

**Draft Meeting Summary
SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION
JOINT WORKING GROUP (WG) AND SCIENCE COORDINATION GROUP (SCG) MEETING**

Virtual ZOOM, September 28, 2021

Full video recording of the meeting is available at: [SEPTEMBER 28, 2021- WORKING GROUP/ SCIENCE COORDINATION GROUP MEETING — Everglades Restoration Initiatives](#)

1. Welcome and Introductions

James Erskine called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM and provided some administrative announcements, thanked everyone for attending, and reminded everyone the meeting was being recorded and webcast live at www.Evergladesrestoration.gov. James Erskine recognized Sandy Soto, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) for the administrative announcements related to the Zoom platform.

2. Member Whip-Around

Members who joined via the ZOOM platform were asked to introduce themselves and provide brief introductory remarks.

Working Group (WG) Members

- James Erskine – Chair – FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Comm. ✓
- Nick Aumen – Vice Chair – U.S. Geological Survey ✓
- Becky Allenbach – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ✓
- Karen Bohnsack – NOAA, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary ✓
- Stephania Bolden – NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service ✓
- COL James Booth – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ✓
- Wes Brooks - Florida Department of Environmental Protection ✓
- Amy Castaneda – Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida ✓
- Kevin M. Cunniff – Seminole Tribe of Florida ✓
- Deb Drum – Palm Beach County ✓
- Rebecca Elliott – FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services ✓
- Veronica Harrell-James – U.S. Attorney’s Office ✓
- Lee Hefty – Miami Dade County ✓
- John Maehl – Martin County Board of County Commissioners ✓
- Roland Ottolini – Lee County Division of Natural Resources ✓
- Pedro Ramos – NPS, ENP & Dry Tortugas National Parks -
- Leonard Rawlings – Bureau of Indian Affairs -
- Jennifer Reynolds – South Florida Water Management District ✓
- Edward Smith – Florida Department of Environmental Protection ✓
- Joe Sullivan – U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA -

Alternate

Melodie Nadja

Jason Watts – FL Dept. of Transportation	-
Larry Williams – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√
Vacant – U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, NRCS	-
Phil Everingham – Chair, BBRRCT, Special Advisory Group (non-voting)	-
Adam Gelber – Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives	√
Science Coordination Group (SCG) Members	
Angie Dunn - SCG Interim Vice Chair - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	√
Lawrence Glenn – Vice Chair – South Florida Water Management	√
John Baldwin – Florida Atlantic University	√
Joan Browder – NOAA, Southeast Fisheries Science Center	√
Amy Castaneda – Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida	√
Dr. Mark Rains - Florida Department of Environmental Protection	√
Jennifer Hecker – Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership	√
Chris Kelble – NOAA, AOML	√
Chad Kennedy – FL Dept. of Environmental Protection	√
Gil McRae – FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	√
Holly Milbrandt – City of Sanibel Natural Resources Department	√
Stacy Myers – Seminole Tribe of Florida	√
Bob Progulske – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√
Stephanie Romañach – United States Geological Survey	√
Dan Scheidt – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	√
Erik Stabenau – National Park Service	√
Jason Strenth – U.S. Department of Agriculture – NRCS	√
Vacant, Special Advisor – National Park Service	-
Vacant – FL Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	-
Vacant – U.S. Department of Agriculture – ARS	-

COL James Booth who assumed command of the Jacksonville District on September 9, 2021, and Becky Allenbach, Senior Advisor for the Director of Everglades and South Florida Issues at EPA were welcomed as new Working Group members. It was announced that Bob Progulske would be retiring at the end of 2021. Bob spent a major part of his career working for both the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Oregon and other parts of the Pacific Northwest. Bob has worked as the Everglades Program Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for more than 10 years, and in that time his accomplishments have been many.

Larry Williams said it was his great fortune to work with Bob over the past 10 years and thanked him for all his work over the past 10 years in mentoring and developing junior staff at their offices in Vero Beach. Many members joined in recognizing Bob Progulske.

3. Approval of Meeting Summary

Jennifer Reynolds made a motion to approve. Kevin Cunniff had a question about the public comment period and whether there were additional public commenters or just one. Adam Gelber said the recording of the meeting would be reviewed. Approval of the minutes was deferred and later concluded via e-mail.

4. Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) Update

Adam Gelber reported the FY22 Cross-Cut Budget is available online at www.EvergladesRestoration.gov and the 2021 Integrated Financial Plan will be posted on the website in November. The effort to update the Biennial Report will be kicked-off in March 2022 and will cover the reporting period from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2022. Updates to the website content are ongoing and information can be provided to Allyn Childress and Jose Cabaleiro. OERI continues to monitor the federal appointments as well as the appointment of the Task Force Chair to begin planning the next Task Force meeting.

Bob Johnson provided a Tamiami Trail Next Steps update noting the roadway work has occurred in three parts. The first was done under Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park in 2014, the second was done under Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 1, completed in 2019, and the third is being done under the Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 2 which is expected to be completed in mid-2024. That completion is expected to match up to the CEPP South components which will bring more water to this area. In addition to raising the roadway they are adding 6 small 60-foot bridges and 7 additional culverts. Project will also include a new stormwater management system with improved drainage and water quality treatment. Project is being done in partnership with the NPS, FDOT, USDO, FDEP and the USACE. As soon as this project is completed, they will have the capability of raising the water levels to 9.7 feet.

5. Program and Project Updates

USACE Update - Jeff Couch reported that in 2020 they received authorization to move forward with the Section 216 Infrastructure Resiliency Plan that will begin this fiscal year as funding becomes available. In FY21, they received \$250 million as part of the President's budget for construction in addition to the \$83 million carryover from the previous year. They have executed over \$330 million in contract awards and will have less than \$2 million in carryover into FY22. The Chief's Report is expected in July 2022 for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP) allowing LOWRP to be included in WRDA 2022. For the Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP), they will be pursuing a 2nd SMART Planning exception for an additional \$4.5 million and 23 months. The Biscayne Bay and Southeastern Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (BBSEER) project will also require a SMART Planning exception for \$4.5 million and 5 years. He reviewed seven projects (Kissimmee River Restoration, C-111 South Dade, Picayune Strand, Indian River Lagoon – South (IRL-S), Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands, Central Everglades Planning Project, and the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir that are in design and construction. For operations he reviewed Modified Water Deliveries, Combined Operational Plan, and the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). The USACE and the SFWMD have been working internally on the Project Management Plan that outlines the scope for the CERP periodic update.

Wes Brooks, regarding LOWRP, noted the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is finalizing their request from Senators on December 17, 2021. The state of Florida will be working with Senator Rubio and Senator Scott to make sure there is placeholder language for LOWRP in the Senate WRDA 2022 bill. He encouraged the SFWMD and the USACE to move LOWRP expeditiously. Kevin Cunniff, on LOWRP, noted the map in the presentation still shows the wetland attenuation feature and 80 ASR wells. It is the Seminole Tribe's understanding that the wetland attenuation feature has been taken off the table and that there will now be 55 ASR wells. COL Booth acknowledged there will be 55 ASR wells and the wetland attenuation feature has been removed.

SFWMD Update - Megan Jacoby noted the SFWMD is taking the lead on the ASR well program for the LOWRP. The 2021 ASR Science Plan is available on the SFWMD's website. They are implementing the ASR well program in a phased approach. At this moment they have continuous coring at three sites with scopes of work being drafted for two additional sites. They are also working on the exploratory wells. They are evaluating the treatment technology and are finishing up the refurbishment of existing ASR wells. She provided updates on the C-44 Reservoir and STA project, the C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, CEPP, and the 8.5 Square Mile Area Limited Curtain Wall. For FY22, the state received record funding with \$469.1 million for Everglades and Northern Everglades restoration. The funding will be used to finish projects and hit their milestones as well as focus on new initiatives such as CEPP North.

Roland Ottolini stated that for the C-43 Reservoir, they went through a two-year study that found STAs to not be the most cost-effective method. He said it would be valuable for this group to see a presentation on the alum injection that is being planned. This study could be useful for future projects. Megan agreed to include it on a future presentation. Kevin Cunniff said the Seminole Tribe applauds the great lengths the SFWMD has gone to produce the ASR Science Plan that will act as a framework for how the studies will proceed. Data driven decisions will be made on whether this large-scale ASR plan will be safe and feasible for south Florida. Part of the ASR Science Plan has a panel of academics that will be working to review the data and he would like to see the review. He requested an in-depth presentation at the next meeting on how the SFWMD will implement the Science Plan.

