

Draft Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Meeting
Royal Palm Beach Cultural Center
Royal Palm Beach, Florida
May 7, 2014

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Rachel Jacobson called the meeting to order at 8:45AM and thanked everyone for participating in the joint meeting with the WRAC the prior day. The agenda (Encl. 6) was provided.

Task Force Member Introductions and Opening Remarks

The following members were in attendance and provided opening remarks:

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

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

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

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

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

Arvin Ganesan, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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

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

David Hawke for 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

Jeff Schmidt for Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Herschel Vinyard, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives

Jim Moran, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Ernie Marks, Chair of the Working Group (WG) and Mr. Nick Aumen, Chair of the Science Coordination Group (SCG). She also recognized Commissioner Baush from Sewell's Point, Commissioner George Nugent from the Florida Keys, Mr. Mike Forrester from The Village of Islamorada, Mayor Norman Anderson City of Layton, Ms. Michelle McGovern from Senator Bill Nelson's Office and Mr. Greg Langowski from Senator Marco Rubio's Office. Ms. Shannon Estenoz noted

the meeting was not being webcast but was being recorded and provided some additional administrative instructions.

Mr. Herschel Vinyard thanked Ms. Darcy for her personal involvement in having the Corps re-engage in the C-111 and Kissimmee River projects. Governor Scott has given Mr. Blake Guillory a number of projects and he along with his team are working to get them done. He also announced that the Governor's water quality plan was funded by the Legislature. Ms. Jacobson also thanked Ms. Darcy as well as her colleagues on the Task Force (TF) for their leadership. She thanked the Florida DOT for their \$90 million commitment for the next phase of Tamiami Trail. Mr. Moran thanked everyone who participated in the joint meeting held the prior day. Mr. Guillory thanked Ms. Darcy for moving the C-111 Contract 8 and the Kissimmee River forward.

Meritorious Award

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Bob Pace with a DOI meritorious service award. Mr. Pace spent 33 of his 37 years with the federal government at the FWS with much of that time dedicated to Everglades restoration.

Task Force Vice Chair Nominations and Election

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone that Mr. Greg Munson left and they need to replace him. Mr. Vinyard nominated Mr. Drew Bartlett to serve as Vice Chair which was seconded by Ms. Darcy. Task Force voted in favor with none opposed.

Membership and Leadership of the WG and SCG

Ms. Estenoz noted that Ms. Susan Markley, long time SCG Chair, retired from Miami Dade County. The SCG is recommending the TF appoint Mr. Nick Aumen as Chair and Ms. Susan Gray as Vice Chair. TF voted in favor with none opposed.

Mr. Ernie Marks said they have a small group working on Biscayne Bay issues but there is a gap that needs to be filled and he asked for TF blessing to include someone that is representative of the national interest as well as the county and state issues. Ms. Estenoz added they are looking for TF concurrence to look for one or two people and bring those names back to the TF for official appointment. Ms. Jacobson agreed that representation from Miami Dade County is essential and asked for this to be accomplished before the next formal TF meeting. Ms. Patty Power asked that the structure of the TF charter not be changed and that given what has been going on around the lake it makes sense to add additional local government representation to the WG. Mr. Marks clarified they are not looking to change the Task Force structure and are looking to add representatives to the WG. Ms. Jacobson noted the WG has the capacity for more local representation and asked that some names be provided at the next TF meeting.

Canal Water Quality Restoration in the Florida Keys

Mr. Billy Causey provided some background information on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Protection Act which was co-sponsored by Congressman Dante Fascell and Senator Bob Graham and later signed into law in 1990 by President Bush. It was the largest National Marine Sanctuary designated at the time and the first Congressionally designated sanctuary to have a co-trustee agreement with the state as well as a water quality protection program. He introduced the three speakers who provided a joint presentation (Encl. 7).

Commissioner George Nugent noted the importance of clean water to the economy in the Florida Keys. They have cobbled together projects since 1999 with whatever money they could scrape together and a lot of the burden was placed upon the tax payers. He thanked the Governor and the Legislature for giving them the money needed to complete the wastewater improvements. He reviewed the history of the water quality protection program (WQPP) created to identify corrective actions to protect, maintain and restore water quality in the FKNMS.

