	2.2
Spartina alterniflora	37	84.5
Spartina cynosuroides	46	76.5
Taxodium distichum	2	2.1
*Typha angustifolia**	81	178.8
unknown	1	0.5
2003 TOTAL	**871**	**1463.2**

*Not counted towards total.
Species listed in bold were planted.

National Marine Fisheries Service provided guidelines on how to analyze vegetation data collected using the B-B method in an emergent marsh mitigation site. Based on their protocol, survival (frequency) was estimated using the following formula:

Survival = # of occupied quadrats/total # of quadrats

The number of plots occupied by both planted and volunteer species (*except Phragmites australis* and *Typha angustifolia*) was counted (Table 20) and divided by the total number of plots sampled within this habitat type (263). This results in counting a plot more than once if more than one species exists within it. Furthermore, the NMFS formula assumes planting occurred on a $1m^2$ spacing (ie. one plant per plot). Instead, the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat was planted on a 2' spacing, which is approximately 2.72 plants per $1m^2$ plot. Therefore, the survival formula was modified to reflect this spacing:

*Survival = # of occupied quadrats/(total # of quadrats * 2.72)*

With this modification, the survival rate is 1.22 or 122% and represents the spacing of plants within the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat more accurately than the original formula. This value exceeds the survival success criterion of 70%. Therefore, the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat type meets the vegetation success criterion for 2003.

Although the density success criterion of 75% (a B-B value of 5) is not officially counted until the fifth year of monitoring, it was calculated this year to monitor progress. The NMFS formula to calculate density is:

Density = sum of B-B scale values/ total # of quadrats

Density within tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat after year three monitoring is 5.6. In terms of B-B cover values, this average represents greater than 75% vegetative cover and already achieves the density success criterion.

3.3 Tidal Freshwater Marsh

A total of 25.18 acres of tidal freshwater marsh habitat was restored at McIntyre. Within these areas, herbaceous plant species were planted on a 4' spacing (Table 21). All planted vegetation was obtained from certified nurseries (Pinelands Nursery, Columbus NJ; Central Florida Lands & Timber Nursery, LLC, Mayo, FL; Horticultural Systems, Inc., Parrish, FL). All herbaceous plants were 2" plugs.

Table 21. List of herbaceous plants planted within restored sections of the tidal freshwater marsh habitat at McIntyre.

Species Planted	Common Name	# Planted/ac	Total Planted
Spartina cynosuroides	Giant cordgrass	1587	40,000
Cladium jamaicense	Saw grass	568	14,300
Scirpus americanus	Common three-square	568	14,300
Scirpus robustus	Salt marsh bulrush	284	6550
Scirpus validus	Soft-stemmed bulrush	111	2575
Total		**3118**	**77,725**

3.3.1 *Methods*

Vegetation monitoring within the tidal freshwater marsh areas followed the same protocol as within the tidal marsh shrub/scrub habitat. As with the tidal marsh shrub/scrub, 15.4 plots that were each $1m^2$ were established per acre. Because 25.18 acres of tidal freshwater marsh habitat were restored, 388 plots were counted.

The vegetation success criterion is the survival of at least 70% of the planted seedlings for the first and each subsequent growing season. Both planted and volunteer species (except *Phragmites australis* and *Typha angustifolia*) were counted towards this criterion. The final plant density success criterion is the establishment of 75% plant coverage by the end of the fifth growing season.

3.3.2 *Results*

Of the five species planted within this habitat type, all were observed within the sampling plots. An additional twelve species have volunteered into the site since planting occurred in June of 2001, including cattails (*Typha angustifolia*). Most of this habitat type previously consisted of cattail beds that were pressed to the ground with mechanical equipment prior to planting. The dead, prostrate cattails were not counted in the sampling efforts. However, new shoots that were located in these plots were counted in the field but were not included in the success criterion data. The number of plots in which each species was observed and the sum of the B-B values for that species are given in Table 22.

Table 22. Number of occupied plots and sum of B-B values for each species observed in the tidal freshwater marsh plots.