6. Restoration, Coordination, and Verification (RECOVER)

Laura Brandt said the topic of integrating their reporting is not a new topic and is something they have talked about for a long time. By having multiple reporting mechanisms there is potential for having conflicting messages and creating an increased workload for those working on the reports. She reviewed the purpose and audience for the Task Force's Biennial Report and RECOVER's System Status Report and Report Card. She asked whether integration of these reports is desired and feasible. If it is, then RECOVER would like one or two people representing the Task Force, WG and SCG to help RECOVER develop the integration process by November 2021.

James Erskine noted that back in 2019 they had a priority setting exercise and integration of system-wide reporting components was identified as needing efficiency. Jennifer Reynolds added that it is important that they allow the work and reporting that RECOVER is doing to continue to evolve so that the science is driving the decision-making. Wes Brooks suggested that if they believe there is a better way to structure things then they should get that info to the lawmakers. If there is a more effective and efficient way to integrate the reporting, then they should present it to Congress for consideration. Lawrence Glenn said that if they move towards integration, they need to figure out the most effective way to put the science out there so that it is digestible and guide these efforts. Volunteers interested in working on this were asked to reach out to the chairs or Laura Brandt by October 6, 2021.

7. Integrated Delivery Schedule Update

Eva Velez provided an update on the 2021 working draft of the IDS. The IDS provides the roadmap for sequencing, planning, design, and construction of both federal and state projects related to Everglades restoration. It is updated jointly between the USACE and SFWMD. In August, they hosted two 101 and listening sessions with stakeholders and everyone had a seat at the table. They have been able to execute historic levels of funding. The 10-year estimate for total SFER construction is ~\$8.1 billion from 2020 to 2030 and includes the authorization of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration project and annual updates to projects. To date they have invested ~\$6 billion in the South Florida Ecosystem program, the state has invested ~\$2 billion for Restoration Strategies

and the federal government has invested ~\$1.6 billion for the Herbert Hoover Dike rehabilitation. Progress is being made in all generations of Everglades restoration. An in-depth review of the IDS placemat was provided. The final draft of the IDS will be released in October 2021.

Wes Brookes noted their funding levels are close to ~\$679 million for FY22. He recognized Gov. DeSantis' bold \$2.5 billion investment in clean water and Florida's environment which has been supported by the Florida Legislature along with President Biden's administration's strong budgetary commitments. He thanked Florida's Congressional delegation for always ensuring Congress funds the federal budgetary commitments. It is critical the Biden administration grows their budgetary requests in line with the IDS. James reminded the group that an IDS workshop was scheduled the following day.

Public Comment

Irela Bague (Chief Bay Officer, Miami Dade County) welcomed COL Booth and invited him to tour Biscayne Bay. Biscayne Bay recently experienced another fish kill which makes the work they are doing with BBSEER and BBCW phase 1 more significant. She thanked the USACE and the SFWMD for moving BBSEER forward.

Kellie Ralston (American Sport Fishing Association) also welcomed COL Booth. She noted their support for the Florida Coral Reef Coordination Team proposed under the WG. Reefs are critical to Florida Fisheries which represent a \$11.5 billion industry. She thanked them for providing the IDS and RECOVER presentations which are critical components in Everglades restoration. Both are key when advocating with policymakers on what's needed in south Florida.

Nyla Pipes (One Florida Foundation) commended them on their commitment for IRL South projects. They are currently experiencing an algal bloom in the C-44 canal because of local basin runoff and it is coming downstream to the St. Lucie River. They have an enlarged local basin because of their flood control system that includes the C-23 and C-24 canal system. It is having a big impact on the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and the South Fork of the St. Lucie River as well. Everything compounds under the Roosevelt bridge in Stuart and contributes to nutrient loading. She urged them to recognize how important both the reservoirs and STAs are to the IRL South.

Mike Effenbein (resident) welcomed COL Booth and said he looked forward to sharing the sportsman's perspective in all its beauty. Government is often scrutinized by society for its shortcomings, and he appreciates how unified people are from different agencies to solve these big problems. He believes that government is doing what they are supposed to be doing with their tax dollars. He is proud to play a small part in bringing sportsmen and Gladesmen to this effort.