Councilman Mike Forrester reviewed the corrective actions and accomplishments such as the implementation of the Wastewater Master Plan and the Stormwater Master Plan. Canal water quality restoration is a high priority given that many canals do not meet the state's minimum water quality criteria and have been identified as impaired waters and must be addressed in accordance with Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act and State rules.

Mr. Gus Rios reported that more than 70% of the areas in the Keys have been connected to advanced wastewater treatment and they are now in the final phase of the upgrade. They are dealing with the residential canals which were built in the 1950s and 1960s. They have about 482 canals in the Keys and the majority of them are not doing well. The Canal Master Plan provides the conceptual framework for prioritizing the canal projects. He reviewed the Demonstration Canal selection process highlighting that only poor water quality canals with the highest priority for restoration were selected as demonstration projects. The County has acquired \$5 million to complete this Demonstration Project. He reviewed the permitting process and issues that have been encountered as well as the schedule to complete the demonstration projects. He asked for assistance from the Corps in streamlining the permitting process. Commissioner George Nugent said they appreciate anything the TF could do to help with the permitting process in order to move the canal restoration projects forward.

Ms. Jacobson said this partnership and achieving clean water in the Keys will benefit DOI assets. She committed to making phone calls to urge the expediting of this process. Mr. Bartlett said he has seen the issues with the canals firsthand and if he were to design something this is exactly what he would do. Mr. Arvin Ganesan agreed

this is an important effort and he appreciated the mention of the grant money for the pre and post water quality monitoring. EPA will continue to work with them. Mr. Guillory commended them for the work going on and encouraged folks to go online and see the work that is ongoing.

Commissioner Nugent recognized the work done by Mr. Steven Blackburn and Mr. John Inglehart. Ms. Estenoz recognized the voices in the Florida Keys in the late 1980s that kicked off Everglades restoration adding that she is proud of Monroe County.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes from the December 2013 meeting were presented. Motion made and seconded and the minutes were approved as presented.

Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)

Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy said CEPP is an important piece of the Everglades puzzle. The Civil Works Review Board (CWRB) will meet on May 23rd and she anticipates a positive review. She recognized all of the people who have worked so hard not only on CEPP but on the C-111 and Kissimmee River. Mr. Guillory echoed Ms. Darcy's comments regarding the people who have worked so hard.

Kim Taplin provided a presentation (Encl. 8) reminding everyone of why they are engaged in Everglades restoration. The proposed plan recommends the vast majority of the remaining area of the Everglades in the central portion of southern Florida and achieves approximately 70% of targeted water levels, durations, flows and seasonal timing of water deliveries needed for restoration in the central Everglades. Increasing water flows to both ENP and Florida Bay and reducing unnatural discharges to the Northern Estuaries on Florida's east and west coast. While this plan does not address all of the adverse effects existing in the south Florida water management system it provides a significant step forward as part of the broader Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) to restore America's Everglades. CERP is a long term endeavor expected to take over 30 years. Because all 68 components of CERP could not be constructed at once it was decided that they would be implemented in groups of projects.

First generation CERP projects have been authorized and are under construction. Second generation projects are awaiting authorization. The first and second generation projects address restoration needs on the eastern and western periphery of the greater Everglades ecosystem. Despite the progress made to date ecological conditions within the central portion of the Everglades continue to decline due to lack of sufficient quantities of freshwater flows, timing and distribution problems. To address this concern the Corps and the SFWMD initiated CEPP in November 2011 as an increment of CERP. The CEPP recommended plan includes portions of six components of the

CERP plan and is a huge leap forward towards achievement of their restoration goals. She provided a virtual tour of the Everglades highlighting some of the alterations made over the past century, existing conditions as well as general features of the recommended plan (Alt 4R2). The plan is estimated to cost \$1.9 billion and will be cost shared with the SFWMD. It will be implemented in phases and the implementation period could range from 6-26 years depending on the funding stream and completion of other CERP and non CERP projects which CEPP is dependent on. The CWRB will reconvene on May 23rd. The final PIR will undergo a 30-day state and agency review and responses and reviews will be prepared as necessary. The Chief of Engineers Report will be finalized and transmitted to Congress for information and to the Administration for review prior to the formal transmittal.

