§ 777.3 Background.

(a) Executive Order 11990 (42 FR 26961, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 121) Protection of Wetlands, and DOT Order 5660.1A,1 Preservation of the Nation’s Wetlands, emphasize the important functions and values inherent in the Nation’s wetlands. Federal agencies are directed to avoid new construction in wetlands unless the head of the agency determines that:

(1) There is no practicable alternative to such construction, and

(2) The proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.

(b) Sections 103 and 133 of title 23, U.S. Code, identify additional approaches for mitigation and management of impacts to wetlands and natural habitats which result from projects funded pursuant to title 23, U.S. Code, as eligible for participation with title 23, U.S. Code, funds.

(c) 33 CFR parts 320 through 330, Regulatory Program, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Section 404, Clean Water Act and 40 CFR part 230, Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines for the Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Material, establish requirements for the permitting of discharge of dredge or fill material in wetlands and other waters of the United States.

(d) Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Mitigation Banks presents guidance for the use of ecological mitigation banks as compensatory mitigation in the Section 404 Regulatory Program for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources.


§ 777.5 Federal participation.

(a) Those measures which the FHWA and a State DOT find appropriate and necessary to mitigate adverse environmental impacts to wetlands and natural habitats are eligible for Federal participation where the impacts are the result of projects funded pursuant to title 23, U.S. Code. The justification for the cost of proposed mitigation measures should be considered in the same context as any other public expenditure; that is, the proposed mitigation represents a reasonable public expenditure when weighed against other social, economic, and environmental
§ 777.9 Mitigation of impacts.

(a) Actions eligible for Federal funding. There are a number of actions that can be taken to minimize the impact of highway projects on wetlands or natural habitats. The following actions qualify for Federal-aid highway funding:
   (1) Avoidance and minimization of impacts to wetlands or natural habitats through realignment and special design, construction features, or other measures.
   (2) Compensatory mitigation alternatives, either inside or outside of the right-of-way. This includes, but is not limited to, such measures as on-site mitigation, when that alternative is determined to be the preferred approach by the appropriate regulatory agency; improvement of existing degraded or historic wetlands or natural habitats through restoration or enhancement on or off site; creation of new wetlands; and under exceptional circumstances, preservation of existing wetlands or natural habitats on or off site. Restoration of wetlands is generally preferable to enhancement or creation of new wetlands.
   (3) Improvements to existing wetlands or natural habitats. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, construction or modification of water level control structures or ditches, establishment of natural vegetation, re-contouring of a site, installation or removal of irrigation, drainage, or other water distribution systems, integrated pest management, installation of fencing, monitoring, and other measures to protect, enhance, or restore the wetland or natural habitat character of a site.
   (4) Mitigation banks. In accordance with all applicable Federal law (including regulations), with respect to participation in compensatory mitigation related to a project funded under title 23, U.S. Code, that has an impact on wetlands or natural habitat occurring within the service area of a mitigation bank, preference shall be given, to the maximum extent practicable, to the use of the mitigation bank, if the bank contains sufficient available credits to offset the impact and the bank is approved in accordance with the Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Mitigation Banks, or other agreement between appropriate agencies.

(b) Mitigation banking alternatives eligible for participation with Federal-