

Draft Minutes
Joint Meeting Working Group and Science Coordination Group
West Palm Beach, Florida
October 23, 2014

Welcome and Introductions

Ernie Marks called meeting to order at 10:00AM and reminded everyone the meeting was being webcast. The agenda (Encl. 1a) and draft minutes (Encl. 1b) were provided. Nick Aumen reminded everyone of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (GEER) Conference scheduled April 21 – 23, 2015. Additional information is available at: <http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/GEER2015/>

Shannon Estenoz recognized Sandy Soto for 25 years of federal government service. Ernie Marks recognized Chuck Collins (not present), Regional Director for the FWC and member of the WG who will be retiring. Ernie announced that his last day with DEP is Oct 31st and he will be trying to fill Chuck Collin’s large shoes. He introduced Ed Smith who will replace him as Director of Ecosystem Projects at DEP.

In Attendance:	Oct 23	
Working Group (WG) Members		Alternates
Ernie Marks – Chair – FL Dept. of Environmental Protection	√	
Barry Rosen – Vice Chair - United States Geological Survey	√	
Billy Causey – NOAA, FL Keys Nat’l Marine Sanctuary	-	
Chuck Collins – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	-	
COL Alan Dodd - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	-	Howie Gonzales
Rory Feeney - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	-	
Roman Gastesi – Local Government	-	
Veronica Harrell-James – U.S. Attorney’s Office	-	
Eric Hughes – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	√	
Bob Krumenaker – NPS, ENP & Dry Tortugas National Parks	-	Bob Johnson
Cherise Maples – Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Russell Morgan - U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, NRCS	-	
Keith Neves - Bureau of Indian Affairs	-	
Fred Noble - FL Dept. of Transportation	-	
Bonnie Ponwith – NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	
W. Ray Scott - FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services	√	
Tom Teets - South Florida Water Management District	√	
Larry Williams – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	-	Bob Progulske
Vacant – Office of the Governor of Florida	-	
Vacant – Local Government	-	
Vacant – U.S. Department of Transportation	-	
Shannon Estenoz - Special Advisor	√	
Science Coordination Group (SCG) Members		

Nick Aumen – Chair – United States Geological Survey	√	
Susan Gray – Vice Chair - South Florida Water Management	-	
John Baldwin – Florida Atlantic University	-	
Lisa Beever – Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program	√	
Joan Browder - NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	
Amy Casteneda - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	-	
Chris Kelble - NOAA, AOML	-	
Chad Kennedy - FL Dept. of Environmental Protection	√	
Cherise Maples - Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Gil McRae – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Comm.	-	
Bob Progulske – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	
Gina Ralph - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	√	
Bill Reck - U.S. Department of Agriculture – NRCS	-	
Dave Rudnick – Everglades National Park, NPS	√	
Dan Scheidt – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	-	
Amber Whittle Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Comm	-	
Vacant – Local Government	-	
Vacant - U.S. Department of Agriculture, ARS	-	

Eric Hughes reported EPA Region 4 was able to successfully conduct the Everglades REMAP effort which included 125 stations from Loxahatchee NWR to the southern regions of ENP. He recognized FIU and several partner agencies for their assistance. Barry Rosen noted there will be another flow event on the DECOMP Physical Model. USGS along with the Corps, FIU and the University of Hawaii will be out measuring flow for the next 2 months. Bob Progulske introduced Tim Green and Marla Hamilton, new employees with FWS. Tom Teets provided a quick update on Restoration Strategies noting the L-8 and A-1 flow equalization basin construction is moving along. Lisa Beever reported they are seeing C-43 show up on many priority lists for RESTORE Act funding through the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. They are also seeing several different projects that were cited in the SW Florida Comprehensive Watershed Plan (the old Feasibility Study) and many of those priorities are going forward for consideration under the RESTORE Act funding.

