

*DRAFT Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
South Interior Building Auditorium
Washington, DC
May 20, 2015*

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Michael Bean, Task Force (TF) Chair called the meeting to order at 12:32pm. He noted they will be joined later by Mr. Dan Ashe, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Ms. Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Ms. Cherise Maples of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Interior is moving forward with the Tamiami Trail Next Steps project, one of its highest priorities, in partnership with Florida's Department of Transportation (DOT). The National Park Service (NPS) is proceeding with FL DOT to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and the Groundbreaking is planned for the Spring of 2016. He thanked the Corps of Engineers (Corps) for working with Interior and the state of Florida to complete the Interagency Agreement providing for independent scientific review of the Everglades restoration program by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). He also thanked the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD's) Governing Board for its decision to approve the Strazzulla Tract land exchange.

Mr. Drew Bartlett, TF Vice Chair, noted they had an amendment to their constitution on the ballot last November that was approved. The Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative will dedicate a specific amount of funds towards environmental programs including ecosystem restoration in the state of Florida. Governor Scott and the state are trying to get a 20-year dedicated revenue source for the Everglades and the Northern Everglades restoration. That along with WRDA and the 50/50 federal cost share means they will see a lot of improvement in the Everglades and the Estuaries.

The following members were in attendance:

Michael Bean, Chair, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior

Drew Bartlett, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary for Ecosystem Restoration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Jose 'Pepe' Diaz, Commissioner, Miami Dade County

Jay Geldermann for John Cruden Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice

Julie Grogan-Stewart, Deputy Chief of Staff, NRCS for Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Blake Guillory, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Letmon Lee, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Legislation for Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, U.S. Department of the Army

Stan Meiburg, Acting Deputy Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Louise Milkman, Special Counsel for Lois J. Schiffer, General Counsel, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce

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

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

Jim Moran, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission

Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives

Task Force Member Introductions and Opening Remarks

Mr. Stan Meiburg recognized the amount of progress made on the Restoration Strategies. All of the projects are currently on schedule with some even being ahead of schedule. EPA continues to coordinate closely with the federal and state partners to find solutions to the water quality problems in the western flowpath that have been an issue for the tribal partners. EPA appreciates the state of Florida for allocating \$1 million to identify projects that can contribute to solutions in the western flowpath. Mr. Jose 'Pepe' Diaz said he looks forward to working with everyone on the Everglades and coastal waters. Mr. Jim Moran reported the SFWMD has done a lot of work in connection with water quality. Florida taxpayers have spent over \$2 billion to get a handle on Phosphorus and recently committed another \$880 million to finish the job. They have built a lot of infrastructure and along with their partners at the Corps, are on the cusp of taking advantage of that infrastructure. Increment 1 and completion of Contract 8 will allow them to move more water south. He announced he was recently appointed by Gov. Scott to another 4-year term and he looks forward to working with the state and federal partners to get the job done.

Ms. Louise Milkman expressed NOAA's continuing commitment to the work of this TF especially in light of the many trust resources they have that are affected by the activities in the Everglades. Ms. Camille Mittelholtz noted one of the Department of Transportation's primary efforts is in getting long term surface transportation authorization legislation passed and she looks forward to the continued support of the program. Mr. Blake Guillory echoed the comments made earlier regarding progress. He attributed the progress on the Kissimmee River, C-111 and Modified Water Deliveries (MWDs) on new energy and new ideas that are being applied to old issues. He thanked Secretary Darcy, Ms. Ann Brown, Mr. Craig Schmauder and Mr. Letmon Lee for working so diligently with them in resolving the cost share issues on the Kissimmee River. He thanked Ms. Shannon Estenoz and the TF for the agenda adding it is timely to discuss the potential changes to the operating regime in Miami Dade. They all need to re-commit to having both Everglades restoration and a robust agriculture in that area. He noted the recent fire in Big Cypress as well as the rising salinity in Florida Bay and asked they put some urgency behind fixing these issues. The Governor of Florida has pledged \$5 billion over 20 years towards Everglades restoration which is more than they have ever spent before. He noted his concern that they may not get the same level of funding from the federal government.

