

FLORIDA'S CORAL REEF COORDINATION TEAM

Charter

AUTHORIZATION: Section 528(f)(2)(E)(i) of Public Law 104-303, the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, enacted October 12, 1996, authorizes the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (Task Force) and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group (Working Group) to establish such advisory bodies as are necessary to assist the Task Force in its duties, including public policy and scientific issues.

BACKGROUND: In response to the recent losses of large, framework-building corals due to Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD), which followed decades of concerning declines in coral cover along Florida's Coral Reef, an ad hoc Florida SCLTD Response effort led by the State of Florida and Federal agencies was launched in 2017 involving dozens of partners from government, academic, non-profit, and private organizations. While the Florida SCLTD Response focuses narrowly on establishing the cause of SCTLD, identifying effective interventions, and conserving the genetic diversity of Florida's corals, a formal mechanism for effectively coordinating federal, state, and local interests in the complex task of restoring Florida's Coral Reef is lacking.

As ecologically and economically important components of the South Florida ecosystem, Florida's Coral Reef and associated patch reef, hardbottom, and seagrass resources should be restored, preserved, and protected consistent with Task Force Strategic Goal 2A2. The implementation of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects and other region-wide restoration activities may have significant impacts (positive or negative) on Florida's Coral Reef and its restoration potential, as well as the efficacy of current management and SCTLD response interventions, through expected changes in freshwater flow quality, quantity, distribution, and timing to nearshore coastal waters within the South Florida ecosystem. Meanwhile, large-scale restoration of Florida's Coral Reef may provide an unparalleled opportunity to enhance the resilience of coastal wetlands and the southern Everglades, and to insulate billions of dollars of state and federal investments in Everglades restoration from future impacts associated with storm surge and sea level rise. Ultimately, the successful restoration of these two interconnected national treasures within the South Florida ecosystem can only be accomplished through focused, formal coordination among local, state, and federal agencies, and must be informed by consultation and public engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders.

MISSION: The mission of this Team is to regionally integrate and coordinate management and restoration-related activities to conserve and restore Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources to protect, sustain, and enhance the South Florida ecosystem's ecological and aesthetic character, function, and resilience. This will be achieved in the context of ongoing anthropogenic disturbance through the implementation and completion of South Florida Ecosystem Restoration projects, programs, and related activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES: The Team shall serve as the principal advisory body to the Working Group and Science Coordination Group for issues impacting Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources. Specifically, the Team shall:

- a. provide an open and inclusive forum for interagency coral reef ecosystem management coordination and communication.
- b. identify and evaluate opportunities to facilitate, integrate, and enhance monitoring and data collection efforts across Florida's Coral Reef and adjacent coastal waters.
- c. enhance data accessibility to foster collaboration across agencies and improved decision-making.
- d. adopt and refine restoration goals specific to Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources consistent with the strategic goals of the Task Force, and assess progress towards achieving those goals.
- e. identify and coordinate capabilities across agencies for coral reef management and restoration-related activities to conserve and restore Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources.
- f. review components of CERP for impacts to Florida's Coral Reef and offer recommendations to secure or enhance the delivery of project benefits to Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources.
- g. coordinate as necessary with coral-related Technical Advisory Committees, the Florida SCTLDR Response leadership, the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative, and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) to avoid duplication of efforts.
- h. inform the development of statutorily-mandated Task Force reporting products.
- i. message the importance of Everglades restoration as a critical element of protecting, sustaining, and enhancing Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources.
- j. assist the Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) in the development and maintenance of informational and educational web content on [Florida's Coral Reef](#) and the activities of the Team.
- k. produce the following deliverables:
 1. a collaborative framework for water quality monitoring along Florida's Coral Reef.
 2. recommendations for ecological indicators and RECOVER performance measures specific to Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources to be considered by the Science Coordination Group.
 3. any other items as requested by the Working Group or Science Coordination Group or as deemed necessary or beneficial by the Team.

MEMBERSHIP: The Team consists of 9 voting members and 9 non-voting members.

a. The VOTING membership shall consist of (1) a member of the Working Group designated as Chairperson, and 8 designated representatives from the following agencies and governments authorized to represent that agency's or government's interest on matters pertaining to the responsibilities of the Team:

Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) National Ocean Service, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Department of the Interior.