Ms. Jacobson noted this is still the largest ecosystem restoration effort in the world. CEPP effort was enormous and many of Interior's trust resources will be beneficiaries of this effort. She added that Interior is committed to getting this across the finish line. Ms. Power asked when they would start to implement CEPP. Ms. Taplin explained CEPP is broken into three phases: northern; southern and FEBs. To move more water south they need to complete the C-111 South Dade Contract 8 and Tamiami Trail next step bridging which is scheduled for 2020. For the northern end, the A1 FEB is scheduled for completion in 2018 and would be operated for 4-5 years. If it is determined that they are meeting water quality standards, the parties could agree to move forward on the northern pieces of CEPP prior to completion of the restoration strategies. Some of the project dependencies will need to be online before they start moving significant water and that would take them to 2023.

Ms. Jacobson introduced Mr. Shawn Benge, interim Acting Superintendent at Everglades National Park and Mr. Mr. Brian Carlstrom, Superintendent at Biscayne National Park. Mr. Jacobson noted that Mr. Pedro Ramos from Big Cypress National Preserve was on a temporary detail.

Public Comment

Ms. Celeste DePalma (Tropical Audubon Society) said there was not much she could say following Ms. Taplin's flawless presentation on CEPP other than to add that CEPP is incredibly important for the economy and vitality of Florida. She thanked Ms. Darcy for convening the CWRB and asked her to do everything in her power to get CEPP to the finish line.

Ms. Jennifer Hecker (Conservancy of SW Florida) said the Conservancy is very supportive of CEPP which will help restore the Caloosahatchee River, the lifeblood of southwest Florida's economy. The Caloosahatchee is in a state of ecological collapse having lost all of their juvenile oysters last year. They are routinely experiencing cyclical harmful algae blooms that make the river unsafe for use. This creates a negative ripple

effect on tourism, real estate values and quality of life. She urged that every effort be made to expedite CEPP so that it could be included in the current WRDA.

Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) said the Sierra Club is extremely disappointed with the actions of the CWRB. CEPP will benefit the entire economy and it is essential they make this happen.

Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (Everglades Foundation) recognized the outstanding job done by the Corps and SFWMD teams to turn planning on its head. She said she was hopeful they could get to a Chief's Report by the end of July. They have set a new bar for Everglades restoration and the public will not go back to seven year planning horizons.

Ms. Sarah deFlesco (Clean Water Action) said her organization representing nearly 1 million members nationwide is extremely disappointed with the failure of the CWRB to approve CEPP. The delay is inexcusable and comes at the risk of the economy, public health and environment. The delay has jeopardized the progress made and risked the federal funding for CEPP. She urged the CWRB to approve CEPP and prevent further delays.

Ms. Caroline McLaughlin (NPCA) said that CEPP is one of the highest priorities for her organization because it is critical to Everglades restoration. They were disappointed with the delay in the approval but are enthusiastic about the decision by the CWRB to reconvene. NPCA suggests the review process be shortened to make up the time that has been lost. They hope that the spirit of collaboration and cooperation they have seen in the resolution of long standing issues such as the Kissimmee and C-111 projects will continue with swift approval of CEPP.

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon) reminded everyone that CEPP is about restoring life in the Everglades. They are relieved the CWRB will be meeting again and the negotiations on KRR and south Dade are coming to a close. They still have the opportunity to make CEPP a great example of how to expedite projects.

Ms. Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center) joined everyone in also supporting CEPP. She noted how thorough Ms. Taplin's presentation was in articulating the problem and why they need to move forward. The unprecedented level of support for CEPP is reflective of the inclusive planning process and she urged it be moved forward as soon as possible.

