

Program Name: Agriculture
Program Name: C&SF: CERP PLA/Public Outreach and Assistance
Program ID: 3502
Lead Agency: USACE / SFWMD
Authority: WRDA 2000; Design Agreement, WRDA 2007 (*specific authorized funding*)

Strategic Plan Goal(s) Addressed: 3-A.3

April 1999 (Restudy) Program Synopsis: The Restudy listed guidelines for implementing CERP and stated that outreach and public involvement efforts were an integral part of the process and would continue throughout the planning, design, construction, monitoring, and implementation of CERP. The objective of all outreach activities was to ensure that the public is informed about the Plan and that its implementation is reflective of the input received from stakeholders and the public throughout the project's implementation.

Current Program Synopsis: Public outreach is a critical part of CERP. Its two primary components -- involvement and information -- continue to play a key role in the CERP implementation effort. The primary objectives of outreach are to (1) keep the public informed of the status of the program or project and key issues associated with restoration implementation, and (2) provide effective mechanisms for public participation in the restoration plan development. A *CERP Public Outreach Program Management Plan* approved in 2001 describes these outreach goals, objectives, and tasks in more detail.

Since 2001, the USACE and SFWMD have implemented an ongoing multi-faceted public outreach program for the CERP. Outreach strategies seek two-way communication with all public sectors to broaden understanding and to instill a sense of stewardship among all south Floridians and visitors. Two separate and simultaneous levels of public outreach have been employed:

Program-level Outreach - involves long-term, system-wide issues at an overarching program level such as general outreach, RECOVER, environmental equity and other CERP issues that span the life of the 30+ year plan.

Project-level Outreach - involves targeted outreach for the 50+ specific CERP components: the individual reservoirs, underground storage wells, filtering wetlands, and other local project features. A custom outreach plan is developed for each individual CERP project. While program and project outreach activities are considered separate, there is often a great overlap of materials, tools and techniques. The same overarching CERP messages apply to both program and project level outreach activities.

A broad array of outreach involvement and information programs has been developed to include the general public, minority groups, small businesses, and specific stakeholder audiences. The program has included public meetings and workshops; news media relations; creative and unusual information products; environmental education; print, electronic and Internet materials; and many other programs and products to ensure the public is engaged and involved in CERP. The main focus of the outreach efforts is the 16-county central and south Florida region, the area most affected by CERP. However, outreach activities and products also reach people throughout the state of Florida, the nation and the world.

Highlights of this very diverse outreach program, from the past two years, follow below.

Current Status: The USACE and the SFWMD continued to make much progress during this reporting period to raise awareness of central and south Florida's public-at-large about CERP and the restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem.

While these efforts were organized by the USACE, they often included the SFWMD as a major state partner in the restoration of the Everglades. Ongoing efforts are summarized below:

Web site update: The official everglades web site was transitioned from www.evergladesplan.org to www.evergladesrestoration.gov in 2014. The new website provides an important source of current and archived news and information to the public and stakeholders.

CERP fact sheets, promotional items, and a report. Fact sheets were produced on CERP projects and engaging promotional items helped update the community.

Project Level Involvement. Many public meetings and workshops were held to inform and include the public in the development of CERP projects. This form of project-specific communication is essential to the success of the CERP. Meetings were announced in advance, held in convenient locations, and often featured an open house session to meet CERP staff prior to the formal meeting or workshop. For those people who could not attend meetings, meeting documents were posted online. Comments were taken online, in addition to those taken in person at the meetings and workshops. USACE developed fact sheets and poster boards for individual CERP projects, with some translated into Spanish.

The USACE, SFWMD and the Task Force developed a unified government webpage, www.evergladesrestoration.gov, to bring information about the everglades to the public.

Hyperlinks: http://141.232.10.32/pm/progr_outreach.aspx

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