Species	# of Occupied Plots	Sum of B-B Values
Amaranthus cannabinus	2	0.2
Aster subulatus	11	2.7
Aster tenufolius	1	0.5
Baccharis halimifolia	2	1.5
Cladium jamaicense	56	88
Cyperus spp.	6	6.6
Cyperus strygosis	1	2
Hydrocotyle spp.	11	10.6
Juncus effusus	1	0.5
Myrica cerifera	2	2.5
Onoclea sensibilis	23	59.6
Osmunda regalis	6	5.1
*Phragmites australis**	5	14
Pluchea rosea	26	11.1
Polyganum hydropiperoides	11	8.2
Pontederia cordata	1	1
Rubus spp.	1	1
Sapium sebiferum	1	0.1
Saururus cernuus	1	0.5
Scirpus americanus	40	91
Scirpus pungens	51	80.1
Scirpus robustus	104	139.8
Scirpus validus	40	64.1
Spartina alterniflora	2	2.5
Spartina cynosuroides	3	6
Toxicodendron radicans	6	7
*Typha angustifolia**	384	1471.5
Unknown	2	0.2
Woodardia areolata	9	13.1
2003 TOTAL	**420**	**605.5**

*Not counted towards total. Planted species listed in bold.

Vegetation data collected within the tidal freshwater marsh habitat were analyzed using the same survival formula as in the tidal marsh/shrub scrub habitat. However, vegetation within this community type was planted on a 4' spacing. Therefore, the average number of plants located within any given $1m^2$ plot is 0.68. The revised formula is as follows:

*Survival = # of occupied quadrats/(total # of quadrats * 0.68)*

With this modification, the survival rate is 1.59 or 159%. This value greatly exceeds last year's rate of 70.5% and exceeds the survival success criterion of 70%. Therefore, the tidal freshwater marsh habitat type meets the vegetation success criterion for year three.

Although the density success criterion of 75% (a B-B value of 5) is not officially counted until the fifth year of monitoring, it was calculated this year to monitor progress. The NMFS formula to calculate density is:

Density = sum of B-B scale values/ total # of quadrats

Therefore, density within tidal freshwater marsh habitat after year three monitoring is 605.5/388, or 1.56. In terms of B-B cover values, this average represents between 1% and 5% vegetative cover. This value is still low but is steadily increasing from 2001 (0.53) and 2002 (0.56).

3.4 Invasive Species

The scope and effect of invasive species throughout the McIntyre tract were evaluated in this third year monitoring report. Prior to any vegetation planting, the extent of *Phragmites australis* within the tract was determined to be mainly along its eastern section (near U.S. Highway 421) and in the middle of the tract near gauge 16 (Figure 3). The plants were sprayed twice in June of 2001 with an herbicide (see Appendix A). These areas were reevaluated during the vegetation monitoring in September of 2003 and it was determined that the plants were negatively affected by the herbicide but are continuing to grow. As in 2002, some individuals were observed within the monitoring transects mostly along the eastern section of the tract and their numbers are noted in Tables 21 and 22. Because of the well-known ability of *Phragmites australis* to withstand many forms of assault, we will continue to periodically monitor these areas and spray the plants with herbicide.

3.5 Conclusions

Year three vegetation monitoring was performed on September 25th and September 26th of 2003. This monitoring found all three habitat types, cypress gum tidal swamp, scrub shrub, and tidal freshwater marsh, to meet their respective vegetation success criterion.

In the cypress gum tidal swamp habitat, an average of 276.7 trees/acre was achieved. This is less than the 530 trees/acre observed in 2002 and is due to a decrease in the number of volunteer shrub species (*Baccharis halimifolia* and *Sapium sebiferum*) observed in Plot #1. When counting only the bald cypress and black gum species, the average was 130 trees/acre. This value is significantly greater than the 36.7 trees/acre observed in 2002 and surpasses the success criterion of 40 trees/acre. The supplemental planting that occurred in the spring of 2002 was instrumental in achieving this success.

The survival rate of planted and acceptable volunteer vegetation within the tidal scrub shrub habitat was 122%. This rate exceeded 100% because the formula includes volunteer herbaceous and woody species. Although this value exceeded the survival success criterion of 70%, it was a slight decrease from the 133% survival rate observed in 2002. The drop in survivorship was most likely due to a later monitoring survey in 2003 (September 2003 vs. August 2002) and an overall equilibration of species' density within the site. In fact, the density value observed in 2003 (5.6) was very similar to that observed in 2002 (5.8).

The survival rate of planted and acceptable volunteer vegetation within the tidal freshwater marsh habitat was 159%. This value met the survival success criterion of 70% and greatly exceeded last year's survival rate of 70.5%. This was largely because the cattails were repeatedly pushed down with lightweight equipment (i.e. trails for monitoring gauges) throughout the year, which allowed sunlight to penetrate to the ground. To ensure continued success, the cattails in the tidal freshwater marsh habitat will be periodically flattened to increase survivability of planted vegetation.

