

**Draft Meeting Minutes**  
**South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force**  
**SFWMD, West Palm Beach, Florida**  
**July 9, 2013**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Rachel Jacobson called the meeting to order at 10:35AM. She acknowledged Mr. Greg Langowski from Senator Marco Rubio's office, Commissioner Ron Bergeron from the Fish and Wildlife Commission and she congratulated General Jackson on his recent promotion.

*The following members were in attendance:*

*Rachel Jacobson, Chair, Principal Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior*

*Greg Munson, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection*

*Beverly Banister, Acting Deputy Region Administrator for Region 4, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

*Ernie Barnett, Acting Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)*

*Billy Causey for Sally Yozell, Director of Policy and Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce*

*Buddy Cunill for Camille Mittelholtz, Acting Director, Office of Safety, Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of Transportation*

*Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, U.S. Department of the Army*

*James M. Erskine, Acting Water Resources Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida*

*Jay Geldermann for Ethan Shenkman, Acting Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice*

*Susan Markley for Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Miami Dade Commission*

*Russell Morgan for Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture*

*Patty Power for Jim Shore, General Counsel, Seminole Tribe of Florida*

*Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives*

*Tim Sargent, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission*

Mr. Jay Geldermann noted that Ms. Ignacia Moreno has left the Department of Justice and Mr. Ethan Shenkman is now the Acting Assistant Attorney General on the Everglades matters. Mr. Shenkman wanted him to convey that the Justice Department continues to be supportive of the great efforts currently underway to improve water quality in the Everglades. Mr. Russell Morgan, new state Conservationist with USDA-NRCS in Florida said he has been in Florida for a little over a month and is looking forward to being a part of this effort. Ms. Jacobson welcomed Mr. Morgan noting USDA is a tremendous partner and the Task Force (TF) is looking forward to his leadership. Ms. Beverly Banister, Acting Deputy Region Administrator for EPA in Region 4 announced that Ms. Gwen Keyes Fleming is now the Chief of Staff for the Administrator in Washington, DC.

Ms. Jacobson noted they would be switching the order of the Invasive Species and Sea Level Rise presentations on the agenda. She recognized the John Marshall Foundation fellows who are students engaged in an intensive program to study Everglades issues. Ms. Shannon Estenoz reviewed the

meeting logistics and Ms. Jacobson reviewed the public comment process. The December meeting minutes were presented and approval was scheduled for after the lunch break.

### **Task Force Member Remarks**

Mr. Greg Munson reported Governor Scott signed into law the plan they collectively worked out last year for long term water quality. This will be the long term plan for water quality restoration in the Everglades which is now state law and something they have to implement. Dedicated, long term funding will be through the SFWMD.

Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy noted it was amazing to see the construction projects underway that were started with AARA money, such as Picayune Strand. She reported that Tamiami Trail will be completed by the end of this year and all of these projects will contribute to this beautiful resource. The DECOMP study is also underway and they will probably finish the Melaleuca Facility this year as well. She wanted to focus on all they have done so far and hopefully talk about the next series of projects.

Ms. Beverly Bannister commended everyone for the progress made thus far and said she was truly amazed, inspired and motivated. EPA will continue to be committed to the work being done and looked forward to hearing more about the things that are underway. Mr. Erskine said the Chairman of the Tribe has made Everglades Restoration his number one priority. He announced the Chairman has appointed Mr. Rory Feeney to the Working Group (WG) and Ms. Amy Casteneda to the Science Coordination Group (SCG). Mr. Tim Sargent thanked the team working on the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and recognized all of their hard work.

Mr. Causey noted he had several things to celebrate. On June 28<sup>th</sup> there was a 60 day notice in the federal register soliciting comments from the public on the criteria that should be used by the public for nominating new sanctuaries in the future. They can now start compiling a list of sites which had previously been discontinued. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) working with state, federal and local partners as well as stakeholder groups has engaged in a public process to look at the Marine Zoning Plan they implemented in 1997. The ecological reserve in the Dry Tortugas is showing tremendous results and he offered to show it to the TF members in the future. They have more grouper, snapper and more fish and the fisherman are noticing the difference and their scientists are reporting it. Lastly, EPA continues to be a leader in their water quality protection program in the Florida Keys and he commended EPA for their continued support along with DEP and the Governor's office.

Mr. Buddy Cunill said he was astounded by the volume of work effort in putting things together for the TF. Federal Highway and USDOT continue to support this effort. Mr. Morgan said Ms. Ann Mills was not able to attend the meeting since she is now the Acting Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. USDA is excited to be a part of this effort and working with the federal partners, State of Florida, farmers, ranchers and others. USDA has undertaken to protect more than 95,000 acres of land in the Northern Everglades through the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). He noted they still do not have a Farm Bill but are looking forward to continuing their work once it is passed.