8. Everglades Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (R-EMAP) Update

Dan Scheidt, as part of the read-ahead, provided three links to the 2021 EPA Management Report, a list of program reports and publications, and an example of multi-variate analyses that can be done with R-EMAP data. He noted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been assessing the Everglades' health since the 1990s. REMAP provides a snapshot of ecological and water quality conditions during a two-week window. REMAP is unique in that it combines multi-media sampling (water, soil, fish, plants and periphyton) with a design that allows quantitative statements about conditions. It samples all the Everglades. The design of REMAP provides the ability to quantify conditions in the Everglades with a known confidence level. No one else is doing this. He reviewed the different R-EMAP phases from 1993 – 2014. Much of this work would not have been possible without their

collaborators at FIU. The 2014 sampling effort included ~70 people from EPA, FIU, ENP, DOI, and the Miccosukee Tribe and resulted in 2,141 sample containers. This effort has required more than 4,000 helicopter take-offs and landings in remote marsh without incident. Approximately 100,000 analytical data results over the course of the study from marsh from 1995-2014. He recognized all the partners that have contributed to this effort. Data is relevant to 14 of 28 CERP RECOVER performance measures and is used by the SFWMD for their South Florida Environmental Reports. The National Academies of Sciences peer-reviewed the study design in the 1990s and the data is used by CISRERP. He reviewed some of the data and reminded everyone the data is available to the public at: <https://www.epa.gov/everglades/environmental-monitoring-everglades>. EPA is looking for input from WG/SCG on whether there is a need or desire from managers and scientists in the Everglades for another round of REMAP.

Lawrence Glenn said that Fred Sklar and his team at the SFWMD have said that R-EMAP is an invaluable assessment tool for evaluating large scale foundational trends that have not been captured by any other organization on such a holistic scale. Trends that are influenced by slow bio-geochemical changes that can set the stage for possible peat collapse, accretion, subsidence, vegetation shifts, carbon sequestration, eutrophication, resilience, and adaptation. R-EMAP has focused on features of an ecosystem that influence the processes that define the fundamental characteristics of the landscape. R-EMAP helps water managers, ecologists and biologists understand these foundational attributes given climate change, natural evolutionary processes, and anthropogenic impacts. Soil and peat dynamics is a key foundational attribute of all wetlands around the world. R-EMAP is the only program that looks at soil thickness, bulk density, soil organic matter and soil phosphorus across the entire greater Everglades. There are many research and monitoring programs looking at these soil parameters in the lab or small basins, but none are at this scale. They believe it is a great program to keep moving forward.

Ed Smith said he also reached out to the Water Quality Division at FDEP and got the same response, adding that they find the data very useful. Melodie Nadja added the NPS is supportive of the R-EMAP program adding that the data is defensible and statistically significant. James Erskine said he has used the data over the years and has found it to be a trusted source of information. His team at FWC staff believes R-EMAP provides important information that should be continued. Melodie Nadja asked whether there was a plan to integrate Big Cypress. Dan said it is always possible and will look at adding it as a line item. Becky Allenbach said they would also like feedback on whether they should stick to the same parameters or whether they should be looking at other things. Joan Browder suggested R-EMAP monitor the same things as before, because it shows the changes across time.

Nick Aumen made a motion that the WG and SCG believe EPA's R-EMAP has produced unique and valuable scientific information relevant to south Florida scientists and managers, and fully support the concept of another REMAP sampling effort. The motion was seconded by Chad Kennedy. There was no one opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Coral Disease Response and Restoration Update

Joanna Walczak provided a presentation on behalf of DEP, FWC, NOAA, and the NPS. Florida's coral reef runs 350 miles from the Dry Tortugas to the St. Lucie inlet in Martin County and is managed at both the state and federal levels. Coral reefs around the world are in jeopardy, from global stressors such as increased frequency and severity of extreme thermal events (hot and cold) and ocean and coastal acidification. Those are coupled with regional and local stressors such as land-based sources of pollution, overuse, and coastal construction impacts. Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease progresses rapidly and has the high likelihood of complete mortality once it infects a coral colony. This disease is significant due to the number of species it is impacting along with its speed. Of the

45 species of coral in Florida, 23 -25 species are impacted. This disease has been present for almost 7 years and they now believe this disease will be part of the ecosystem moving forward.

An unprecedented disease outbreak requires an unprecedented response and there are many partners from federal, state, and local agencies, NGO's, universities, and private industry that are working together on a common goal. The response for the short term includes enhancing management and response capacity while the long-term response includes reducing local stressors and restoring environmental conditions to improve reef resilience. For the long-term response, the Florida Reef Resilience Program will be putting out the Resilience Action Plan for Florida's Coral Reefs. The three goals include: enabling resilience-based management of Florida's coral reef; supporting public policy that creates the enabling conditions for reef recovery; and enabling stakeholders to support the future of the reef and those who depend on it. Everyone's support is needed to rescue and restore Florida's Coral Reef and share the wonders of our waters with generations to come. She encouraged everyone to take the pledge and join the Florida Coral Crew: www.FloridasCoralReef.org

Deb Drum said Palm Beach County is thrilled to be a partner in this effort. They have planted corals in Palm Beach County on their natural reefs and things are going very well. A NOAA economic report on valuation of natural and artificial reefs reported that Palm Beach County's economic impact from scuba and snorkeling on their reefs was estimated at about \$202 million per year.