Mr. John Arthur Marshall (Arthur R Marshall Foundation) said the Corps deserves kudos for what they have done in streamlining their process. Time is money and they need to continue streamlining before they have more regression that is not recoverable.

Ms. Michelle McGovern (Sen Bill Nelson's office) on behalf of Senator Nelson stated that he supports getting CEPP done. It is the missing link of restoration and they need to keep the CERP projects going and focus on results. They should not lose sight of the foundation projects and finishing the Kissimmee. They should stick together even if they don't always agree since there are plenty of other places in the US that would love to take the federal dollars.

Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation Natural Areas and adjacent portions of the Big Cypress

Ms. Patty Power noted the Tribe commented on CEPP early on when it realized there was an opportunity to move water through Big Cypress. They were told it was impossible because of the lack of information. That encouraged them to move forward on this effort and the Tribe appreciates the attention on behalf of the Corps, SFWMD, EPA and Interior. One of the issues they have been looking at is the operation of the S-190 structure which controls water leaving the Reservation through the L-28 Canal. The Corps has planned a study of that structure and has secured partial funding and assured them that the rest of the funding will be coming in FY15. The Tribe, working with EPA, completed a desk top surface-water/groundwater interaction study that confirmed they are lacking some critical data. Data is needed to determine exactly what is going on as well as to be able to create a model that will predict what might happen if things are changed around. Another team meeting is scheduled on May 21st and they will discuss some additional efforts to help fill the data gaps.

Mr. James Erskine, as far as the data gaps, asked if they have identified agencies or resources to fill those data gaps adding there are a lot of data gaps in that entire region. Ms. Power said the short answer is no. The SFWMD is working on the C-139 Basin meeting and more work in that area will help fill it in. One of the goals of this group is to have a clear view of what data they have, what the gaps are and help fill it. The biggest problem is finding the money. Ms. Estenoz added it is hard to build models if they don't have the data. The group is trying to focus on solutions they can move on with existing data and resources.

Mr. Ernie Marks agreed they are looking for things they can do now with what they know and they are working to determine what the targets are. Ms. Gail Mitchell said EPA has been an active participant of the group and was able to provide some funding for the surface-water/groundwater interaction study. She suggested it may be good if the TF give the subgroup the charge to come back to the TF with some recommendations. Ms. Jacobson asked the group to come up with some recommendations based on existing data as well as some longer term goals of how they might fill future data gaps. She asked for the subgroup to come to the next TF meeting with some concrete suggestions for next steps.

Miccosukee Restoration Priorities

Mr. Erskine reported that Congressmen Alcee Hastings, Joe Garcia and Mario Diaz Balart held the Everglades Caucus on the Miccosukee Reservation to hear how the L-28 canal system has impacted the Tribal lands, Tribal way of life and Federal Reservation lands. The L-28 canal system discharges in an area that has been deemed by the Clean Water Act standards as outstanding Miccosukee waters that requires the highest level of protection they can provide. They have documented significant impact to the area where that canal discharges and terminates over the past several years. Prior to the introduction of the canal this entire area was a ridge and slough mosaic where the Tribe would have cultural activities, collect medicinal plants, and have hunting activities. The Everglades Caucus supports the water quality of the L-28 canal system be addressed and signed a letter on April 16th urging solutions and progress in addressing this water quality problem. The Tribe asks the federal agencies on the TF to utilize their trust responsibility and the state agencies to build their trust relationship and that the TF urge solutions that address the impacts and make the solutions a priority.

Mr. Marks thanked Mr. Erskine, the Chairman and the Tribal Council for inviting DEP to attend that meeting and said it was very enlightening to hear the issues directly from the Tribal members and have everyone discuss the path forward for a solution. Water quality and quantity are intertwined and he hoped they could make progress. Mr. Guillory also thanked the Tribe for inviting the SFWMD. After the meeting, the team from the SFWMD flew up from the discharge point and it is clear that it needs their attention. The SFWMD is working with FDACS, the Corps and others to move this forward and make it a priority. Ms. Jacobson, under the convening authority of this TF offered to bring the right people to the table to talk about the L-28 issues as well as what may be appropriate for next steps. Ms. Estenoz offered to have her office (OERI) host those meetings.

Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework

Ms. Estenoz reported the draft Framework will be vetted through WG and SCG and brought to the next TF meeting. Ms. Allyn Childress provided a presentation and reviewed the team's activities to date in response to the TF direction. They have held five interagency meetings and are developing the Strategic Action Framework (printable and web based) as well as the suite of case studies. They have also initiated the process to update the Task Force's Strategy to better address invasive exotic species. She reviewed the invasion curve which is used as an organizing tool as well as the Goals and Objectives that have been developed. Ms. Estenoz added the team will be prioritizing the action items and bringing them to the TF at a future meeting.

Mr. Nick Aumen said this has been a great effort and although folks at the ground level are interacting well on an ad hoc basis this will help them do it better. Mr. Causey said

they have now developed a management plan for the Lionfish and it has many of the elements mentioned in the presentation.

Reporting and Other Requirements

Strategy and Biennial Report

Ms. Carrie Beeler reminded everyone that the Strategy and Biennial Report are mandated by Congress. Strategy outlines how they do restoration and the Biennial Report shows what progress has been made. The System-wide Ecological Indicators tell them how the system responds to the progress made. The Integrated Financial Plan (IFP) is also mandated by Congress and has more than 200 detailed project sheets. Changes to the Strategy includes revisions to Sub-goal 2B and its objectives and the addition of Sub-goal 3D and objectives in order to reflect the work they are doing on invasive exotic species. The proposed language was vetted through the Invasive Species Team as well as the WG and SCG. The timeline was reviewed and noted that the TF will be asked to approve the Strategy and Biennial Report at its Oct/Nov TF meeting. Ms. Beeler asked the Task Force to approve the recommended changes to the Strategy and Biennial Report at this meeting to reflect the work being done by the Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework.

Ms. Jacobson agreed with the recommendation that this TF approve the changes. Mr. Bartlett made a motion to approve the recommended changes which was seconded. Motion passed without objection.

General Public Comment

Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) said that if they believe in climate change this restoration process is the way to go to help protect Florida. For those who don't believe in climate change, this is about economics, it protects south Florida's economy which depends tremendously on tourism and their ability to protect the Everglades.

Ms. Jennifer Hecker (Conservancy of SW Florida) called the TF's attention to a grave new threat in the western Everglades, inappropriate drilling and fracking activities. While there has been limited drilling for decades in the region they are now seeing a surge of activity for large scale horizontal drilling and fracking in Collier, Lee and Hendry counties. Just one of these drill wells uses 5 million gallons of water per month causing a drawdown to wetland water levels. Another permit just issued was for explosive charges to be set 50-200 feet deep across 103,000 acres of land immediately north of the Big Cypress Preserve. Cumulatively these impacts encompass hundreds of thousands of acres threatening water and wildlife in and around the western Everglades. The Conservancy urges this TF to take this issue up at the next meeting and would be happy to offer a non-governmental perspective, if interested.

Mr. John Marshall (Arthur R Marshall Foundation) said they have found that when they plant native species in sufficient density it prevents exotics from coming back and suggested they have more replacement in addition to removal of invasive species in the Everglades.

Ms. Julie Hill-Gabriel said it was great to see the presentations on water quality in the western Everglades as well as invasive species. They have to keep their eye on the next issue and she was glad to see this group is helping to do just that.

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Ms. Jacobson thanked everyone for attending. The meeting adjourned at 11:53am.

Handouts and Presentations:

1. Joint Agenda
2. Membership Rosters
 - a. Task Force
 - b. WRAC
3. Howie's presentation
4. USDA comments (read by Jeff Schmidt)
5. Presentation
6. Presentation
7. Regular TF Agenda
8. Draft Meeting Minutes
9. Residential Canal Restoration presentation
10. CEPP presentation
11. Miccosukee Restoration priorities & L-28 Canal System presentation
12. Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework presentation
13. Strategy and Biennial Report presentation