



# Lean Government

## Florida Submerged Lands and Environmental Resources Permit Process Kaizen Event Case Study

### Summary

In Florida, the Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Submerged Lands and Environmental Resource Permitting Program (SLERP) addresses dredging, filling, and construction in wetlands and other surface waters. The program is designed to ensure that activities do not degrade water quality or degrade habitat for aquatic or wetland dependent wildlife. To protect the environment, developers must obtain an Environmental Resource Permit before beginning any construction activity that would affect wetlands, alter surface water flows, or contribute to water pollution.

In response to observations that there were inefficiencies in the 30-day permit review process, FDEP's Northwest District Office conducted a Lean kaizen event to streamline the SLERP "Dredge and Fill" permitting process. This event was held in August 2009 with support from U.S. EPA Region 4. In the existing process, the time from receipt of a permit application to when it reached a processor was taking as much as 10 days. As an application is required to be reviewed by a processor in 30 days or less, there was sometimes only 20 days left for a full technical review.

The objectives of the four-day Lean event were to introduce participants to Lean tools and to create an implementation plan to eliminate waste from the Dredge and Fill permit application process. Participants also wanted to develop efficiencies that would be transferable to other FDEP processes. The Lean event team designed a new, streamlined process in the event and identified a series of actions to eliminate inefficiencies, simplify the process, and improve the quality of applications. Implementation activities have continued since the event, and FDEP has achieved a 50 percent reduction in the time it takes for an application to reach a processor for technical review.

### Results

With implementation since the Lean event, FDEP has achieved the following **results**:

- Reduced **lead time** of the process from 6.5 days to 0-3 days (greater than 50% reduction))

### Scope of the Lean Project

**Project Scope:** FDEP SLERP Dredge and Fill permit application process from receipt of application until it reaches the processor for technical review

### Goals of the Lean Event

- Reduce time of the first phase of the Dredge and Fill application process by 50%.

## Process Changes

During the kaizen event, FDEP participants developed “current state” and “future state” maps of the process. Participants then developed an implementation plan to work toward the future SLERP process based on the following key process improvement areas.

- Improve the quality of applications by informing the public on proper application requirements.
- Decrease application transmittal time by obtaining permission to e-mail scanned copies of applications to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
- Move scan and fax equipment closer to staff.
- Minimize or eliminate the distribution and copy process.
- Increase communication efficiency with applicants by requesting an e-mail address on the application.
- Streamline process steps between Administrator and Supervisor.
- Minimize the time an application spends in the queue by implementing visual signals.

Figure 1: Current State Process Map

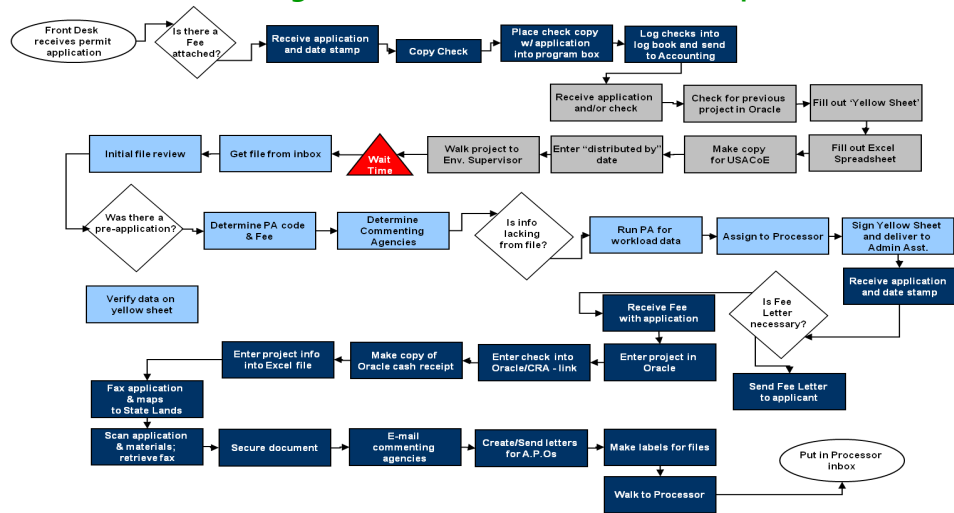
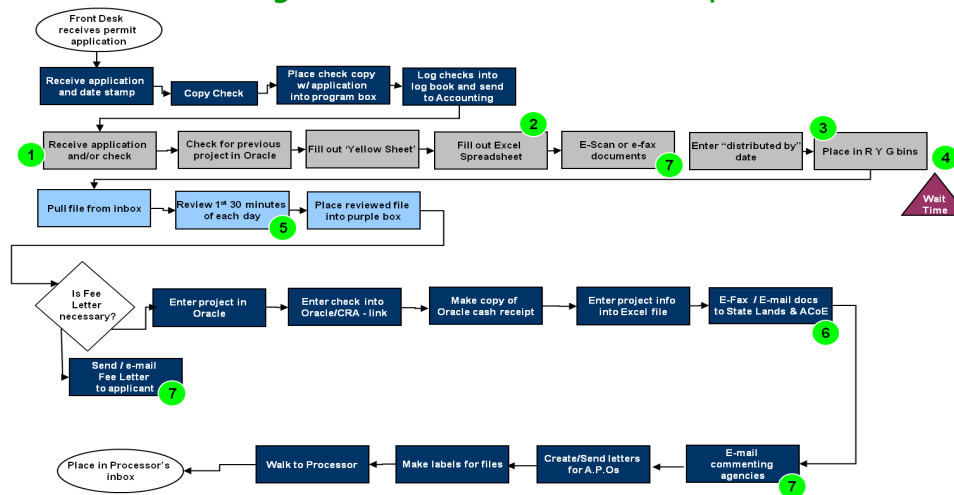