Bob Progulske added there have been many data calls for RESTORE Act funding and they within the FWS as well as the NPS have inserted some of the CERP projects. There is a possibility that the RESTORE Act funding associated with the BP Oil Spill could fund some Everglades restoration projects. The footprint for that funding goes all the way up to Iowa because of the effects on the Mississippi River and wetland issues in Iowa.

Update on EvergladesRestoration.gov

Shannon Estenoz provided an update on the new website noting they are still in the process of converting pages from two existing websites. Her office along with the Corps

and students from Braddock High School in Miami are working to bring this web presence into the 21st Century. A live demo of the website was provided. The website will be officially unveiled at the November Task Force meeting and the Braddock High students will be recognized at that meeting as well.

Membership Discussion

Shannon noted this issue was initially raised after Susan Markley retired since Susan had been the voice of Biscayne Bay and Miami Dade County. At the last WG and SCG meeting they held a discussion and asked for nominations. The Chairs received names and narrowed the list to three individuals: Brian Carlstrom, Superintendent of Biscayne National Park; Deb Drum, Manager Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division, Martin County; and Rob Robbins, Director, Environmental Resources Management, Palm Beach County. Brian Carlstrom is not considered a local gov't representative and would provide the Biscayne Bay perspective. Commissioner Pepe Diaz and Mayor Kevin Ruane, as Task Force members, will appoint their WG and SCG members so they will be getting that Miami-Dade and west coast voices. This first slate of names represents a good balance and these names will be elevated to the Task Force at the November meeting.

Ernie Marks agreed they should move forward with these folks and elevate them to the Task Force. Nick Aumen noted that prior to working for Palm Beach County, Rob Robbins worked at the SFWMD. Chad Kennedy said that he also knows Deb Drum who worked at the SFWMD for some time. Martin County has been a champion for Lake Okeechobee and organized the nine county Coalition which handles the administrative activities associated with Lake Okeechobee. Ernie Marks agreed Deb Drum has some great experience and she is excited about the opportunity. Ernie Marks noted these names would be brought forward to the Task Force at the November meeting.

Corps Program and Project Update

Howie Gonzales reminded the members of the Picayune Strand – Merritt Pump Station Ribbon Cutting ceremony the following day. He provided a presentation (Encl. 2) reviewing the status of three of the foundation projects (Kissimmee River Restoration, Modified Water Deliveries to ENP and C-111 South Dade) as well as the status of implementation of CERP (first and second generation projects). Tom Teets added that the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Pilot Project Pump Test just started on Oct 15th and the goal is to see what benefits they get and use that as a design test.

On the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), the comment period closed on October 3rd and the comments are under review. Final Chief's Report is expected in the Dec/Jan timeframe. The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration is a new planning effort they will be initiating. The Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) is the

comprehensive sequencing and scheduling of construction projects in the south Florida ecosystem restoration program that incorporates both federal and state initiatives. It allows the implementing agencies to provide guidance to decision-makers for scheduling, staffing and budgeting. It is a living document that will be updated to reflect major program changes. The last IDS is almost four years old and they anticipate an effort to engage a group like the WG and SCG to look at what the next phase of the IDS will look like. IDS effort will be started and completed in 2015.

Ernie Marks said that if the IDS becomes a public process they need to be clear about some of the mandates and issues that will affect how they develop the IDS. Shannon agreed that their constraints need to be part of the IDS conversation. Tom Teets emphasized the importance of getting agreement and being able to move forward on both Kissimmee and south Dade which keeps the ball moving for restoration. The SFWMD will continue to work closely with the Corps and the Congressional delegation to make sure the Corps has adequate funding to complete these projects. Contract 8 is the missing piece that will resolve a lot of the issues out there now. On the IDS, they have learned a lot and there are a lot more moving parts and mandates and it will be good to take some time to educate everyone on how it influences what is done and when. Shannon Estenoz agreed that Contract 8 is the lynchpin and they need to get that project constructed. She also gave kudos to the team working on the MWD Ops Plan who has been working on incredibly difficult issues.