Ms. Julie Grogan-Stewart said USDA is very proud of the partnership working together to save this important ecosystem. They recognize the Everglades is the primary drinking source for more than 7 million Americans and is home to the largest mangrove ecosystem in the western hemisphere. USDA does a lot of work partnering with landowners and a large portion of that is in the Northern Everglades with conservation easements. The Florida easement program is one of the largest in the nation and they have acquired more than 200,000 acres in Florida alone. Since 2009 they have invested almost \$500 million within Florida. They have brought in over 100,000 acres over the last 5 years with 95% of that within the northern Everglades watershed. Over the last year they have committed \$65 million to restore and protect the Everglades watershed. They also recognize the importance of controlling invasive species and in 2014 they spent approximately \$1.4 million to work with private landowners to implement various invasive plant controls. USDA recognizes there is still significant work to be done and looks forward to continue working with the federal, state, local governments and well as the local communities and private landowners. Mr. Jay Geldermann noted Mr. John Cruden was unable to attend and asked him to extend his appreciation for the progress the federal government and the state of

Florida are making towards achieving the restoration of water quality needed to protect and preserve the Everglades ecosystem and for the TF's assistance in furthering these goals.

Mr. Ernie Marks, Working Group (WG) Chair, noted that Ms. Estenoz and her staff work diligently with representatives from the agencies on the WG to make sure they can raise these issues and concerns to the TF. While the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is not one of the lead agencies on restoration of the Everglades, they do support everyone with the work they do to make sure they have progress and believes this partnership is very important. Mr. Wiley said FWC is always working hand in hand with DEP and the SFWMD, which demonstrates Gov. Scott's continued commitment to Everglades restoration. He is very excited to be working with the federal partners and be more engaged at a time when he feels they can get a lot of good things done.

Ms. Shannon Estenoz recognized Ms. Eleni Valanos from Senator Marco Rubio's office, Ms. Pam Krauss from Senator Nelson's office, Commissioner Sara Heard from Martin County, Ms. Emma Roach from the Office of Management and Budget, Ms. Alexis Segal from the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Commissioner Doug Smith from Martin County. She reported COL Alan Dodd, District Engineer in Jacksonville will be retiring this summer and wished him well on his retirement. Ms. Maples and Ms. Kinsinger joined the meeting and were recognized. Ms. Estenoz provided some logistical information and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

Ms. Ann Kinsinger reported that Ms. Suzette Kimball was ill and she sent her apologies for not being able to attend. Ms. Kimball firmly believes that science is an important part of the Everglades restoration effort. USGS has had a multi-decadal effort in trying to link science to decision making. The greater Everglades Priority Ecosystems Studies Program is continuing to fund a large number of studies they hope will be useful in their decision making. They are currently providing about \$6 million a year in support of Everglades science. In 2015, USGS received \$1 million in its budget to address invasive species in the Everglades and they will be directing most of that to new projects along the lines of early detection and rapid response (EDRR). They are also providing some tools and resources to things such as the Everglades Depth and Estimation Network (EDEN) which is providing scientists and managers with hydrologically based data to assess response to hydrologic change in the ecosystem.

Everglades Endangered Species Update

Mr. Larry Williams noted the tremendous amount of successes they have had recovering threatened and endangered species in south Florida. They currently have seventy threatened and endangered species in the entire drainage of the Everglades. As they work on Everglades restoration, they try to maintain the overall momentum on the right path towards recovery of listed species. He provided a presentation reviewing five of the most prominent species (Florida Manatee, Florida Panther, Everglades Snail Kite, American Woodstork, Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow (CSSS)). The CSSS population never recovered after Hurricane Andrew and they will need to focus on it in the near future. He reviewed some of the history with the Grasshopper Sparrow, close relative to the CSSS, which is headed towards extinction as well as the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, an even closer relative that went extinct in 1987. Having seen what happened to these two species they are watching the CSSS closely. The DOI agencies recently signed a MOU committing to doing everything they can to recover the CSSS and keep them on the landscape while Everglades restoration moves forward. The C-111 South Dade restoration project will help the CSSS. Other projects that also will help several species include the C-44 (manatees), C-43 (manatees and sawfish) and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) (American Crocodiles).

