

**SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE SPONSORED
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP**

INTEGRATED DELIVERY SCHEDULE

SUMMARY

Virtual Meeting via ZOOM
September 17, 2020
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees:

Adam Gelber
Allyn Childress
Alyssa Jordan
Amanda Kahn
Amy Bennett Williams
Amy Castaneda
Amy Thompson
Angela Dunn
Angela Montoya
Anna Wachnicka
Anne Cox
Beth Lewis
Bill Baker
Brenda Mills
Cara Capp
Carrie Beeler
Cecelia Harper
Chad Kennedy
Chelsea Bohaty
Chris Kelble
Christian Avila
Christopher Johns
Dan Crawford
Dan Glazier
David Cowan
David Day
David Moe
Debbie Madden
Deborah Drum
Dennis Duke
Derek Cox
Donna George
Donnatto Surratt
Doug Gaston
Doug Smith
Drew Martin
Eduardo Lopez

Edward Smith
Elizabeth Ross
Emily Canney
Emily Hunter
Eric Summa
Erica Skolte
Erik Stabenau
Ernie Barnett
Eva Velez
Eve Samples
Faith Hoffman
Fred Sklar
Gary Ritter
Georgia Vince
Gib Owen
Gina Ralph
Glenn Watkins
Greg Burns
Gretchen Ehlinger
Holly Milbrandt
Howie Gonzales
Ingrid Bon
Irela Bague
Irene Quincey
James Erskine
Jason Goldstein
Jeff Couch
Jennifer Aiton
Jennifer Brown
Jennifer Leeds
Jennifer Reynolds
Jenny Staletovich
Jeremy McBryan
Jerry Smith
Jessica Mallett
Jessica Ritter
Joan Bausch

Joana Savinon
John Maehl
Jon Dinges
Jon Lane
Jordan Tedio
Jose Vega
Kara Mills
Karen Bohnsack
Karina Elsken
Katherine English
Kathy Fitzpatrick
Katie Bowes
Kelli Edson
Kevin Burger
Kevin Carter
Kim Gates
Kim Taplin
Kloee Ciuperger
Kyle Keer
Laura Olympio
Lawrence Glenn
Lee Hefty
Lee Tranford
Leslye Waugh
Lisa Kreiger
Luna Phillips
Marcia Steelman
Marie Huber
Mark Perry
Marsha Bansee
Marshall Critchfield
Matt Morrison
Megan Jacoby
Melanie Parker
Michael Collins
Michael Ellis
Michael Weglein

Mike Elfenbein
Mike Magley
Miles Meyer
Monica Mayotte
Nafeeza Hooseinny
Nick Aumen
Nicole Gumbs
Nyla Pipes
Patrick Dayan
Pete Quasius

Pierre Massena
Ramon Martin
Rebecca Elliott
Robert Johnson
Roland Ottolini
Ryan Rossi
Sandy Soto
Sheryl Wood
Stu Appelbaum
Stuart Van Horn

Sue Wilcox
Terrie Bates
Theresa Lawrence
Tibebe Dessalegne
Tim Gysan
Tom MacVicar
Virginia Walsh
Walter Reigner
Wes Brooks

1. Welcome and Introductions, Adam Gelber (OERI) and James Erskine, Working Group Chair

Adam Gelber, Director of the US Department of Interior's Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF), welcomed everyone to the workshop. He reminded everyone that this Task Force sponsored workshop on the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) is being held in response to a formal request by the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) at the June 23, 2020 Working Group/Science Coordination Group meeting. He mentioned that the IDS provides an overall strategy and sequence for the planning, design, and construction of projects within the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program and that staff from the USACE and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) are here to provide background information on the IDS as well as describe the latest update. Adam stated that the IDS presentation will be followed by a facilitated discussion as well as a public comment period.

James Erskine thanked everyone for participating and reminded everyone that the workshop is being recorded. The workshop agenda, presentations, and the full recording are available at: <https://www.evergladesrestoration.gov/content/ids/meetings/091720/index.php>. A panel of agency staff is available for the discussion portion of the agenda:

- Eva Velez, Kim Taplin, Howie Gonzalez, Joana Savinon, and Dan Crawford (USACE)
- Megan Jacoby and Jennifer Leeds (SFWMD)

He then introduced Allyn Childress who provided an overview of the workshop process including the purpose, how the public can participate, and the feedback loop from the workshops to the Corps and SFWMD.