Mr. Ernie Barnett recognized the hard work on behalf of EPA and the other agencies in developing the restoration strategies. They remain ahead of schedule in their milestones and deadlines. The A-1 flow

equalization basin (FEB) final design is under review and the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in the federal register on July 5<sup>th</sup>. DEP has issued its notice of intent for the Everglades Forever Act permit and they anticipate initiating construction in the first quarter of FY14. Another key component of the restoration strategies is the sub regional source controls, a margin of safety they are implementing to make sure the nutrients flowing into the treatment systems are at the proper levels or even lower than they need them to be in order to achieve the water quality standards. They initiated the project a year and a half ahead of schedule and have entered into a cooperative agreement for the canal cleaning of the demonstration project. Lastly, another key element is the Loxahatchee River Plan, formerly known as the North Palm Beach Plan, they have repurposed the L-8 Reservoir to be the FEB for STA 1 East and West and in doing so they needed to find replacement storage. The Governing Board (GB) conceptually approved the purchase of the Mecca Site, the former Scripps site. He thanked Ms. Karen Marcus for her leadership in Palm Beach County. They are also working with the FWCC to provide a small portion of that site for recreational activities but a vast majority of the site will be an above ground impoundment. The SFWMD remains firmly committed with the Corps, Interior and other partners in moving forward with CEPP and are pleased with the progress made to date.

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Karen Marcus, former Palm Beach County Commissioner and former TF member.

#### **Restoration of the Western Everglades Natural System**

Ms. Patty Power expressed the Tribe's appreciation to the TF for taking up this challenge. The western Everglades is a critical part of the system but from the Seminole Tribe's point of view has been a stepchild in the whole process. That is not to say that all the work that has gone on hasn't been critically important or beneficial. The Tribe's concern was triggered by a review of CEPP and how CEPP was going to influence the Reservation. They do appreciate the attention paid and the progress made.

Ms. Shannon Estenoz noted that at the December 2012 TF meeting the Seminole Tribe gave a presentation and issued a Minority View for inclusion in the 2012 Strategy and Biennial Report. The Minority View represented the culmination of and sought a response to the Tribe's long standing concerns for natural systems in the western basins of the Everglades. The concerns included whether there was adequate water supply for the environment in the western basins and they pointed to the Big Cypress Reservation Critical Project which is not operating as designed. The natural systems that are part of that project are not being hydrated as originally hoped. The Tribe is concerned by the lack of attention by federal and state resource agencies on western basin conditions and there is a systemic lack of data and modeling tools for that area. The way they make decisions and tackle problems is by bringing data and plugging them into groundwater and surface water models and looking for causal relationships. In the western basins they have sections where they lack data and this problem has been going on for a long time. After some discussion at the December meeting, the TF directed the Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) to convene a meeting of a subset of TF member agencies to discuss this issue and to return to the Task Force with an update at its next meeting. They recognized quickly that these were complex issues that deserved a lot more attention and a lot of people including technical people would have to be brought in to discuss the issues.

Specific concerns raised by the Seminole Tribe included:

- The Big Cypress Reservation Critical Project is not operating as intended;
- Natural Areas in the reservation and downstream are experiencing negative ecological impacts affecting core Tribal values;
- The CEPP does not address problems in the western basins; and
- The Tribe's concerns are long standing and have not been addressed

The Big Cypress Reservation is on the southwest side of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and the western basins include the reservation and the downstream basins, Big Cypress National Preserve and those areas immediately to the north. At the December meeting the Tribe expressed its restoration goals which included providing enough water to the Big Cypress Reservation and the Big Cypress National Preserve to allow rehydration of the natural systems and to restore a healthy, diverse ecosystem sooner rather than later and consistent with the purpose of the Big Cypress Reservation Critical Project.

The first meeting was held in January at the Seminole Tribe Headquarters and they were joined by Mr. Wovoka Tommie, Assistant Tribal Council Representative Big Cypress Reservation, and Mr. Mondo Tiger, Tribal Council Representative Big Cypress Reservation. The Tribe has seen visible changes during the lifetime of current tribal members. Their cultural values are affected by ecological degradation and health of their lands. Some of the ecosystem responses they have seen include changes in populations of species that are familiar to them such as mudpuppies and fireflies. They have had three all day meetings in January, March and June and the fourth is scheduled for Aug 6<sup>th</sup>. They have been attended by TF member entities and attendees have changed as issues have crystalized.

In January they tried to come to terms with the concerns and known issues including the S-190 operations, data gaps, potential issues with the western weir and Critical Project performance. The March meeting was highly technical and resulted in the development of a master data template and the sharing of additional data. At the June meeting they received updates on the S-190 regulation schedule study scope, western weir survey/recalibration and data template. There was discussion of potential funding sources and a brainstorming session identifying immediate, short term and long term actions that merit further exploration. They will begin that exploration at the next meeting scheduled in August.

Ms. Jacobson thanked Ms. Power and the Seminole Tribe for bringing these issues forward adding they seem to be on the right track. She hoped the group continued to meet and discuss these issues. Ms. Power said they have been encouraged by the progress made. One of the Tribe's main concerns is that the issues won't be addressed until much later and some of the Tribal members don't see that much time being available to turn things around. In full cooperation with the Corps, the Tribe has been building a Critical Project on the Reservation. Some of the outcomes have not been what they expected due to lack of water in the system. The Tribe has been very encouraged by the folks who have been attending the meetings and their willingness to think outside of the box. This is part of a bigger issue that will take more time and resources to address. Important to address what they can today with the

infrastructure and legal authorities in place. There is not a lot of information known about how the hydrology of the western basins works. A lot is not understood about the surface/groundwater interaction which is part of the problem they are having on the Reservation. They need to stay focused to make changes as soon as they can and the Tribe looked forward to continue working with this group.