Review of Phosphorus Water Quality Trends

Mr. Drew Bartlett said he asked for this presentation to be on the agenda because of all the good news in the South Florida Environmental Report reflecting their efforts.

Ms. Melissa Martin agreed they have some good news to report from their interagency evaluation of Phosphorus water quality trends within the Everglades ecosystem. She provided a presentation reviewing the historic and current Everglades ecosystem. The changes that are seen in the current system are as a result of an infrastructure project that was exceptionally successful in allowing them to use the land the way they wanted. However, it altered the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of the water, disrupted the dynamic wetland vegetation and altered the nutrient dynamics within the ecosystem. They went from seeing low levels of nutrients to elevated levels of nutrients. In most of the freshwater Everglades the nutrient of concern is Phosphorus. She reviewed the ecological changes that were seen in the Loxahatchee NWR. It was the inter-agency acknowledgement of these changes in areas like Loxahatchee and throughout the Everglades ecosystem that led them to invest in water quality improvement projects. She provided two examples of water quality improvement projects that have been successful in removing 55% and 75% of the Phosphorus respectively. Those two projects combined remove 90% of the Phosphorus. She reviewed the technical analyses of Phosphorus trends in the Everglades Protection Area over the last 10 – 15 years that show their investment in water quality improvements upstream can be seen in the downstream ecosystem. They have seen long term downward trends in total Phosphorus concentrations throughout the entire Everglades Protection Area (EPA). In the Loxahatchee NWR they are seeing an 80% reduction in Phosphorus concentrations. Some challenges remain and will need to be addressed.

Mr. Ed Smith reported on Restoration Strategies, one of the key projects the state of Florida has engaged to address water quality issues and reduce the Phosphorus loading going into the EPA. He reviewed the five projects noting the L-8 Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) and the A-1 FEB are both ahead of schedule and will be operational in 2015. When fully complete Restoration Strategies will take 11,000 acres that were used for citrus groves and turn it back into something that resembles what it was historically. Restoration Strategies, when fully implemented, is expected to reduce Phosphorus loading by approximately 47 metric tons per year in addition to providing 125,000 acre feet of additional storage. The ultimate goal is to achieve the water quality based effluent limit of 13 ppb. Gov. Scott and the Florida Legislature have committed \$32 million every year towards Restoration Strategies. He reviewed the challenges and considerations that have to be taken into account and noted the importance of maintaining and expanding the high level of communication and cooperation among all of the partners.

Mr. Stan Meiburg said the level of progress is astonishing and commended the SFWMD and DEP for all their work. Commissioner Pepe Diaz echoed Mr. Meiburg's comments and asked what else could be done to address the remaining challenges. Ms. Martin explained Restoration Strategies is focused on improving water quality on the northern end but improving water quality alone does not restore the ecosystem. They also need to restore the hydrology, timing, distribution and get the volume correct. CEPP will help to address those remaining challenges. They also see improving trends in Lake Okeechobee but their presentation was focused on the EPA. Ms. Estenoz added the Governing Board conditionally approved the exchange of lands between FWS and the state of Florida in order to move forward with the next phase of Restoration Strategies.

Transitioning to a new operating regime in the Southern Everglades: Issues and Perspectives

Mr. Lindahl noted the involvement of a diverse group of agencies, regulators, sovereign entities as well as NGOs. He reviewed the project location and explained how the system currently works. He reviewed the history of the operational changes some of which were due to projects being constructed and some were due to endangered species. Under the current system 80% of the water moves to the west through the S12 structures and 20% moves to the east. Water levels in south Dade have increased over time and the agricultural community is continuing to see high water levels during the dry season. Increment 1 of the MWDs project will redistribute the water so they will have more water flow naturally through Shark River Slough with 55% moving to the west and 45% to the east. The first increment will allow more water to move into the Park and provide for flood control for agriculture. It will be the first time they will be able to move water back into the park using the S-356 pump station. MWDs was authorized in 1989 and it is a huge step that they are on the brink of starting the Increment 1 field test. They anticipate starting the actual test after July 13th once the water levels exceed an elevation of 6.8 feet. He provided updates on the C-111 South Dade Project, C-111 Spreader Canal project and the tools they will be using to evaluate the operational planning. The SFWMD is working with the FWC on enhancements/modifications to the Old Tamiami Trail that looks to improve flow going into ENP.