2. Workshop Procedures and Ground Rules, Allyn Childress (OERI)

https://evergladesrestoration.gov/content/ids/meetings/091720/2-IDS_Welcome_and_Ground_Rules.pdf

Allyn Childress reminded the attendees that Task Force requested the Working Group conduct a stakeholder workshop on the 2020 IDS. She explained that a formal transmittal of all the workshop materials will be sent to the USACE and the SFWMD following the workshop. She

explained the workshop format and how participants could pose written questions to the panel via the Zoom chat feature during the discussion portion of the agenda and/or provide oral public comment at the conclusion of the workshop.

3. Overview, Eva Velez (USACE)

https://evergladesrestoration.gov/content/ids/meetings/091720/IDS_2020_Update_Public%20Workshop.pdf

https://evergladesrestoration.gov/content/ids/meetings/091720/IDS_091020_WORKING_DRAFT_placemat.pdf

Eva Velez thanked OERI and the Task Force for hosting the workshop. She began by stating that several tools are used to help track the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) program and the IDS is used in many ways. The IDS 11x17, two-sided placemat was reviewed beginning with the top gray funding band on the front page of the IDS. The estimate for total SFER Construction is ~\$7.4 billion from 2020 to 2030.

Eva explained each of the 5 different colored project bands on the front page of the IDS:

- Blue: Foundation and Non-CERP Projects
- Green: CERP Generation 1 Projects (WRDA 2007 Authorization)
- Purple: CERP Generation 2 Projects (Authorized in 2014)
- Tan: Central Everglades Planning Project and EAA Reservoir (2016 CEPP authorized, 2018 EAA)
- White: Planning Projects

She pointed out the kickoff of the Biscayne Bay Southeastern Everglades Restoration (BBSEER) project and the new Southern Everglades project in the white/planning project band.

Turning to the back page of the IDS placemat, Eva explained how the components of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) became part of a project and the planning process. In addition to the projects, the important last steps are system operating manuals (SOMs) that will maximize benefits to the system. A brief summary of RECOVER's 2017 Everglades Report Card is also included on the back page and Eva noted the work done by the scientists to summarize the state of the system in the Report Card. The system-wide grade as of 2017 was 45% (fair) and while concerning, the projects and operating manual updates in the next ten years will help improve these conditions. Science tells us that restoration is the best defense against sea level rise. The BBSEER will address sea level rise and add resiliency to the coast as a component. The back of the placemat also includes a map of CERP components and status by RECOVER regions.

4. Discussion

James Erskine thanked Eva and the team for walking through the IDS. He invited Kim Taplin and Allyn Childress to begin reading the questions posed by participants in the Zoom chat feature. (56:15 on recording)

Q: Nyla Pipes: Comparing the 2019 IDS to this 2020 draft version, the costs have risen. In 2023, 2024, and 2025 we are now over a billion dollars annually. Part A: What is the reason for such a cost increase? Part B: Is that funding really attainable considering the fact that we are seeing both state and federal budgets effected by COVID-19?

A: Eva: Part A: The reason for the cost change is due primarily to updated project costs for individual projects, but the greatest change in cost is due to the updated costs to the EAA reservoir and CEPP components. Part B: We are sensitive to the concerns about impacts of COVID to our budgets, so our goal is to be clear and transparent about what investments are needed to make the progress that our stakeholders have asked of us. We understand that when the program is being considered in Washington DC and Tallahassee, it is being looked at through the lens of what the nation needs. South Florida is a water-based economy and the investments are big, but the work is big too.

Q: Dan Glazier: I live on the St. Lucie River, and am interested programs that are addressing the Lake O. algae issues and releases into the St. Lucie River, who is heading up those programs. Also, very well-done presentation.

A: Eva noted she was glad for the interest. In regard to Lake Okeechobee and releases and how Lake Okeechobee is operated, she invited participation in the development of the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) that is happening now through 2022. When it comes to water coming into the lake, the USACE works with their partners at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the SFWMD. For the St. Lucie River, the SFWMD and the FDEP have robust water quality and modeling programs. Jennifer Leeds said Dan hit upon several efforts and noted that one to look at is the state's Blue Green Algae Task Force, a tri-agency effort between FDEP, SFWMD, and the Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (FDACS), on the FDEP website. There is also the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program and projects like the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) South project that address the local basin runoff.

Q: Mark Perry: How does the SOM Vol 3 Schedule include the C43 and C44 projects and the EAA in the relationship to developing LOSOM update?