10. WRDA 2020 Directives, Adam Gelber, OERI

Adam Gelber reminded everyone of the Invasive Exotic Species' Strategic Action Framework developed in 2015 and updated in 2020. Subsequently in 2019, the Suppressing Looming Invasive Threats Harming Everglades Restoration "SLITHER Act" was introduced by Senator Rubio. In 2020, the SLITHER Act was included in WRDA 2020, Section 504, as Invasive Species Risk Assessment Prioritization and Management. It amended Section 528 of WRDA 1996 and added specific duties to the Task Force related to invasive species. The first part of the legislation directs the Task Force to develop and update, as appropriate, a priority list of invasive species that reflects an assessment of ecological risk that the listed species represent. The list should include invasive plants and animals that: significantly impact the structure and function of ecological communities, native species, or habitat within the South Florida ecosystem; or demonstrate a strong potential to reduce, obscure, or otherwise alter key indicators used to measure Everglades restoration progress. The second part of the legislation directs the Task Force and its member organizations to use the priority list to focus cooperative and collaborative efforts to: guide applied research; develop innovative strategies and tools to facilitate improved management, control, or eradication of listed invasive species; implement specific management, control, or eradication activities at the appropriate periodicity and intensity necessary to reduce or neutralize the impacts of listed invasive species, including the use of qualified skilled volunteers when appropriate; and develop innovative strategies and tools to prevent future introductions of nonnative species. This item will be brought before the Task Force at its next meeting for direction.

11. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Quarantine Facility/Bio Control

Dr. Allen Dray provided an update on the USDA's Invasive Plant Research Laboratory (IPRL) which conducts research on the impacts of exotic plants as well as the safety and effectiveness of biological control and other methods used to manage invasive plants. The lab was established in 1954 and has continued to grow in its efforts to combat invasive species, particularly those species affecting the Everglades. He was one of the authors of a scientific assessment (Weeds Won't Wait!) that determined that fixing Everglades hydrology without addressing

invasive species would ultimately fail restoration objectives. He reviewed how four Everglades invaders (Brazilian peppertree, Australian pine, Old World climbing fern, and Melaleuca) alter the hydrology, community structure and fire regimes. Because no one technology can effectively and efficiently control invasive plants in all habitats and under all circumstances, the solution is using integrated pest management. Biological control is the science of re-associating natural enemies with their hosts in regions where neither the host nor the enemy naturally occurs. The goal is to produce enough stress to the host that it no longer causes problems in its non-native range. Biocontrol is not about eradication but about making them a more acceptable member of the community. He reviewed the process for getting a biocontrol which begins with foreign surveys, quarantine studies, release and establishment, long-term monitoring, redistribution, and technology transfer and testing protocols. Success stories include the use of a flea beetle on Alligatorweed and weevil on the Waterhyacinth. The Waterhyacinth technology has been transferred for use in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Mexico. He reviewed a list of weeds that are problematic in the Everglades. Help in the form of money and staffing is needed for biocontrol efforts. They currently have only 5 staff scientists. James Erskine noted that the presentation answered his question about what is coming down the pipeline. He encouraged the members to think about this in relationship to the priority list required in WRDA 2020.

12. Invasive Species Lightning Round

A series of five pre-recorded “lightning round” presentations was given to showcase a variety of invasive species activities related to restoration. The first presentation was programmatic and the final four presentations reflect each of the four goals from the Task Forces’ Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework document that is organized using the invasion curve.