Mr. Eric Bush provided a presentation on the Everglades Restoration Transition Plan (ERTP) which is the current water management plan for operations in the southern Everglades and governs how they deliver water out of WCA-3A into ENP. It is a vast and complex water management system developed to recover species and habitat. As they look into the future they need to keep the effects of climate change in mind given that the analysis they have done for all of these operating plans were done based on a historical period of record. He reviewed the history and the current operations of the ERTP to include how the S-12 structures are closed to achieve hydrologic targets for the sparrows in that area. They will be adding a significant amount of additional flow through WCA-3A into ENP. CSSS sparrow populations are in the same area they are trying to make wetter to achieve ecosystem restoration objectives. The current Biological Opinion expires in January 2016 and the Corps has re-initiated ESA consultation. Next steps include having a draft Biological Opinion by November with a final at the end of the year. He reviewed some of the concerns with the current water management plan as well as the challenges in moving ahead with flowing more water into ENP.

Ms. Estenoz noted water quality and endangered species are issues that are implicated in their ability to move into a new operational regime in the southern Everglades. The story as a whole shows that Phosphorus trends are down. As they move more water through the system it has to be cleaner. The good news is that the experts are saying that the water is getting cleaner. Mr. Bush closed by saying the three most important things for managing water in the southern Everglades in the near term is to: complete consultation and get the Biological Opinion on the ERTP; get approval to implement the Increment 1 test; and award the C-111 South Dade Contract 8 which is the missing link between MWDs and C-111.

Commissioner Diaz asked about the seepage wall noting his concern they are going to increase the flow when all the provisional things are not fully in place. Mr. Lindahl said one mile of the cut-off wall has been constructed and they are monitoring the results. They will be moving ahead with another two miles and possibly carry it down around the C-111 which is something that has been a topic open for discussion. Mr. Hughes added the increase in flow is a couple of years out. They are moving forward with Increment 1 which raises the water level constraint in the park and enables them to flow a little

more but not a lot. In the future, Increment 2 and the combined operating plan will increase the stage in the L-29 canal and enable them to flow more water south. That is several years out and will require compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), permits, etc. Mr. Bob Johnson added two miles have been built and three additional miles are in the planning phase. The rock miners are ready to go forward once approval is provided. A total of seven miles has been proposed which is the distance from Tamiami Trail down to the beginning of where the detention area starts in the 8.5 Square Mile Area then from the detention area to the C-111, roughly 23 miles of seepage control with no gaps in it and there is still an area that needs to be worked out.

Mr. Guillory noted Everglades restoration will not work without this, it is the key to everything. For them to send more water south they have to provide more flood protection. Water quality, quantity, timing and distribution, endangered species, cultural resources, climate change and all the other issues have to be balanced in getting this right. Coming up with the operations plan will require making tough decisions and he urged everyone to work on those solutions. Mr. Moran agreed putting more water into the park at times could be in conflict with protecting the sparrow. In some areas they currently have it under 10 ppb and they are spending almost \$3 billion of Florida taxpayer money to do that.

Public Comment

Ms. Sara Heard (Martin County Commissioner) requested inclusion of the remaining components of the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) South into the IDS. The St. Lucie Estuary and the IRL and are vital to Martin County. Martin County is known for their strong conservation ethic with over 25 percent of the county in conservation. They play a leadership role in Everglades restoration as a key partner with both the state and federal governments. Her community voluntarily taxed itself in order to generate \$75 million to acquire 45,000 acres of land for the Indian River Lagoon and Everglades Restoration projects. The IRL is one of the most biodiverse estuaries in North America. It provides critical nursery habitat for species the entire length of the eastern seaboard. Highly polluted discharges from Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie basin are destroying their estuaries. In 2013 they experienced the lost summer and the Florida Department of Health posted notices along the extent of the St. Lucie Estuary and the IRL prohibiting all contact with the water. The completed IRL South will go a long way towards helping their estuaries survive and recover and is an integral part of Everglades restoration. In addition to the benefits to the estuaries, the IRL South provides unique opportunities for rehydration and habitat restoration. One key premise of Everglades restoration is to provide healthy nesting habitats to restore the once magnificent flocks of wading birds that fill the Everglades. As wading birds react to adversely changing conditions of sea level rise and salt water intrusion in the south, birds can fly to the restored wetlands in Martin County. If they implement the IRL South plan, they can provide important habitat that provides a critical ecological buffer and benefit to ENP, Big Cypress and the WCAs. Together they can save the Everglades.