A: Eva referred back to the slide with the SOM boundaries and noted that area 3 is the boundary for the LOSOM update. Looking at the new schedule as the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) is being completed and making sure the schedule will work with the projects to be completed in the next few years. The formulation process acknowledges the change in the landscape by 2022 and also by 2025, which brings completion of C43 reservoir. LOSOM will be implemented quickly enough that we will have a new schedule when the HHD is complete which is the primary driver and we will do a forward look at the upcoming projects that will be complete in 2022 and 2025. Dan Crawford followed up and pointed out that the last row on SOM 3 corresponds to the subsequent update after LOSOM is complete that reflects the CERP Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule modification and the EAA and is slated to start after we wrap up the pre-CERP LOSOM project.

Q: Ernie Barnett: The estimate annual costs has increased significantly over the prior IDS. Since the 2020 (the highest combined level of funding in recent years) budget was \$598 million is it

realistic to expect a combined level of funding of over \$1 billion a year for multiple years. Why doesn't the IDS schedule include a reasonable and realistic level of annual funding?

A: Eva noted they did look at historic funding. We know we have been on an upward trajectory for funding. If you look at 2018 and 2019 from the federal side, it doubled in 2020 and 2021. The question we are trying to answer is: we need to move as quickly as possible because the ecosystem and economy need it, so what would that look like? We understand the funding is really a decision made by the Congress and the Florida Legislature.

Ernie Barnett provided a follow-up statement via chat: With all due respect, the IDS Guiding Principles adopted by the Task Force included this statement "Projects should be implemented in a sequence that achieves restoration objectives at earliest practicable time, consistent with funding constraints." This proposed IDS does not appear to take into account realistic funding constraints.

A: Jennifer Reynolds (SFWMD) responded via Chat: We were asked to be transparent about what it costs to maintain an optimized schedule for project completion. That is what this does. We will adjust the schedules to the funding appropriated by the Federal and the State governments.

Q: Eve Samples: Thank you for the informative presentation. What are your findings so far regarding the planned 23-foot depth of the EAA Reservoir, and whether the depth could contribute to growth of harmful algal blooms? Has the C-43 Reservoir project planning process provided any specific insights in this regard?

A: Eva stated that the USACE looks at these massive infrastructure projects to learn and are working with our partners at the SFWMD to answer that question. The EAA reservoir connects with stormwater treatment areas (STAs) as the water leaves the reservoir and enters the Everglades Protection Area. Dan Crawford added that they are still working through all the design details and more information should be forthcoming in the next quarter.

Q: Mark Perry: The RECOVER "Report Card" really needs to be evaluated and updated. Since we are relying on this to tell us how Everglades restoration is doing, we need a process to make sure the RECOVER is evaluated and updated. Is there a plan to update and evaluate RECOVER?

A: Eva: RECOVER is looking at continuing to improve on their knowledge. The latest information was incorporated into the interim goals and interim target projects report that was published this year. The data is also presented annually in the "South Florida Environmental Report" from the SFWMD.

Q: Mike Elfenbein: Eva mentioned the report indicated that the Everglades is struggling to hang on. She went on to suggest that projects in the next ten years will address that concern. My concern is that I can spend an entire three days sitting at the top a tree in the western Everglades and see NO WILDLIFE at all. what hope do we have that there will be anything left in ten years? What are we doing now, immediately, to help the struggling system survive those next ten years? Also, while I support these projects and initiatives none of these efforts will save the Everglades if we don't work harder to remove the nutrients from Lake O. I welcome any and all opportunities I work with staff to address that issue. A big thank you to COL Kelly and LTC

Polk for their leadership on these issues and for their exemplary staff and their continued efforts. thank you.

A: Eva: We have for the first time in the southern part of the system a new operational plan that receives the signal from Everglades National Park to WCA 3A. We have an immediate ability to put more water across Tamiami Trail with the bridges and more work is being done as we speak. That provides an opportunity right now. Projects are moving towards completion. The STA on C-44 are being pressed into vegetation grow-in that allows for quick improvement in that watershed as well. The floodplain is being restored on the Kissimmee River and we are seeing benefits to the habitat and ecology there. There is more work to be done across the system so we are leveraging the progress already made and collaborating with our stakeholders and partners.

Q: Gary Ritter: Lake Okeechobee and LOSOM is so integral to CERP why is it considered as Non-CERP?

A: Eva: Operations are integral to the whole system. We looked at LOSOM as what is needed to have new operation criteria for the Lake once the HHD is complete.