Ms. Jacobson said that because of these very technical issues such as the surface and groundwater interface this may be something that would be suitable and appropriate for the National Academy of Science (NAS) to look at as part of their next report. Mr. James Erskine said Ms. Power has summed up the western basins project very accurately and pointed out the canals they are talking about discharge directly onto the Miccosukee Federal Reservation and those waters they discharge into are outstanding Miccosukee waters. Under the Clean Water Act (CWA) they are offered the highest level of anti-degradation and nutrient protection. So improvements to the western basin area need to be consistent with Miccosukee water quality standard and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. At times water comes out at 100ppb out of the Interceptor Canal into WCA 3 well above what has been scientifically known to be protective of the environment. He added that they have brought it to the attention of the NAS as well.

Mr. Barnett stated the SFWMD has enjoyed a long standing relationship with the tribes and they are great partners. They look forward to continue participating in this process. Before making the leap to the NAS, he suggested tasking the SCG or the WG to look at the availability of data and evaluation tools and have them bring a recommendation back to this TF. Ms. Estenoz suggested they continue to let this group refine the gaps with the data template and once this is done they could pull in additional resources such as the SCG. Ms. Power agreed it was a good idea to keep this group going.

Ms. Banister stated EPA is committed to continue working with FDEP, USDA and others to see if additional 319 funding or other types of funding could be brought to the table. They will work with the Tribe on the numeric nutrient criteria to see what could be done there. Ms. Power noted the Tribe had a couple of sidebar meetings with EPA and they are very encouraged to see their concern being addressed. Ms. Jacobson noted the group has been convening at the Task Force's request and a lot of progress has been made. She asked whether they should let the group continue to convene as they have and report back to the TF. Ms. Power and Ms. Estenoz both agreed. Ms. Estenoz recommended an open direction to the group that they go to the SCG at some logical point in between TF meetings. Ms. Jacobson agreed and asked that the group just send a report to the TF informing them of the direction they are going to take.

#### **Public Comment on Restoration of the Western Everglades**

Ms. Martha Musgrove (FL Wildlife Federation) congratulated the Tribe, SFWMD and the federal agencies for getting together to address these problems. Under the Seminole Compact, the Tribe does have the right to assistance in dealing with their water issues. The very fact that the Critical Project did run into problems is an indicator they need to understand the issues and the relationship of groundwater. They all want to think of new and innovative ways of doing business. To the extent that the Florida Wildlife Federation can contribute, they will and she called attention to the fact that they have two people, Ms. Nancy Peyton and Mr. Franklin Adams, who are very knowledgeable about the area and can participate at the appropriate time. She urged the TF to recognize and abide by the Compact.

Ms. Jacobson thanked Ms. Musgove and the Federation for their contributions in helping them better understand Everglades restoration. In terms of thinking outside the box they should bring to bear all the expertise they can to better understand the complex hydrology. She said she left it to Ms. Power and Ms. Estenez to determine at what point it may be appropriate to bring in experts from Florida Wildlife Federation or other entities with expertise on these issues.

### **Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)**

Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy said this planning process has been one that the Army Corps of Engineers and the SFWMD took on together as partners in an unprecedented undertaking. They will see how much progress has been made and what remains to be done over the next couple of months. Mr. Tim Sargent added the team has been working day and night to get some of these issues resolved. The Governing Board Chairman is open to scheduling a special meeting to keep things moving.

Mr. Barnett added that General Jackson, COL Dodd and their team have been working side by side with staff from the SFWMD. He appreciated Ms. Darcy picking the Everglades as one of the expedited planning efforts. They have taken something that would take 5 – 7 years and collapsed it down to an abbreviated time frame. They still have some issues to work through but considering the complexity of the issues they are at a remarkable place. Ms. Estenez recognized Mr. Stu Appelbaum who was in the audience as the former Corps project manager when CERP was launched.

Ms. Taplin provided a presentation on behalf of the team. At the last TF meeting they were in the midst of running the alternatives. Since then they have done a robust screening process to get the final array of alternatives. They all resulted in a cost effective measure to do a Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) in the EAA in order to get water that is currently going out to the estuaries and have a place to store and deliver it to get clean, new water to the Everglades. They also looked at various options on how that water would be distributed to the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs). There was a lot of concern from the resource agencies as well as the recreational users about deer having to cross over a canal to get to the levees during high water conditions. They took all that input and incorporated a design that just looked at degrading the L-4 levee and allowing the water to sheetflow from the canal into the WCA. Other options they looked at included various conveyance features between WCA 3A and 3B to reconnect the system. They looked at alternative configurations for getting the water through WCA 3B and on to ENP from the existing gravity structures on the L-29 canal along Tamiami Trail to adding additional gravity structures to pumping the water out of WCA 3B into the park. They also looked at an alternative that looked at a flowway that actually did levee degradation and looked at various forms of managing seepage as they increased flows in the NE Shark River Slough to protect the developed areas to the east. They looked at options of distributed pump systems, shallow barriers and deep barriers combined with pumps, longer seepage barriers as well as combinations of increased pump and seepage barriers.