1. Risk Screening and Assessment Tools - Christina Romagosa provided examples of tools used in Florida or within the greater Everglades footprint for prevention and early detection of non-native species. These are decision support tools are used to help inform decisions. They are meant to be quick, transparent, standardized, and defensible.
2. Prevention (Goal 1) Sarah Funck noted that managers use a variety of strategies to mitigate invasive species impacts. Prevention is the most cost-effective method. These strategies include awareness campaigns such as ‘Don’t Let it Loose’ and FWC’s Amnesty program. Her presentation was focused on non-native species regulations such as the federal Lacey Act and the State of Florida’s regulations to prevent high risk species from becoming established and causing harm.
3. Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR) (Goal 2) Kelly Gestring and John Galvez reviewed what happens when prevention fails, and they need a coordinated set of actions to find and mitigate potential invasive species before they establish (or spread further) and cause harm. He focused his presentation on the Arapaima EDRR Case Study.
4. Containment (Goal 3) Sue Alspach focused her presentation on containment of Conehead termites. They recently found a large population of Conehead termites feasting on 8 acres of mangroves and other vegetation in Broward County. Its native range is in most of Latin American and the only known Conehead termites in the U.S. are in Broward County. It is a federally regulated, quarantinable pest. It is a capable colonist and has a rapid population growth. A mature nest could double in size in one month. They can cause huge disruption to the south Florida ecosystem altering plant health, weakening structural integrity of trees, and spread a fungal disease known to cause death in red mangroves. Because of their high transport risk and their ability to move easily, rapid containment is essential. They destroyed 88 nests in infested wetlands and follow-up treatment will be needed. They have achieved control on 52 infested

acres covering 85 properties. They will continue containment and control to address termites that evaded treatment and continue to take steps to reach eradication.

5. Long-term management (Goal 4) LeRoy Rodgers reviewed what happens when a species becomes well-established and widespread throughout the Everglades and containment and eradication becomes unlikely. Natural resource managers must adopt strategies aimed at reducing the population to the lowest feasible level. Unfortunately, few regions of the Everglades are completely free of invasive plants and many aggressive invaders are established throughout the system. Numerous agencies and the Tribes are actively managing these plant species. Federal, state, and county agencies conducted search and removal efforts on 550,000 acres between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. A collaborative landscape level monitoring program using systematic reconnaissance flights conducted across the ECISMA footprint on 5-year intervals quantifies the distribution of high priority invasive plants in the Everglades. They now have landscape level data from 1995 to 2020. He highlighted the change in distribution and abundance of *Melaleuca* over the past 25 years. Although *Melaleuca* has increased its footprint over the past 25 years, most of the infestations are at low levels showing good management.

Public Comment

Mike Elfenbein (resident) said they should all give their money to Dr. Allen Dray, his work is amazing. The presentation gave him a new perspective that they are not trying to eradicate but trying to keep invasive species from taking over the native plants and animals.

Nyla Pipes (One Florida Foundation) said she couldn't agree more about the correlation of the coral reefs and the greater Everglades ecosystem. What happens in the transition zone is very important and that is our coastal communities. When talking about improving water quality for the coral reefs, in her mind, it gets back to sewage issues. They are facing failing sewage infrastructure and must consider the impacts human have.

Amy Castaneda noted the importance of REMAP adding this study highlights the high levels of total Phosphorus in the western basins. The Miccosukee Tribe looks forward to working with COL Booth in moving WERP forward. It is the only plan addressing pollution concerns in the western basins that includes the Miccosukee Tribe's Federal Reservation.

Next Steps and Closing Comments

James Erskine thanked everyone for attending and noted OERI will review the recording of the last meeting and the minutes will be sent out for approval via e-mail. Meeting adjourned at 2:53PM.

Note: This is a summary of the major highlights for the September 28 Joint WG/SCG meeting. The most accurate source and official record for the meeting referenced herein is the actual digital recording of the meeting which is readily available and posted for viewing on the OERI website at www.evergladesrestoration.gov.

Handouts:

1. Draft Agenda
2. Member Whip-Around (no handout)
3. Meeting Summary, May 19, 2021
4. Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI)
 - a. Tamiami Trail Update
5. Program and Project Updates
 - a. SFWMD

- b. USACE
- 6. Restoration Coordination and Verification (RECOVER) Update
- 7. Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS)
 - a. IDS Power Point
 - b. 2021 Working Draft Placemat
- 8. Everglades Regional Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (R-EMAP) Update
 - a. Everglades REMAP Program Reports and Publications
 - b. Everglades REMAP Report
 - c. Spatiotemporal effects of interacting water quality constituents on mercury in a common prey fish in a large, perturbed, subtropical wetland
- 9. Coral Disease Response and Restoration Update
- 10. WRDA 2020 Directives presentation
- 11. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Quarantine Facility/Bio Control presentation
- 12. Invasive Species Lightning Round