Q: Ryan Rossi: Good morning, this is Ryan Rossi with the South Florida Water Coalition. Thanks for the presentation. While these current projects are being developed, what efforts are being taken to address baseline protections to South Florida's water supply, as has traditionally been applied in the past? Thank you!

A: Eva: We look that our water supply has a balanced approach during current operations of the C&SF system. For the future SFWMD does the planning. Jennifer Leeds: one of main functions of the SFWMD is water supply planning. We have a whole department that works on that. They look at current conditions and work to look at future projections such as growth and the information can be found at our website. As we do CERP projects one of the things we look at is the Savings Clause analysis. This is used to prevent any impacts to local users from projects.

Q: Tom MacVicar: Great job Eva, and team. Where can we find the latest project by project cost estimates for the components that are summarized under CERP on slide 5?

A: Eva: You can find project information in our published justification (J) sheet.

A: Joanna Savinon (USACE) posted the following link in the chat box:
<https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16021coll6/id/2129>

A: Mike Magley (USACE): Note that the J-sheet only covers federal projects and those which have been funded within that specific year's budget request will be more fully detailed.

Q: Michael Collins: Great presentation representing a huge amount of work. Big funding year. The future has a number of potential storm clouds hanging over funding. Are we capable of or interested in revising the IDS in the face of future potential reduced funding to fund more bang for the buck projects and less for projects that might take decades to realize? For instance, CEPP South and the Levee removal projects provide benefits to ENP with or without additional water from other projects.

A: Eva: You bring up a good point about CERP projects that bring up key connections for water. Building the blue shanty flow way is creating that key connection. Part of it is that the existing

water budget in the southern part of the system isn't enough. Even though some of the projects are big, we need the ability to store water so we have carryover capacity for the dry season, so we can have storage in Lake Okeechobee. I appreciate that question, as far as prioritizing that is a conversation to have as a team and with the Task Force as well.

Q: Michael Conner: Should we see no progress with private landowners in regards to selling land to the state for northern projects to retain and clean water, how much state land is available and what kind of shortfall might there be to arrive the end goal of bring TMDLs into the desired range for the Lake?

A: Jennifer Leeds: thought he might be referring to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Plan (LOWRP) and from the state's perspective since it's our responsibility to acquire the land, for the EEA project we wait until it is authorized by Congress and then we would move forward with working with willing sellers. With that particular project 30-40% of the land is in public ownership and rest is private. In other projects such as Northern Everglades, we have some considerable land the state owns, and Governor DeSantis has increased funding for some of these projects. We have the land for the projects we are going to design. For other projects we would look for public/ private partnerships.

Q: Cara Capp: Good morning. This is Cara Capp from NPCA. Thank you for the thorough presentation and especially the variety of useful graphics. It is encouraging to see a path forward that delivers big success by 2030. Does the Corps have an estimate about how long it would take to implement CERP at historic, lower funding levels by comparison? Thanks for making this virtual format so successful.

A: Eva: We have not prepared something for today which would show lower funding levels. Allyn's (OERI) presentation to the Task Force (May 7, 2020 meeting) with the different funding levels is useful is understanding the time value of money. Although these numbers are greater that analysis holds true today even with this updated IDS.

Q: Gary Ritter: Jennifer Leeds talked about the importance of the water savings clause and that the SFWMD is responsible for assuring it remains within all appropriate CERP and non-CERP project features. Can we assume there will be coordination concerning the water savings clause between the Corps and SFWMD?

A: Eva: Yes. Although we didn't specifically call out which one of the operational plan updates on the back page have a saving clause analysis associated with it, we did put a note in the upper righthand corner to address additional modeling and NEPA.

Additional technical questions answered in writing within the Chat feature:

Q: Joan Bausch: Where can we find names of IRL South team?

A: Kim Taplin: You can find the Project Managers for the Corps and the SFWMD contact information on the project website here:

<https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Indian-River-Lagoon-South/>

Q: Marcia Steelman: Can you send a link to the planning website?

A: Kim Taplin: I am not sure which website you are referencing but here is the Ecosystem Restoration website on the Jacksonville District's Homepage
<https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/>

Q: Kim Gates : Will the presentations be made available to attendees?