(3) National Park Service, South Florida Natural Resources Center.

(4) Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Environmental Protection Agency.

(5) Region 4, Water Division, South Florida & Everglades.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

(6) Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection.

(7) Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

(8) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

(9) Division of Marine Fisheries Management.

b. The NON-VOTING membership shall consist of (1) the OERI Executive Director as a Special Advisor, and 8 designated representatives from the following agencies and governments authorized to represent that agency's or government's interest on matters pertaining to the responsibilities of the Team:

Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers.

(2) Jacksonville District, Planning and Policy Division, Environmental Branch.

United States Geological Survey.

(3) Natural Hazards Mission Area, St. Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center.

South Florida Water Management District.

(4) Water Resources Division.

County environmental resource agencies.

(5) Broward County.

(6) Martin County.

(7) Miami-Dade County.

(8) Monroe County.

(9) Palm Beach County.

c. Designations for members shall be made by an appropriate authority within each agency to the Executive Director in writing.

d. Designees may name an alternate in the event they are unable to attend a meeting, in full or in part, by notifying the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson prior to or during that meeting. Alternates in attendance are not proxies and may not vote on any matter before the group.

e. The Working Group shall select one of its members to serve as Chairperson of the Team. The voting members of the Team shall nominate and recommend a Vice Chairperson subject to Working Group approval. The Vice Chairperson may not represent the same level of government (state or federal) as the Chairperson. The terms of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall not exceed two years unless otherwise approved by the Working Group. The Vice Chairperson shall serve as Chair in the absence of the designated Chairperson.

ADMINISTRATION:

a. The Team shall serve in an advisory role to the Working Group and Science Coordination Group, and not as a direct granting or operation agency.

b. The Team shall not supplant agency authority or have any regulatory authority.

c. The work of the Team shall be consistent with the authorities of all managed areas across Florida's Coral Reef, including state parks, ecosystem conservation areas, aquatic preserves, national parks, national marine sanctuaries, and national wildlife reserves.

d. A majority of the voting members then serving shall constitute a quorum provided that at least three federal and three state designees are present.

e. The goal of the Team shall be to share information, coordinate activities, and build consensus among its members. Where consensus is unattainable, a minimum two-thirds majority vote is required for final Team action, and actions other than final actions may be taken by a simple majority vote.

f. The Team may adopt additional principles, operational guidelines or procedures to facilitate the accomplishment of the responsibilities described in this Charter, provided those protocols are consistent with this charter and Working Group and Science Coordination Group guidance.

g. The Team shall meet at the call of the Chairperson or of a majority of the voting members, but not less often than quarterly.

h. The Team may create, reorganize, or dissolve subgroups of its members to study specified issues or work on tasks, and to report to the Team as a whole, subject to Working Group concurrence.

i. If a voting member (either the designee or alternate) misses three consecutive meetings, their status may be suspended from voting member to non-voting member, subject to Working Group concurrence, and until such time as the organization they represent names another designee or alternate, or the voting member subsequently attends three consecutive meetings to reinstate voting privileges.

j. There is no term limit for designees. Each designee serves at the pleasure of the designating authority.

k. Any vacancy on the Team shall be filled in the same manner in which the original designation was made and subject to the terms of this charter and Working Group concurrence.

l. The Team shall ensure that all meetings and workshops, including those of its subgroups, are open and accessible to the public, including by providing advance notice of meetings, providing adequate opportunity and designated time slots for public input and comment, maintaining appropriate records, and making a record of the proceedings of meetings available for public inspection. As an advisory body established by the Working Group, the Team, like the Working Group, is not considered an advisory committee subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and it may seek advice or input from interested, knowledgeable, or affected parties without being subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, pursuant to section 528(f)(3)(C) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996.

m. The Team and its subgroups may seek the advice of any non-Team member through formal invitations to present at meetings or participate in workshops.

n. The OERI will provide staff support to assist the Team and to maintain its records.

o. This Charter shall sunset 5 years after its effective date unless renewed by the Working Group.