CERP 2015 Report to Congress (RTC)

Natalie Garrett provided a presentation (Encl. 3) which explained that the RTC is an update on CERP implementation required by WRDA 2000 and the Programmatic Regulations. It will be jointly submitted by the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with EPA, Commerce, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, FDEP, SFWMD and other federal, state and local agencies and the Task Force. It is submitted every five years and the last report was done in 2010. This report will include accomplishments over the past five years from 2010 to mid-2015. RTC shows the funds that were expended for fiscal year 2010 through 2014 and the progress made on south Florida ecosystem restoration. Report will also include work that is anticipated over the next five-year period, it will update estimates of total cost of the Plan and individual projects as well as look to the future in terms of project expectations, land needs, science and funding needs for the next five years. They are currently in the process of identifying key agencies/persons to prepare sections of the draft report and the hope is to have a first draft by January 2015. It will then go out for agency review followed by Task Force and Tribal consultation. They have an aggressive schedule and hope to have it completed and in to Congress by the due date (October 2015). She noted this report has been done twice before and this is

an opportunity to highlight their accomplishments, new science and let everyone know how the restoration is going.

Shannon Estenoz asked the members to be responsive in writing the drafts and asked Sandy Soto to work with Natalie in scheduling consultation with the TF. She also suggested that they think about how the report will be briefed once it is done. Natalie noted that the last time they prepared 50 hard copies for congressional folks and she is working on the list to identify who will receive the report. Dennis Duke added that some of the staffers will read every page of that report and it is a very important document. Shannon suggested making the report available electronically.

Invasive Exotic Species

Strategic Action Framework

Shannon Estenoz noted the Framework was reviewed at the last meeting and comments received have been incorporated. The team was asked to prioritize the 31 strategies for invasive species and they selected 11 strategies they felt warranted additional effort and focus. The team then conducted a gap analysis on 200 projects that are currently being done to determine what work is being done and what is missing and turn that analysis into an Action Plan. The goal is for the group to accept the Framework and recommend it to the TF for consideration. Carrie Beeler provided a presentation (Encl. 4a) reviewing the Task Force direction, accomplishments to date and the four goals. She reviewed the changes that have been incorporated into the 2nd draft of the Framework (Encl. 4b). Next steps include conducting a final QA/QC of the Framework and then presenting it to the TF.

Action Plan

The team met on October 2nd and created a prioritized action list. Eleven priority strategies were chosen to be considered as a basis for action. Action Plan (Encl. 4c) is intended to be a 'living' piece of the Framework and will continue to evolve and change as needed. Comments are due by Oct 30th. Action Plan will be presented to the TF for direction.

Web Portal

Live demo of the web portal found at www.EvergladesRestoration.gov was provided.

Shannon Estenoz noted that once the TF accepts the Framework, they are proposing a two-step process of: going to individual agencies and others to brief the document to the leadership at the Executive level; and then ask the TF to convene an Executive Leadership level meeting to talk about the Action Plan, gaps analysis, to talk about how much of the plan could and should be implemented and also discuss resource gaps.

Ernie Marks said it was a good approach and encouraged the members to brief their leadership on what has been developed. He is sure there will be questions as to

resource allocation once the TF has been briefed and the Executive level/decision-makers is the best way to do that. Shannon Estenoz noted the agencies have been provided with an outline for the Cross Cut Budget and they expect to have that done in the Jan/Feb 2015 timeframe.

Public Comment

Martha Musgrove (Florida Wildlife Federation) noted she has been reading a lot of action plans and finds there is very little “action” in the plans. To have an action plan they need to put in the metrics with some idea of what percent can be achieved in x number of years otherwise it is a long list of monitoring and sends the wrong political signal. It says they are putting a lot of money into something they are doing over and over again. There are no specific ties between what is being done and the goal. Budgeters like to see a goal or a portion of a goal achieved. As an example, she said she believed Goal 1 should be the rapid response to the introduction of invasive exotics and it is actually found in goal 2b1.