All the alternatives have significant improvement over the current system today but the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) Alternative 4R rose to the top. The TSP includes the FEB on the A-2 Basin which allows them to take water that is currently going to the estuaries, about 200,000 acre feet per year on average. This will be operated in conjunction with the state's Restoration Strategies FEB on the A-1 site.

These facilities will work together taking that additional water from the lake running it through the STAs and distributing it to WCA 3A. Other features include a 2.9 mile degradation of the L-4 levee, a pump station to ensure they can still deliver water to those western basins, backfilling of the Miami canal from about 1.5 miles south of the S-8 to I-75 and L-5 canal improvements.

The concerns they heard included the need for additional water supply performance, Savings Clause, cost and implementation, water quality and cost share. To address those concerns they undertook additional modeling from April to June to further optimize the TSP. They optimized Lake Okeechobee and Indian River Lagoon (IRL) operations for the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA), optimized operations for WCA 2A/2B and lower east coast to address savings clause concerns and increased water supply demands. The results were presented to the Project Delivery Team (PDT) on July 1<sup>st</sup>. They are currently coordinating with the stakeholders on the modeling results. The project dependencies were reviewed and included completing the 8.5 square mile area and Tamiami Trail one mile bridge road raising. Ms. Taplin reviewed the key policy issues that are still being worked on such as water quality to Everglades National Park and cost sharing of the Operations, Maintenance, Repair, Replacement, and Rehabilitation (**OMRRR**) state treatment facilities. She reviewed all of the information that needs to be incorporated into the Draft PIR. The team is working hard and targeting to get it all done by the middle of July to get it included in the Draft PIR. The written report will then undergo a quality review check by staffs in Jacksonville and at the SFWMD. It will then be presented to the Governing Board for their endorsement for release.

Ms. Jacobson said it was truly impressive to see what had been accomplished in a short time and asked about additional opportunities for public input. Ms. Taplin said that once they get endorsement to release the draft report from the SFWMD and Corps of Engineers they have to go through Decision Point 2 where they get permission to release the draft report. The report gets released for a 45 day public comment period. They then take the comments, make revisions and incorporate them into the final report that goes through a similar approval process. They then get a letter of support from the Governing Board and go through the Civil Works Review Board to release the report. That report then goes out for a 30 day agency and public review.

Ms. Darcy said she continues to be awed by the expertise and the incredible dedication in putting this plan together. They have worked around the clock to make this project a reality. She acknowledged the expertise that the SFWMD brings. Ms. Jacobson recognized the tremendous leadership at the Corps, SFWMD and State of Florida.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. John Arthur Marshall (Arthur R. Marshall Foundation) thanked the TF for recognizing their interns. He congratulated the team that put this together. They are happy to see ecosystem services valuation finally folded into the process, it is long overdue. They haven't heard much mentioned on the consequences of sea level rise and how much CEPP will counter sea level rise. They may be overlooking a huge benefit of CEPP. He congratulated Ms. Taplin, Mr. Morrison and the entire team.

Ms. Barbara Miedema (Sugarcane Growers Cooperative) said the cooperative is based in Belle Glade Florida and comprised of 47 grower/owners who produce sugarcane on 70,000 acres of land in the EAA. The cooperative applauds the work of the state and federal agencies in developing the \$880 million Everglades Restoration Strategies Plan to resolve the water quality issues. They applaud the policy makers, the environmental community and fellow agriculturists for all coming together this past legislative session. She noted that she has been involved in Everglades issues since 1988 and she helped lobby in support of CERP. CERP would have never had the broad based support if it didn't have the Savings Clause language and project assurances. The project sequencing needs to be wrapped into the PIR as well as the operational changes to Lake Okeechobee and operations in the IRL South project. Their issues are project sequencing, interdependencies between components, Savings Clause concerns and water quality. All of these issues were recognized and the cooperative applauds them for doing that, but they have to meet the Water Quality Based Effluent Limits (QBEL), the requirements in Appendix A of the Consent Decree and they don't want to trigger a violation of TMDL in Lake Okeechobee. The Cooperative would like to see these issues resolved up front in the PIR.

Commissioner Ron Bergeron (FFWCC) recognized Ms. Taplin for her work. As they move forward with central Everglades, he reminded them of the concerns the wildlife management agencies have that the water levels are compatible with the ecology and wildlife. Without a healthy food chain they won't have a healthy environment. He encouraged them to look at the global Everglades and said he looked forward to continue working not only as a commissioner but as a team player. He said he hoped they could somehow work together when they are in emergency situations. He thanked the COL, the Corps, Mr. Munson and everyone who has come together. He urged them to continue working together and have reasonable flexibility. To keep the Everglades alive while CEPP and many other projects come online over the course of decades requires them to have boots on the ground.