Figure 2: Future State Process Map



## Implementation

Since the event, participants have been working to implement the streamlined process. Key implementation activities have included:

- **Defining the criteria for a complete application** – More specific instructions on using the fee list and completing an application have been provided on the cover sheet, and an application is no longer complete without correct fees.
- **Collecting data metrics on complete vs. incomplete applications** – The staff maintains an internal spreadsheet which tracks receipt of a dredge and fill application and fees and the spreadsheet tracks when an application goes to and is received from a processor. This spreadsheet allows the team to collect data metrics on complete applications. An application is no longer complete without correct fees.
- **Tracking the number of days an application takes to get to the Processor** – Average time from administrative staff to processor is currently 0 – 3 days.

- **Installing color-coded hanging file folders to send visual signals on status to teammates** – green, yellow, red, and clear wall pockets have been installed and are being utilized.
- **Holding 30-minute check-ins each morning** to review folders and make appropriate staff notifications – Supervisors are maintaining the 30-minute meetings. These meetings are used to discuss the status of applications and subsequent information for commenting agencies. Additional discussions regarding commenting agencies are done via email.
- **Acquiring permission to scan application documents and e-mail** them to USACE – The current operating agreement between FL DEP and USACE dictates the receiving of a hard copy. FL DEP has been unable to gain permission from State Lands Title Check to change from fax to email. These changes will eventually save time and money
- **Acquiring and installing all-in-one copier access** – The current budget has prevented the purchase of all-in-one copiers, which would save additional time and resources.

The primary purpose of the Lean event was to allow more time in a 30-day review cycle for the processors to review Dredge and Fill permit applications. By implementing the Lean implementation plan, the team has accomplished a 50 percent reduction in the time it took for an application to reach a processor, thereby allowing more time for review.

EPA received positive feedback from the post Lean event survey, but most participants expressed skepticism over the ability and willingness to implement the plan. The SLERP Administrator has since retired, but the Lean team has been able to implement the Lean recommendations and maintain these critical improvements. FL DEP continues to face budget constraints, but implementing the Lean plan has proven to help save time and will help to save shrinking state resources.

Shortly after the Lean event on the dredge and fill process, the original Lean team and a few new participants conducted another value stream mapping event focused on the referral process for State Board items regarding State Lands. The Northwest District is interested in implementing Lean across the entire District and became a member of the Jacksonville Lean Consortium to benefit from shared learning and networking on Lean-based continuous improvement efforts.

## For More Information:

### Florida DEP Lean Event

Latoya D. Miller, US EPA Region 4, (404) 562-9885, miller.latoya@epa.gov

Suganthi Simon, US EPA Region 4, (404) 562-9384, simon.suganthi@epa.gov

Barbara Ruth, SLERP Administrator, FDEP, (850) 595-8300 x1128,

Barbara.Ruth@dep.state.fl.us

Brandy M. Smith, Administrative Assistant, FDEP Water Facilities Program NW District,

(850) 595-8300 x1155, Brandy.M.Smith@dep.state.fl.us

### EPA Lean Government Initiative

Jamie Burnett, EPA OPEI, (202) 566-2305, burnett.jamie@epa.gov

Kimberly Green-Goldsborough, EPA OPEI, (202) 566-2355,

green-goldsborough.kimberly@epa.gov

<http://www.epa.gov/lean/leangovernment>