4.0 Summary

Both hydrology and vegetation success criteria were evaluated in this third year monitoring report at the McIntyre tract. This report compared fourteen automated gauges located within the McIntyre tract to seven automated gauges located within reference areas between January and September of 2003. This comparison determined that six gauges (8, 9, 11, 13, 15E, and 20) were within 10% of their reference gauge and ten gauges (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15E, 16, 19, and 20) were within 20%. Four gauges (7, 14E, 18E, and 17) exceeded 20%. All McIntyre gauges except for gauge 7 had hydrology that was greater (or wetter) on average, than their corresponding reference gauges (see Appendix B). The biggest difference was again between gauge 17 and reference gauge 5R, which was 53.22%. Gauge 17 is located along a tidal creek, just south of the easternmost spoil pile. This area is extremely wet and is flooded a majority of the time. Data show that gauge 17 is much wetter than any other gauge at McIntyre or the reference areas.

The hydrology success criterion established in the mitigation plan required restored hydrology to be within 10% of reference hydrology. Six gauges meet this criterion and ten gauges are within 20%. However, all McIntyre gauges except for gauge 7 had hydrology that was greater (or wetter) on average, than that of the corresponding reference gauges (see Appendix B). Therefore, this mitigation has achieved its ultimate goal of restoring tidal flushing back to this area. Frequent visits to the site during varying times of the tidal cycle indicated that the restored elevations of this tract and the tidal creeks were allowing water to inundate the site during high tide and return to drier conditions during low tide (Appendix A). In addition, because planted wetland vegetation was surviving within the tract, it can be assumed that appropriate hydrology has been restored that was neither too wet nor too dry for the system. Although not all gauges met the hydrology success criterion of no greater than a 10% difference in tidal amplitudes between the McIntyre tract and the reference areas, the tract should not be considered a hydrological failure. In fact, when comparing two reference gauges (2R and 3R) located at the impact site, average tidal amplitude differences were approximately 23%. It appears that the established hydrology success criterion was too restrictive and did not

allow for natural variation in amplitudes. A more appropriate and realistic success criterion may need to be developed by the agencies.

Salinity data taken at each gauge show that salinity readings within the McIntyre tract are similar to readings taken within reference areas. Average salinity differences for the three habitat types at the McIntyre tract and the reference areas were 2.2 ppt (cypress/gum), 1.0 ppt (shrub scrub), and 0.8 ppt (freshwater marsh). Values taken within the McIntyre tract ranged from 0 ppt – 6 ppt (post-project) while values taken within reference areas ranged from 0 ppt – 5 ppt (post-project). Based on natural variation of salinity readings in any aquatic habitat, the salinity differences between the McIntyre site and reference areas were small enough to fulfill the salinity success criterion of 'matching'.

A comparison of pre-construction hydrology data and post-construction hydrology data determined that average post-construction tidal amplitudes were significantly higher than average pre-construction tidal amplitudes for five of the six gauges. Abnormally low tides were experienced within the project area during the post-construction data period, which was likely the reason that gauge 14E did not meet this objective in 2003.

Year three vegetation monitoring was performed in September of 2003. This monitoring found all three habitat types; cypress gum tidal swamp, scrub shrub, and the tidal freshwater marsh, to meet their respective vegetation success criterion.

In the cypress gum habitat, an average of 276.7 trees/acre was achieved. When including only the bald cypress and black gum species, the average was 130 trees/acre. This value was significantly greater than the 36.7 trees/acre observed in 2002 and surpassed the success criterion of 40 trees/acre.

The survival rate of planted and volunteer vegetation within the tidal scrub shrub habitat was 122%. Although this value exceeded the survival success criterion of 70%, it

was a slight decrease from the 133% survival rate observed in 2002 and was most likely due to a later vegetation monitoring survey (September vs. August) in 2003.

The survival rate of planted and volunteer vegetation within the tidal freshwater marsh habitat was 159%. This value met the survival success criterion of 70% and greatly exceeded last year's survival rate of 70.5%. This increase was largely because the cattails were repeatedly pushed down with lightweight equipment (i.e. trails for monitoring gauges) throughout the year, which allowed sunlight to penetrate to the ground.

Based on the hydrology and vegetation data collected throughout the third year of monitoring, it has been determined that the McIntyre Tract is a mitigation success thus far.