Mr. Nick Lund (NPCA) expressed thanks for the coordination and effort that went into President Obama's trip to the Everglades. They were happy to see Secretary Jewell and Director Jarvis at the event. Thanked the Administration for highlighting the critical need for action on climate change. NPCA will continue its work with agency partners to protect all national parks from climate change impacts. Getting the water right in the southern Everglades is critical and NPCA has been involved in the MWDs planning process for many years. Like everyone they want to see it operational and providing ecosystem benefits, however, they continue to have major concerns with some of the operational test features. This is a restoration project authorized and funded for the benefit of ENP and maximizing ecosystem benefits must remain a top priority. Instead they see that restoration benefits are being

sacrificed to achieve better flood protection in south Dade. The original language that would sunset detrimental operations upon construction completion has been since removed from the plan. NPCA does support the SFWMD and the Corps moving forward with a process to identify sustainable, long term solutions for land owners in south Dade, however, they feel strongly that carrying the weight of flood control on the back of restoration is a burden that ENP cannot bear. NPCA continues to work with Congressional leaders to advocate for regular WRDAs that include CEPP authorization in 2016. They have been participating in the IDS public workshops and continue to highlight the need for projects that move forward concurrently so that they always have projects in the planning and construction phases. At the IDS workshops they heard many stakeholders talk about the need to move forward with a water storage and treatment reservoir in the EAA and they were very disappointed in the SFWMD's decision to dissolve the contracted option to acquire almost 50,000 acres of land from U.S. Sugar. NPCA asks the SFWMD to be actively seeking an alternate plan that will provide much needed relief to the ecosystem by storing and redirecting the water south. He thanked DOI for their stated support of the EAA Reservoir and in particular Secretary Jewell for her leadership in calling for the state to purchase land. NPCA expects Biscayne National Park's General Management Plan (GMP) to be released in the near future. They have been strong advocates for marine protection within the park and hope to see a final GMP that includes a marine reserve to benefit coral reef and marine populations. He thanked Superintendent Brian Carlstrom and his team on behalf of NPCA for engaging the public throughout the GMP planning process.

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon) said they are glad this meeting was being held in Washington to enable some of the partners who are unable to travel to Florida to participate and hear about some of the progress they have made. The \$5 billion pledge from Gov. Scott and President Obama's trip to the Everglades for his Earth Day remarks help raise the profile. The environmental community has concerns with this first increment test of MWDs and the south Dade projects. They are on the brink of a crisis in terms of salinity levels in Florida Bay and that first increment shows zero ecological benefits. They do recognize the balancing act that everyone needs to do but keeping those ecological benefits on the front burner has to be the first priority.

Congressional Perspectives Panel Discussion

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone they were joined earlier today by Ms. Eleni Valanos from Senator Marco Rubio's office and Ms. Pam Krauss from Senator Nelson's office. They have also be joined by Ms. Kim Greenplate from Congressman Klaussen's office, Mr. Koby Dolan from Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz's office, Mr. Morgan Cashwell from Congressman Murphy's office and Ms. Abby Tinsley from Senator Nelson's office. Ms. Estenoz asked the panelists, as they look ahead, what are the issues they think they will be facing over the next couple of years with a particular emphasis on things like funding, appropriations, authorizations and also what is it that the members of this TF should or could be doing to be thinking about from your perspective on the Hill.