Mr. Tom VanLent (Everglades Foundation) noted that the foundation is a not for profit organization dedicated to the restoration of America's Everglades. The foundation strongly supports CEPP, a remarkable achievement to date. It is the first regional project in the country that takes a series of five projects and moves them forward to get real regional benefits. The process had a high level of stakeholder involvement and there was a broad spectrum of support for this project. There is no doubt that without the continuous ongoing engagement of people to solve problems at every level, they would not have gotten this far. Their best hope for getting this authorized is to have a Chiefs Report and ASA letter as soon as possible. He asked them to focus on getting the Chief's Report done by December. He thanked Ms. Darcy for her personal involvement.

Ms. Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center) recognized the great planning process that provided so many opportunities for public involvement. The plan provides major environmental benefits and is unprecedented. She hopes it is also precedent setting. They are now in the homestretch and the worst thing they can see happen is 'a hurry up and wait' for many year for authorization. They want to see it move forward and get authorized and they can then figure out how to sequence it.

Ms. Julie Hill-Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) thanked everyone for all of their hard work. She reminded everyone of all the cheers at the Everglades Coalition Conference when Ms. Darcy made the announcement. After the cheers there was doubt as to whether this could actually happen and now they are close to the finish line. Since 2000 they have heard over and over "what if they had one more



project” was there anything they could have done to get something over the finish line. So as they are approaching a WRDA given the uncertainties in Congress, they have to make sure they have no “what ifs”. Audubon continues to appreciate what everyone has done. It was incredible to hear the Florida Everglades mentioned in President Obama’s climate speech. They will talk about sea level rise later in the agenda and this is the type of project they need to do as quickly as they can.

Ms. Cara Capp (Clean Water Action/Co-Chair Everglades Coalition) echoed many of the previous comments and added that both Clean Water Action and the Everglades Coalition strongly support the CEPP process and plan. She expressed sincere appreciation to everyone who worked so hard on this groundbreaking process. She attended many of the workshops and described it as a unique experience to be so involved throughout the process. Now that they are so close to the end, she urged the TF to ensure the momentum is not lost. WRDA may advance this year and she urged them to not miss the narrow window or they may have to wait years for another WRDA. The Everglades is in trouble and they can’t afford to wait for the benefits that CEPP will offer.

Mr. Tom MacVicar (engineer) noted he has been in the water resource arena for over 35 years. He represents the agricultural communities around Lake Okeechobee and in south Dade County. He noted they have taken five of the most complicated and controversial projects in CERP and put them all together in CEPP. The Everglades moves to the front of the line when you have a good plan, when you don’t the plan sits on a shelf. There is a long list of things that need to be resolved for this plan to be complete. CEPP assumes Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) never gets built. The agencies that can resolve the remaining issues with MWD are represented at the table. His final wish is that they prove they can be serious about this by operating MWD. Ms. Taplin in her presentation stated that the Corps is committed that MWD is a precursor project and he hopes they keep it that way.

Mr. Kahlil Kettering (NPCA) said CEPP is not just any old project, not a stone cutting project but a chance for them to build a house. A lot of people scoffed at the idea of the Corps shortening their planning time but here they are. They have a better chance of seeing a unicorn than a WRDA coming about but yet here they are with that opportunity. He reminded them that the Battle of Gettysburg was fought 150 years ago and some brave people had the foresight to act in the face of naysayers and detractors. Now 150 years later they can look back and say that it was a great idea and a pivotal point in the history of our nation. When people look back at what they have before them now, he said he wondered whether they are going to say that they squandered this away or will they applaud their foresight for taking the opportunity to restore the Everglades. He said they have a great opportunity to do this with CEPP.

Ms. Martha Musgrove (FWF) congratulated Ms. Taplin for providing great leadership to the team. Many of them thought this would never happen and she hoped they can shorten the implementation time as well. Some members of the Florida Wildlife Federation who use the conservation areas did come up with some proposals to substitute weirs for some of the structures in the L-67A to attack the problem of the water duration and levels so that the water would flow immediately into ENP. It has received some favorable reports and they would hope that during the design stages of this project they will see some serious consideration. There are concerns about the risks of failure, the size of the Blue Shanty levee

and that as this project goes up the chain at the Corps that risk could be modified by the potential for damage. She asked the SFWMD to proceed with the local sponsorship letter at the next meeting. They are at the edge of something grand and glorious. In 1948 the C&SF began building a project and this is a modification of that project. They don't need to be fearful about moving ahead just fearful that they won't have the political support in Congress to get the authorization. They need the authorization now and she urged them to not miss the December deadline.