Shannon Estenoz explained they are following the invasion curve which is a tool used by invasive species professionals all over the world. On the invasion curve, the first line of defense is prevention once it gets here then the attention is on early detection and rapid response (EDRR) which is why it is Goal 2. The vast majority of the eleven strategies chosen are in the EDRR category. Our experts agree that those strategies are the place where they need to focus a tremendous amount of attention. The leadership team will now have to determine how this gets implemented. Ernie Marks asked Martha to follow-up with Carrie Beeler on her suggested edits.

Public Comment

Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) said she was pleased to see the discussion on additional local government representatives. She reminded everyone that nothing attracts success like success and encouraged them to celebrate the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony the following day. She recognized the hard work of the folks putting together the combined operations plan. Now that they are moving into figuring out how to operate projects they need to keep the focus on those things that will get them the best results for the Everglades. On the invasive species issue, it seems the Everglades is at the forefront and they need to be more proactive. Climates will become more accommodating to species that are not there today and they support the work that is ongoing.

Approval of Minutes

Draft minutes from the September meeting presented. Motion made and seconded to approve.

2014 Task Force Strategy and Biennial Report

Marsha Bansee provided a presentation (Encl. 5) reminding everyone of the purpose of the Strategy, Biennial Report and System-wide Indicators reports. She reviewed the schedule and asked for member acceptance to forward the report to the TF for approval. Shannon Estenoz added they will get the report up to OMB for review before the budget cycle begins. Bob Progulske made a motion to approve and forward the report to the TF which was seconded and passed.

Manatee Recovery Update

Bob Progulske provided a presentation (Encl. 6) on the manatee recovery efforts. The manatee was originally listed in 1967 before the current Endangered Species Act (ESA) was in place and it was grandfathered in as endangered in 1973. He reviewed the population estimates, manatee protections under various authorities as well as the current range of the Florida manatee and Antillean manatee which are a subspecies of the West Indian manatee. The FWS received a petition from the Pacific Legal Foundation asking that the West Indian manatee, including the Florida and Antillean subspecies, be down listed from endangered to threatened. The FWS' 90-day finding determined that the need for action is justified and they are now working through a 12-month finding which is a more comprehensive review. They have received 49,000 comments and a decision will be announced in the spring. FWS is working with other partners including FWC, USGS and Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources.

The FWS is required to complete a 5-year review of every listed species and determine whether it is warranted for any change in its status. In April 2007, the FWS completed a 5-year review of the West Indian manatee and recommended that it be down listed from endangered to threatened. They had a lot of manatee deaths last year so they did not move forward with that down listing but they do have to address the petition. If the manatee is completely delisted manatees would no longer have ESA protections but will remain highly protected under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA). There is a delisting monitoring plan that occurs for five years before delisting can actually happen.

Dave Rudnick added that although the manatee is not a constraint for Everglades restoration it certainly should benefit from restoration. Gina Ralph noted the manatee mitigation feature at the Picayune Strand restoration project is going to have a beneficial effect on manatees. Bob Progulske added that FWS in concert with the SFWMD and Corps and have developed a monitoring plan for the next 10 years for that manatee mitigation feature. Everglades restoration will benefit the manatee if it comes to pass as they have it planned and manatees are not causing a lot of impediments to the implementation of the Everglades restoration program.

Public Comment

None

Next Steps and Closing Comments

Ernie Marks thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting at 1:05PM.

Enclosures:

1. Administrative Items
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Minutes, Sep 2014 meeting
2. Corps Program and Project Update presentation
3. CERP 2015 Report to Congress presentation
4. Invasive Species
 - a. Power Point presentation
 - b. 2nd Draft Strategic Action Framework
 - c. Action Plan
5. 2014 Task Force Strategy and Biennial Report
6. Manatee Recovery Update presentation