Mr. Koby Dolan said their job is to help organize and bring light to the importance of this project and authorize and fund it. The challenge is keeping everyone on the same page given everyone's different priorities and perspectives. It is critical they make a strong case for the benefits from the money the federal government puts in. They need to show the economic benefit to the nation and important they work together in a collaborative way. He has had appropriation committee staff tell him that the Everglades is some bottomless pit that pulls away from all these other construction projects around the

country. It is easier for them to tell the story when they have a clear picture of where it's going and what funding is needed.

Ms. Morgan Cashwell noted the funding successes is a testament to all of the hard work. If they can't say that everyone is on the same page then their job is made more challenging. They go to folks who don't understand what the Everglades is all about and it all comes down to effective messaging and showing the progress that has been made. She noted the remarkable job that has been done with water conservation. If they help them with the messaging, they can continue to see progress.

Ms. Abby Tinsley said her thoughts are very similar to her colleagues. In defending Everglades work and in advocating for additional funding they often face sticker shock. They need to show progress and keep projects on track. Any time there is a lapse in a project, it makes it that much harder for them to ask for funding the next time. As far as concerns about upcoming funding at both the state and federal level, they need to all stand together and carry the same message reminding the next Governor or President why the Everglades is so important to the entire state of Florida and to the world. It will help them convince their colleagues why it should matter to a Senator from California. She thanked the TF for all the work they have done.

Ms. Estenoz asked what the WRDA 2016 horizon looked like. Mr. Dolan said Chairman Bill Shuster as well as Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz have committed to doing regular WRDAs. Having four members (John Mica, Corrine Brown, Daniel Webster and Lois Frankel) from Florida on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee helps. Ms. Cashwell said she is cautiously optimistic they will see some movement. Mr. Lee said he is fairly certain they will have a WRDA bill and Sen. Imhoff's and his staff are preparing for a WRDA 2016.

Mr. Wiley noted the parade of good news and successes and asked for advice to the TF on ways they can communicate these successes more effectively. Mr. Dolan suggested finding a better way to summarize accomplishments and to send out the positive news on a regular basis. Important to let people know where we've been, where we are and where we're going. Ms. Tinsley asked they provide good news stories even if just in an e-mail and they will pass on to the committee staff. Mr. Lee encouraged everyone to simplify the message.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 2014 meeting minutes. There was no discussion and minutes were approved as presented.

Corps Program and Project Update

Mr. Howie Gonzales provided a presentation reviewing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) Program. He reviewed the progress they have made since the prior year adding their success comes from this TF and from the leadership. In the President's budget request they are working with just short of \$124 million for FY16 which represents 11% of the entire Corps construction budget coming to south Florida for Everglades restoration. He reviewed the status of two of the foundation projects (Kissimmee River Restoration and C-111 South Dade), Generation 1 projects authorized in WRDA 2007 and Generation 2 projects authorized in WRRDA 2014. The Final Chief's Report for the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) was signed in December 2014 and the final Project Implementation Report (PIR) package is undergoing review. They anticipate CEPP will be ready for a WRDA 2016.

Mr. Gonzales reviewed the purpose and history of the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) which will serve as their roadmap for moving forward for all ecosystem restoration projects including the foundation projects and Herbert Hoover Dike. The IDS is a living document and was last revised in 2011. The new revision will consider: the status of the restoration program; WRRDA 2014 authorization of Generation 2 projects; National Academy of Science 2014 Report to Congress; CEPP planning phase complete; sea level rise; 2014 CISRERP report. Workshops are being held to engage the public and nothing was off the table. They are looking for the best way to group these projects based on the funding scenarios, authorizations they have and the authorizations they anticipate. IDS considerations for scenario development included project dependencies, federal process assumptions, completed and existing projects. Next steps include building the sequencing plans based on process and design and complete the update by the end of 2015. The Report to Congress is required every five years by WRDA 2000 and the Programmatic Regulations. It is submitted jointly by the Secretaries of the Army and the Interior. The 2015 Report will include accomplishments during the past five years (2010 – mid 2015), funds expended during the period (fiscal years 2010 – 2014), updated estimates of total cost of Plan and individual projects and work that is anticipated over the next five year period. From a programmatic standpoint they will also report on their efforts on science, cost sharing and public outreach. Next steps include agency and public review followed by consultation. Ms. Estenoz asked Mr. Gonzales to include consultation with the TF into the timeframe.