Ms. Jacobson said it was essential to talk about next steps and the December target date. Ms. Darcy said they have made great progress. The GB is meeting this Thursday but there are a couple of issues that need to be resolved and they are working tirelessly to resolve them. Mr. Sargent said he would support having a meeting when they have something for the GB to consider. Ms. Darcy noted that since Mr. Rock Salt's departure she has become more involved than ever on these issues. They will continue on this aggressive schedule. They all have the same goal to get this planning process completed and get the project authorized. Mr. Munson thanked the SFWMD and everyone that has been involved and added he appreciated the District's willingness to hold a special meeting. It is important to see the full draft PIR before they can approve moving forward with it. Mr. Barnett added that the Chairman is very receptive to holding a public meeting and committed to bringing the draft forward to the GB. He reiterated their commitment to keep the process moving forward.

Ms. Patty Power appreciated all the hard work that has gone into this effort. The western basins haven't been mapped and the modeling has not been done to read what impacts are possible from CEPP. While the Tribe supports seeing the system improve overall, they still have concerns that they can't evaluate the impacts on tribal lands. They are very interested in seeing the price, timing and how this is going to fit in with all the other projects. Ms. Darcy said the target date was December 13<sup>th</sup> of this year. They are not sure they can get there given the time they have left and the statutorily required review times for both the draft and final PIRs. They haven't had a WRDA since 2007. The Senate has passed its version of WRDA and the House has taken no action on a WRDA bill. Their goal is to get CEPP in the best shape it can be as soon as they can. In the past projects have gotten authorized on their own and they need to be thinking about every possible avenue they have in order to get their projects authorized. Ms. Jacobson said the Task Force stands ready to assist any way it can.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December meeting minutes. Minutes were approved without objection.

### **Sea Level Rise: Its Effects on Water Management in South Florida**

Mr. Barnett said sea level rise has an impact on its core mission, flood control. In extreme weather events they need to protect against storm surge, sea level rise, salt water intrusion and water supply, beach erosion and impact to the Everglades. He showed pictures of flooding during high tide with saltwater coming into Miami Dade, Broward and Monroe counties. They currently have 4.9 million people living below sea level. As hurricanes happen the natural variability is hard to predict but they are seeing major strikes in the state of Florida and it is premature to make any conclusions that human activities have had a detectable impact on hurricane activity but they are seeing a shift to stronger storms. While there has been a decrease in the frequency there has been an increase in intensity. With

that come an increase in rainfall events and more pressure on the flood control system. Historic sea level is rising and in Florida it has been steadily rising throughout the region. This upward trend has been persisting for more than a century. He reviewed the impacts of rising seas and the flood control challenges. They are doing risk assessment for each of their structures to include a preliminary screening based on original designs. They have 28 gravity structures on the East Coast and the most vulnerable structures are in Miami-Dade County. As saltwater moves in, the coastal wellfields have the potential to be contaminated with chlorides. He reviewed some example of the adaptations that the SFWMD has been doing such as at the S-26 where they added forward pumps. They continue to look at opportunities and technologies to reduce the amount of additional freshwater needed for water supply. They are also implementing conservation measures and developing alternative water supply options.

Potential impacts to the southern Everglades include relocation and possible reduction of mangrove forests, forced migration of wading birds northward, peat collapse and coastal erosion. Salinity intrusion into freshwater marshes can discharge toxic hydrogen sulfide, cause coastal fish kills and increase habitat loss. It is important to know that they can manage water differently. There are entire nations like the Netherlands that have adapted to sea level rise. Everglades restoration is an important adaptation to sea level rise. By restoring the Everglades they can provide some ecosystem resilience by increased water flows through the Everglades and increased storage. Increased flows into the southern estuaries will reinstate widespread organic soil formation and maintain the freshwater head in order to mitigate the effects of sea level rise and saltwater intrusion. The National Academies in their 2008 report stated that climate change should be a reason to accelerate Everglades restoration, not a reason for delays. Everglades restoration will help delay impacts in natural and developed areas. More work is needed to assess impacts of sea level rise and climate change on the restoration effort. CERP PIRs need to address climate change adaptation strategies for enhanced long term sustainability.

Ms. Jacobson said she was pleased to know that they are stating that restoration is an important adaptation feature. The questions about how they should be spending their money always come up and whether it is worth it. Glad to see not only is it worth it – it is a way to adapt and perhaps help mitigate against it. Mr. Causey said he was pleased to see this on the agenda. Climate change has been impacting the coral reefs since the late 70s/early 80s and is one of the major causes of coral reef decline around the globe. The biggest question he gets asked is why they are spending all these funds when sea level is rising. It becomes clearer they don't have a choice but to do restoration.

Ms. Markley stated that Miami-Dade along with several other counties in southeast Florida is part of a four county compact working on climate change adaptation. This is at the top of their list at the local level and there are a lot of concerns to maintain flood protection when sea level is rising and at the same time they have to be careful when drawing down the water table. She agreed they have to keep getting this message out adding that there are a lot of concerns about the investments in infrastructure.

Mr. Barnett complimented Ms. Markley and the four county compact adding that the SFWMD does participate in that effort. There is a lot of information they share and disseminate. It is up to the local governments to decide how they will adapt to the rising seas.

Ms. Estenoz noted that she was invited several months prior to attend a technical workshop that was put together jointly by NPS, USGS, SFWMD and FAU that brought together leading scientists working on sea level rise in the Everglades. The message to them was they need to do exactly what they are doing as quickly as they can to protect the ecosystem. Ms. Jacobson said that within Interior they have to take into account all effects from climate change in their management work.

