



SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE



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Florida's Coral Reef Coordination Team (FCRCT) Direction for the Year

Wes Brooks, Chair

Erik Stabenau, Vice Chair

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[EVERGLADESRESTORATION.GOV/FCRCT](https://evergladesrestoration.gov/fcrct)

2023 Year in Review

- 5 meetings + BBCW field tour
- Began reviewing SFER projects with downstream impacts on FCR
- Shared monitoring program information across agencies
- Developed and adopted a

Unified Monitoring Framework for Florida's Coral Reef

With priority focus on:

- *Inventorying existing monitoring programs*
- *Defining effective monitoring to measure Everglades restoration impacts*
- *Identifying monitoring gaps; and*
- *Developing, tracking, and supporting implementation of consensus recs*

2024 Proposed Meeting Schedule

- March 22 (virtual) (YOU ARE HERE!)

CALENDAR HOLDS:

- July 15-19 (virtual/hybrid/in-person?) + field visit
- September 24-26 (virtual/hybrid?)
- December 6 (virtual/hybrid?)

2024 Presentations

March

- WQM Programs Review (Nutrients) - Methods & Results (Dave Kochan, FWC)

July

- DEP SEACAR WQ & benthic monitoring
- SCTL D Response & evolution of intergovernmental collaboration

September

- LOSOM primer
- System-wide Ecological Indicators & “stoplight” report

December

- FCR restoration efforts

2024 Progress on Deliverables

FLORIDA'S CORAL REEF COORDINATION TEAM

Charter

1. **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.

4. **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:

k. produce the following deliverables:

I. a collaborative framework for water quality monitoring along Florida's Coral Reef.

II. 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.

III. any other items as requested by the Working Group or Science Coordination Group or as deemed necessary or beneficial by the Team.

Unified Monitoring Framework

This Framework reflects a comprehensive and iterative approach built around 10 coordinated actions to structure data collection efforts and the evaluation (and re-evaluation, as appropriate) of available evidence to answer the following questions:

- Can we detect changes in nearshore water quality across time and space as a result of Everglades restoration's anticipated hydrological improvements, and appropriately distinguish those signals from other 'pulse' or 'press' disturbance dynamics?
- If so, how do those changes affect Florida's Coral Reef and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem?
- And, ultimately, do subsequent ecosystem responses manifest in measurable benefits for neighboring human communities?

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 1. Inventory existing water quality monitoring programs along FCR and nearshore coastal waters of South Florida.

- Survey FCRCT agencies on existing water quality monitoring efforts.
- Integrate and validate with McEachron et al. (2022).
- Identify water quality monitoring programs and methodologies that may be particularly useful for long term analysis.

Coordinated Action Plan 1:

March

- Discuss next steps - WQM Programs Inventory (Nutrients + other Abiotic)

July

- Review & adopt WQM Programs Inventory (Nutrients)

September

- Status update - WQM Programs Inventory (other Abiotic)

December

- Review & adopt WQM Programs Inventory (other Abiotic)

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 2. Inventory existing biological or ecological monitoring programs related to FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Survey FCRCT agencies on existing monitoring efforts.
- Identify biological or ecological monitoring programs and methodologies that may be particularly useful for long term analysis.

Coordinated Action Plan 2:

March

- Discuss next steps - BEM Programs Inventory

July

- Status update - BEM Programs Inventory

September

- Review & adopt BEM Programs Inventory

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 3. Develop a list of appropriate parameters for monitoring FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Assess what data may be necessary to statistically detect changes to FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem from hydrological restoration of the Everglades and related alterations in freshwater surface and groundwater flows, specifically:
 - What should be sampled?
 - Where should sampling occur?
 - At what frequency should sampling occur?
 - What tools or methods are available to capture this information?
 - The degree to which each parameter provides critical value to evaluation and decision making?
- Prioritize appropriate parameters for FCR and associated resources monitoring according to the relative value of such information and the costs to obtain and maintain it.
- Ensure standard operating procedures from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection are met, where appropriate.

Coordinated Action Plan 3:

March

- Discuss next steps - FCRRP - WQ Team Workshop(s)

July

- Status update - FCRRP - WQ Team Workshop(s)

September

- FCRRP - WQ Team Workshop(s) (Tentative)

December

- Review FCRRP - WQ Team Workshop products

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 4. Identify Everglades restoration projects, water management activities, and operational schedules that may influence nearshore water quality and the biological or ecological characteristics of FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Categorize the potential for CERP and non-CERP projects and operations to impact FCR individually and cumulatively.
- Understand the timing of potential impacts based on the Integrated Delivery Schedule.

Coordinated Action Plan 4:

March

- Discuss next steps - "FCRCT watchlist" & PDT assignments

July

- Review & adopt "FCRCT watchlist"
- Assign & submit PDT representatives

September

- Discuss next steps - process for formal FCRCT engagement on PDTs

December

- Review & adopt process for formal FCRCT engagement on PDTs

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 5. Propose Conceptual Ecological Models (CEMs) and Hypothesis Clusters (HCs) for FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Revise existing CEMs for FCR and associated resources, and identify drivers/stressors/effects/attributes potentially affected by Everglades restoration.
- Develop HCs for FCR and associated resources demonstrating how restoration is anticipated to affect ecosystem components and relationships.
- Consider the need for integrated modeling tools to support CEM and HC validation.

Coordinated Action Plan 5:

July

- Discuss next steps - MARES Update Workshop?

September

- Status update - MARES Update Workshop?

December

- MARES Update Workshop (Tentative)

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 6. Propose Ecological Indicators (EIs) for FCR and associated resources within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Evaluate how existing System-wide EIs may relate to FCR and associated resources.
- Identify other potential EIs for FCR for further evaluation.

Coordinated Action Plan 6:

September

- Discuss next steps

Unified Monitoring Framework

Action 7. Define pragmatic changes to existing monitoring programs or implement data solutions that would improve data interoperability and enhance utility, while preserving original program aims.

- Work with existing monitoring programs to identify needs and discuss what adjustments can be accommodated without making unwieldy and cost-prohibitive modifications to program design or implementation, or compromising the original objectives of those programs.
- Evaluate potential data solutions where program changes may not be feasible.

Action 8. Assess the extent to which pragmatic changes to existing monitoring programs would yield an effective monitoring effort across FCR and nearshore coastal waters within the South Florida ecosystem.

- Conduct a gap analysis to determine what is still needed to detect Everglades restoration signals that cannot be captured by existing programs, even after adjustments within those programs are accounted for.

Coordinated Action Plan 7:

December

- Discuss next steps

2024 Progress on Deliverables

- ***CAP₁ COMPLETE***
- ***CAP₂ COMPLETE***
- CAP₃ in progress (parallel to FCRRP - WQ Team Workshop(s))
- ***CAP₄ COMPLETE***
- CAP₅ in progress (parallel to MARES Update Workshop)
- CAP₆ in progress
- CAP₇ in progress by 2025
- CAP₈ in progress by 2025
- CAP₉ in progress by 2025
- CAP₁₀ in progress by 2026

Questions?



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Agenda Item #5, Brooks and Stabenau