Ms. Patty Power suggested the Report to Congress have a strong summary that is hyperlinked since people will not read the entire document and the timing will be great as they are preparing for the next WRDA bill. Mr. Guillory said the state of Florida is ramping up its funding for the Everglades to \$200 - \$250 million a year. He asked how the IDS factors in the increased funding and the Governor's potential 20-year plan. Mr. Gonzales said the IDS baseline assumption would be \$200 million federal and \$200 million non-federal.

Invasive Exotic Species Update

Ms. Estenoz provided a presentation noting that the number of invasive species shown on the slide for 2013 have increased. She highlighted the Argentine Black and White Tegu which could be the Burmese python of the future. Millions of dollars are spent every year to control invasive species that are already established but they are not spending much to prevent the invasion. Florida is the most vulnerable mainland state in the US for invasive pest introduction and establishment. On average Florida receives one new pest every month. In an effort to do things better they launched a process to develop a Strategic Action Framework, a prioritized list of strategies, preliminary action assessment and an Invasive Exotic Species Cross Cut Budget. All of their work is up on the web at www.evergladesrestoration.gov. The longer they wait to respond to an invasion the costlier it gets and the chance of eradication gets smaller. She reviewed the Cross Cut Budget and highlighted that almost \$7.9 million is being spent on animals and \$42.8 million on plants. Their top priority is to develop an effective EDRR system. They will hold a workshop in September with experts from around the country to develop a rapid risk screening tool when a new species is detected. Leadership briefings on the framework will continue and they will continue to engage the political leadership at both the state and federal level to come up with funding ideas that would include the private sector.

Mr. Nick Wiley thanked Ms. Estenoz for bringing the partners together and said they owe it to those working in the field to get them the tools and support they need. The Governor and the Legislature are committed to help fund this. The next Python Challenge will be kicked off in January 2016 and will be an

opportunity to elevate awareness and get the message out. Mr. Jim Moran said they are all for restoring the Everglades but unless they get a handle on exotics they may never achieve that goal. Mr. Meiburg said the earliest form of detection is not getting it in in the first place and asked about the coordination between FWS and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). Ms. Estenoz replied that the law enforcement for FWS, FWC and CBP were involved in developing the Strategic Action Framework.

2016 Strategy and Biennial Report

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone the Strategy and Biennial Report are two reports that have been combined and is prepared biennially. This is not a reporting year and they will use this time to update *Goal 3: Foster Compatibility of the built and natural systems*. Ms. Allyn Childress provided a presentation noting the Strategy explains how the restoration will occur and the Biennial Report shows what progress has occurred. Significant changes to Goal 3 were made in 2008. The WG and Science Coordination Group (SCG) discussed possible changes at their last meeting and agreed they should incorporate latest knowledge, policies and activities, include climate change and sea level rise and engage regional planning councils in Florida.

Mr. Marks, as the Chair of the WG, reinforced the need to streamline things. They will continue to keep leadership apprised and allow those who read it to get a good handle on the progress made to date.

Public Comment

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon) expressed appreciation on behalf of Audubon for the work done by the TF on invasive species and the IDS workshops. CEPP shows that the more the public could be involved and heard throughout the process the more likely everyone will be on a unified song sheet. The draft IDS worksheet is an important tool to point out the conflict in messaging they are hearing. On one hand they hear they need to finish what they started and on the other hand they hear they need to increase federal funding. They need to put new projects on the table and continue planning for new projects down the line.

Assignment, Next Steps and Closing Comments

Ms. Estenoz noted the next TF meeting will be scheduled to coincide with the Report to Congress in Florida. Mr. Bean thanked the TF staff and the members for their participation.

Adjourn at 4:36PM.

Enclosures:

1. Administrative Items
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Meeting minutes, November 2014
2. Task Force Roster
3. Everglades Endangered Species presentation
4. Review of Phosphorus Water Quality Trends presentation
5. Transitioning to a new operating regime presentation
6. Corps Program and Project Update presentation
7. Invasive Exotic Species presentation
8. 2016 Strategy and Biennial Report presentation