### **Invasive Species: Update and Recommendations**

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone of the challenge they are facing in the Everglades when it comes to invasive species. Invasive species pose a direct threat to the ecological performance measures they use to measure the health of the ecosystem. She reviewed a few examples of how invasive species directly impact performance measures such as the Old World Climbing Fern and its impacts on freshwater vegetation mosaics and ridge and slough community sustainability. The TF in its Strategy developed three overarching goals and dealing with invasive exotics is a goal 2 activity. There is a sense by most if not all those who are working on invasive species that the effort deserves and requires more and better coordination to be as effective as it possibly can.

At its December 2012 meeting, the TF directed the OERI, WG and SCG to conduct a comprehensive review of current efforts to combat invasive exotics and present updated recommendations for how to improve efforts and boost effectiveness. The WG provided recommendations to the TF in 2010 and their hope was to review them and determine if they were still valid. To date her office along with the WG and SCG have had extensive engagement with interagency invasive species staff who are some of the most dedicated folks working in the Everglades. They have begun the process of developing a conceptual solutions pathway framework, participated in two summits, gathered information on resource allocation and gaps and met with National Invasive Species Council (NISC) staff. They have tried to provide some direct support to the Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ECISMA), created a portal on the [www.sfrestore.org](http://www.sfrestore.org) website and arranged for a briefing for Secretary Jewell. They have addressed the NAS and have requested that the panel take up invasive species in their next Biennial Report to Congress. Her office is also helping to coordinate Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) initiatives.

Invasive species management requires an integrated approach with sustained resources and involves long-term suppression of established species; containment of established but localized populations, detection and possible eradication of newly established species; prevention of new introductions of un-established species; and cross-jurisdictional coordination. The invasion curve is used as the organizing principle and it shows cost versus time versus geographic area infested by an invasive species. As an invader becomes more entrenched over a larger geographic space, the cost for controlling that species increases. They are spending a lot of their time controlling very well established, very widespread species. The solution pathway has already been developed and attempts to increase success by coordinating the management of multiple strategies and educating the public. The idea is to use this invasion curve as a way to organize their investments and efforts.

The invasive species crisis is being addressed by a dedicated, effective and well-coordinated group at the staff/grass roots level from their teams. The effort does not have a complete governance structure in

place and they need to connect them to the management team and the folks who control the resources. There is an immediate need for additional coordination and organization of resources at the federal level. A significant level of professional consensus exists and can form the foundation for increased coordination and effectiveness. Current efforts are chronically, and in some cases dramatically under-resourced. Recurring, predictable and adequate funding is important for long term planning. A comprehensive, integrated (plants and animals) strategic framework for invasive exotics in south Florida does not exist. The 2010 WG recommendations to the TF were reviewed. Those recommendations will be updated with some short term initial recommendations. The OERI will allocate 1.75 FTEs for six months to provide enhanced coordination support for federal invasive species efforts and support the development of a Comprehensive Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework that includes a cross cut budget planning tool. They want to respond to immediately increase federal coordination by applying additional human resource capacity to this need. They will look for ways to build cost effective, short term and long term capacity and opportunities for increased coordination and support and promote budget coordination. They want a Coordinated Framework for Action which is not another plan but rather a better coordinated framework for action at all levels and includes a more complete governance structure.

Today their resource needs seem daunting and there are no dedicated resources for EDRR. For example, Everglades National Park (ENP) estimates the annual need to treat and maintain Melaleuca and Australian pine to be \$850,000. So the idea is to build an approach that is as well coordinated as it possibly can be. Next Steps include convening a high level partnership workshop (Aug/Sep) to discuss the Strategic Action Framework. OERI will work with federal partners to enhance federal coordination.

Ms. Jacobson noted that coordination was identified as a serious and immediate need and that need becomes greater when they are all are struggling with fewer resources. For the cross cut budget they are talking about the federal budget and they don't expect the other partners to participate in that exercise unless they want to do so. They need to bring that back to Washington to make sure they are adequately funded.

Mr. Erskine noted the invasive species issue is something very close to Miccosukee Tribe. The Ambrosia Beetle is lethal to the Bay trees which are a culturally sensitive species. Bay trees are used for ceremonial and medicinal purposes. The loss of those plants in the region could represent a significant ecological and cultural loss. The Miccosukee Tribe fully supports the development of a Comprehensive Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework that would include a cross cut budget. With respect to the budgeting tool, this is a federal Task Force, he recommended that the Task Force takes an approach for the trust and fiduciary responsibility of Indian lands to acknowledge that some dedicated, set aside money for this long term problem could be made available to Miccosukee Tribe for management of the reservation lands in the Everglades.