A: Allyn Childress: The workshop materials are available at:
<https://evergladesrestoration.gov/content/ids/meetings/091720/>

One additional question came in after the discussion period finished, so it was unable to be answered:

David Moe: David Moe, here from Charlotte County: a couple of general environmental questions: will the restoration have a positive effect on excessive nutrients and will the various projects help reduce methyl mercury effects currently occurring in the tribal lands in Agriculture 3 area? How deep was lake 'O' historically; 1950 or 1960. And would dredging the lake allow improved water management and improved ecological conditions

5. Public Comment

At the conclusion of the discussion session, Allyn asked Sandy Soto (OERI), to open the traditional public comment period. Sandy Soto noted that there would be 2-3-minutes allocated per person during the public comment period depending upon how many people raise their hands.

Drew Martin: Representing Loxahatchee Group of the Sierra Club, thank you for having this session. We need to put significant money into getting water flowing into the park because those things work right away. I don't think HHD should be part of the Everglades process because it is a safety issue which raises the costs significantly. The deep EAA reservoir is raising the cost too. I know the state has said they don't want to use eminent domain but there should be an analysis to determine the cost of buying the land to create sheetflow or have shallow storage versus building the deep reservoir. Current STAs store water coming off fields and we are still not getting water out of the lake. We need it to flow out of the lake and to be clean. We need to talk about water supply and landscape irrigation using this significant amount of water. We need to look at how we can create more water catchment areas so water supply along coasts get the benefits. We want to move water into the center of the state We also have not talked about climate change.

Michael Collins: Thank you for the format. Its disingenuous to say the lake operations schedule doesn't have anything to do with CERP. If LOSOM operational schedule reduces lake level we have 400,000-500,000 acre/ft of water, at some point LOSOM needs to be integrated into the CERP process. I agree with Drew Martin that at some point we will have a lot less funding and we are going to have to deal with it and have to review where we get the best bang for the buck, and I think it is in conveyance of water to the park.

Michael Conner: The water coming into St. Lucie from the northern canals, the volume is surprising, and the water is becoming muddier all the time. Much of the pollution comes from the

tidal basin. We have had so much come out of the C-44 and the off and on pulse of the water is damaging. And the salt level readings are very low. I wish we would focus on the reservoirs west of St Lucie. We need the projects sooner rather than later.

Nyla Pipes: One Florida Foundation. I wanted to bounce off what Mike Conner just said. Every time we go to DC there is commentary on Everglades fatigue and the Congressmen and Congresswomen are frustrated and tired of us coming. And now we are raising our ask. What I am worried about is if we keep asking for more that we might shoot ourselves in the foot with the transparency. I am concerned that we will need to revisit some things moving forward and what really is that big bang for the buck. While the south end of the system is really important, if we are looking at the St. Lucie River specifically, we really need IRL-South completed.

Sarah Heard: Martin County. IRL-South was authorized in WRDA 2007. And other CERP projects that came after are predicated on IRL South being completed first. The natural lands storage in IRL-South is no longer on the IDS. IRL South projects are slipping so notably down the IDS that by the time they are scheduled there will be such exhaustion that it will be difficult to complete. Also concerned about blue-green algae coming back in the future.

Cara Capp: representing NPCA, from an advocacy perspective we are curious to see the numbers and appreciate looking at this updated IDS and now we can go ask for increased funding. It's clear that the longer we wait the more it costs. It is important to start talking about climate resiliency. Everglades Restoration is our region's biggest climate resiliency plan and hopefully we will all advocate about how important it is. We are very excited about CEPP South moving forward and getting freshwater to Everglades National Park. Also appreciate Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 2 planning moving forward.

Irela Bague: Great to see the progress made on the IDS particularly Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1. Also excited to see BBSEER moving forward. In addition to the PDT meetings, it would be helpful to have public workshops for BBSEER.

Ernie Barnett: Florida Land Council, I strongly support all of the projects listed in the IDS, I echo Cara Capp's support for CEPP South and Sarah Heard's support for IRL-South. We have to look at project interdependencies, funding, engineering, contracting, and other constraints pursuant to programmatic regulations before we put something out there that has unrealistic expectations. We need a realistic and achievable schedule.

6. Closing Comments

James Erskine thanked everyone involved. James stated that one of the things he observed was a lot of participants came back to the budget. We know going forward we face budget uncertainty due to COVID, however there have been uncertainties along this whole journey and we have made progress and we will continue to make progress. For those interested in the accounting he encouraged them to look at page 36 of the Task Force's 2020 Biennial Report for the budgeting exercise. One important take away from that exercise is that waiting costs more.

Adam Gelber also thanked everyone for participating.