Tom Teets expressed the SFWMD's appreciation for putting forth the resources for this coordinated effort. They support the Strategic Action Framework which is something that is badly needed. They all have limited resources and are all doing the best they can. Ms. Power said that the Seminole Tribe shares this problem and supports Mr. Erskine's request. The Seminole Tribe spends a lot of time fighting

a lot of species on its Reservation. Mr. Causey said the terrestrial and freshwater environments are not the only areas being invaded and they are suffering throughout the region from the invasion of the Pacific Lionfish. What started in 1992 in the Miami area has moved up to North Carolina through the Caribbean and off of Galveston, Texas. This species is wiping out large numbers of small fish and agrees with what Ms. Estenoz presented. They also have an invasive coral which is problematic and are using all the different strategies that Ms. Estenoz reviewed in her presentation.

Ms. Jacobson, with respect to Mr. Erskine's request, said that this Task Force and the federal members of the Task Force do not have the authority to provide any financial assistance. They will do their best to support the Tribe in those efforts but they do not have any authority to make any type of grant. Ms. Estenoz said that in looking ahead to the next TF meeting, one of the things that could emerge is that they may find that they have to layer on top of other organizing principles such as priority species, priority landscapes and whether there are species that pose a threat to human health and the environment. If there is consensus to move forward, they will host a high level meeting that would extend beyond WG members because there are agencies that need to be at the table that are not necessarily involved in Everglades restoration. They will work with the partners to identify the logical group to bring together. Ms. Jacobson noted they have requested that the NAS take the issue up in the next Biennial Report to Congress and asked whether this group would work on refining what they will be asking the NAS. Ms. Estenoz said that was a good question, the NAS is meeting again in September and December and they will try to make the same pitch on invasive species they have made before. Mr. Nick Aumen said he did not know for sure but based on some of the questions the committee had been asking he thought they may be considering invasive species.

Ms. Jacobson said she looks forward to a report at the next TF meeting.

#### **Public Comment**

Ms. Tamina Sholz (ARM Foundation) complimented the TF for their efforts to understand and incorporate the effects of sea level rise on water management in south Florida. Everglades restoration is a very complicated process and the Foundation appreciates the initiative to incorporate sea level rise into the mix. It is critical to plan for sea level rise over the decades it will take to implement CEPP. Restoration will be an important tool they can use to adapt to sea level rise. She invited the TF and anyone who was interested to learn more about sea level rise by attending the Sea Level Rise Symposium they were hosting at the Oxbridge Academy in West Palm Beach on July 26<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon Florida) said that invasive species is a great example of how this body has been really effective. Climate change and sea level rise hasn't always been the most politically popular topics but sea level rise is happening. They often get asked by members of the public about whether the agencies are doing anything at all about it and whether they are paying attention. The presentation was a great example of the type of thing they can do to make it more publicly known. She encouraged everyone to continue to highlight the work they are doing.

Ms. Jacobson suggested that it would be useful to hear from the other resource agencies on how they are also addressing climate change and sea level rise.

Mr. Steve Davis (Everglades Foundation) acknowledged the PDT, Ms. Taplin and Mr. Morrison on the fantastic job communicating the benefits of the CEPP plan from the northern estuaries all the way down to Florida Bay. This will translate into economic value in south Florida and they benefit from the ecosystem services the greater Everglades provide. By restoring the Everglades they can get an even bigger return on their investment. The benefits extend beyond the direct impacts. For example, the Gulf oil spill had direct impacts to the Gulf of Mexico and the impacts will also be resonating throughout the Gulf and the coastline region for years to come. He appreciated Mr. Barnett saying they need to do Everglades restoration and that it is compatible with improving the environment in the face of sea level rise. They know these transformations are going to take place and the question is whether they want the transformations to take place in a healthy, restored ecosystem or a dying and degraded ecosystem. They are on the right track with moving CEPP forward to achieve that healthier, restored ecosystem.

Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) said they are pleased by the work being done by NRCS. Sierra Club is very supportive of the CEPP process and is anxious to see it move forward. Climate change tells them they can't wait seven years. Sea level rise are not waiting and Everglades restoration is the ideal way to move forward. The sea level rise and invasive species presentations demonstrate that there are a lot of external factors that they need to be dealing with. Everglades restoration is the ideal way to move forward and elevate land levels. If they continue on their current path of draining the land they are sinking the center of the state into a bowl which means that with sea level rise they cannot move inland to get away from it. He said he disagreed with Mr. Barnett adding that the Netherlands model would not work in south Florida because it is too porous. Sierra Club endorses the CEPP process and encourages the state, the GB and the TF to meet the deadlines to make it to the Chief's Report and get it into the WRDA bill.

Ms. Estenoz clarified that Mr. Barnett was using the Netherlands as an example of "all is not lost". Mr. Barnett was not suggesting they build sea walls around the Everglades.

### **Assignments, Next Steps and Closing Comments**

Mr. Munson thanked the TF chair as well as the staff for pulling together these meetings. Ms. Jacobson thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08PM.

Enclosures:

Briefing Binder

1. Administrative Items
  - a. Agenda
  - b. Draft Meeting Minutes, December 2012
2. Restoration of the Western Everglades presentation
3. CEPP presentation
4. Sea Level Rise: Its effects on Water Management in South Florida presentation
5. Invasive Species: Update and Recommendations presentation