



SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE



LEADERSHIP • PARTNERSHIP • RESULTS

Working Group/Science Coordination Group Priorities - Proposed Workplan

Allyn Childress, OERI

EVERGLADESRESTORATION.GOV

Working Group/Science Coordination Group (WG/SCG) Priorities

- The WG/SCG November 28, 2018 meeting included a brainstorming session on priorities.
- The results were subsequently assessed by the Chairs, Vice Chairs, and the Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI).
- This initial list was distilled into a set of draft priorities that was presented to the Task Force at their April 26, 2019 meeting.
- Following are proposed work plans for these priority items.
- Progress reports on all items will be provided to the Task Force at their October 2019 meeting.

Draft Priorities

- System-wide Ecological Indicators
- Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework
- Florida Bay
- Communications Coordination/Web-based Briefing Tool
- Reporting Efficiencies
- Task Force Strategy

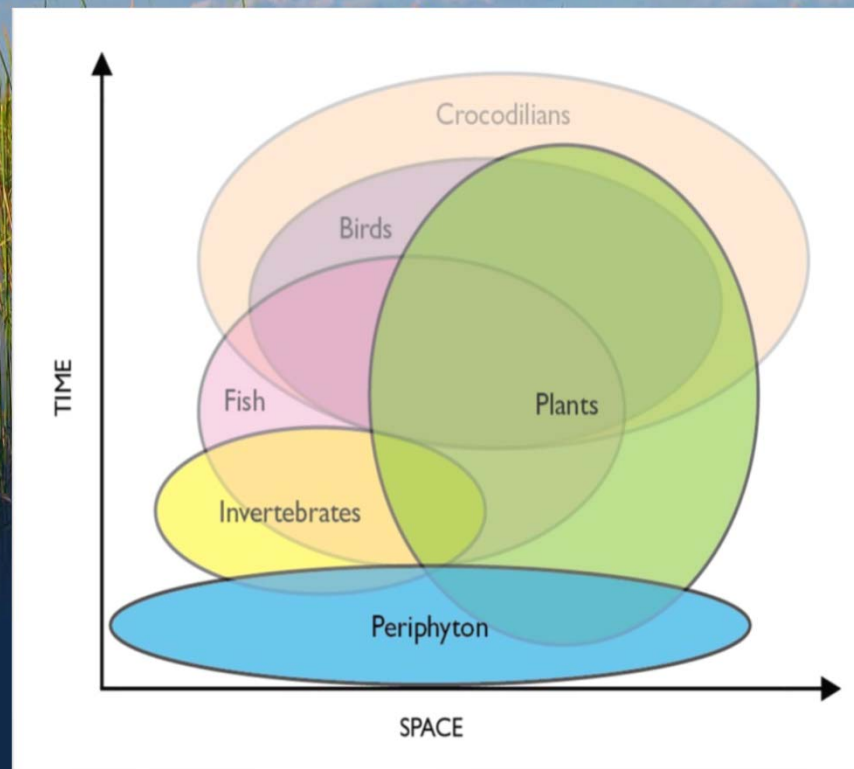
System-wide Ecological Indicators

- **Issue:** Interest in assessing the current suite of indicators to determine whether they are still appropriate, have sufficient data, cover the right geographic area, are able to detect trends, etc.
- **Proposal:** Series of SCG-sponsored workshops to review/update the system-wide ecological indicators.

System-wide Ecological Indicators

- The current suite of indicators were chosen based upon their collective ability to comprehensively reflect ecosystem response in terms of space and time:

- Invasive Exotic Plants
- Lake Okeechobee Nearshore Zone Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
- Eastern Oysters
- Crocodilians (American Alligators and Crocodiles)
- Fish & Macroinvertebrates
- Periphyton



- Wading Birds (White Ibis & Wood Stork)
- Southern Coastal Systems Phytoplankton Blooms
- Florida Bay Submersed Aquatic Vegetation
- Juvenile Pink Shrimp
- Wading Birds (Roseate Spoonbill)

System-wide Ecological Indicators

Table 2. Restoration Indicator Guidelines developed by South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, Science Coordination Group (SCG)

<i>Ecological Indicator Guidelines</i>	<i>Restoration Compatibility Guidelines</i>
1. Is the indicator relevant to the ecosystem and does it respond to variability at a scale that makes it applicable to the entire system or a large or important portion of it?	1. Does the indicator provide a measure of compatibility of the built system with ecological restoration?
2. Is the indicator feasible to implement (is someone collecting data already)?	2. Is the indicator feasible to implement (is someone collecting data already)?
0. Is the indicator sensitive to system drivers?	3. Is the indicator sensitive to system drivers (stressors, operations of water management)?
4. Is the indicator interpretable in a common language?	4. Is the indicator interpretable in a common language?
5. Are there situations where even an "optimistic" trend with regard to the indicator might suggest a "pessimistic" restoration trend?	5. Is the indicator scientifically defensible?
6. Are there situations where a "pessimistic" trend with regard to the indicator may be unrelated to restoration activities?	6. Are clear measurable targets established for the indicator to allow for assessments of success of effects of management actions and operations on ecological restoration?
7. Is the indicator scientifically defensible?	7. Does the indicator have specificity? Does it indicate a feature specific enough to result in management action or corrective action?
8. Are clear, measurable targets established for the indicator to allow for assessments of success of ecological restoration and effects of management actions?	
9. Does the indicator have specificity? Does it indicate a feature specific enough to result in management action or corrective action?	
1. What level of ecosystem process or structure does the indicator address?	

System-wide Ecological Indicators

Technical questions to consider for the re-evaluation of the indicators include:

- Are these still the most appropriate indicators?
- Do we have sufficient data?
- Are they sensitive to hydrology?
- Can we detect trends?
- Can we separate natural variability from trends due to restoration actions?
- What are the gaps? (i.e trophic levels)
- Do we expand beyond organisms to include other measures such as landscape patterns?
- Do we need to re-define or re-confirm the geographic scope for revised indicators?
- Do we have the necessary ecological models? Are they still appropriate?
- Can we assess the influence of sea level rise and/or changes in climate?

System-wide Ecological Indicators

Prior to initiating an assessment of the appropriateness of the current indicators, need to ask the WG and Task Force the following questions:

- What are the Task Force and Working Group getting out of the reporting on the ecological indicators?
- What is not needed and what is missing?
- How is this information used? Who are the point of contacts to ask?
- How does the TF and WG want to use this information?
- How can this information be used to further restoration?
- Reporting every 2 years is tied to the Task Force bi-annual strategy document, but do the indicators show change that can be attributed to restoration actions at this frequency? If not, can we modify the frequency of reporting?
- Identification of additional resources are estimated to required approximately 5-6 **additional** participants to coordinate, organize and conduct this effort at 25% of their time over two years
- Will also need the participation of the subject matter experts , which may preclude other activities they are doing

System-wide Ecological Indicators

Other considerations include the following:

- Need to have a process that includes the PIs, stakeholders
- Task Force indicators need to be broader than CERP. i.e. addition of exotics indicator
- What is the expected schedule and deadline to complete the re-evaluation?
- Coordination between project and system wide monitoring (CISRERP)
- Temporal and spatial scale; why don't we use the same approach (i.e. GERTS panels) but modified at the appropriate scale to distinguish between project and system-wide effects (CISRERP)

System-wide Ecological Indicators

- **Today:**

- Obtain commitment from member agencies to provide staff/resources to support the effort.

- **Next steps:**

- Conduct kickoff workshop in Late Fall 2019.

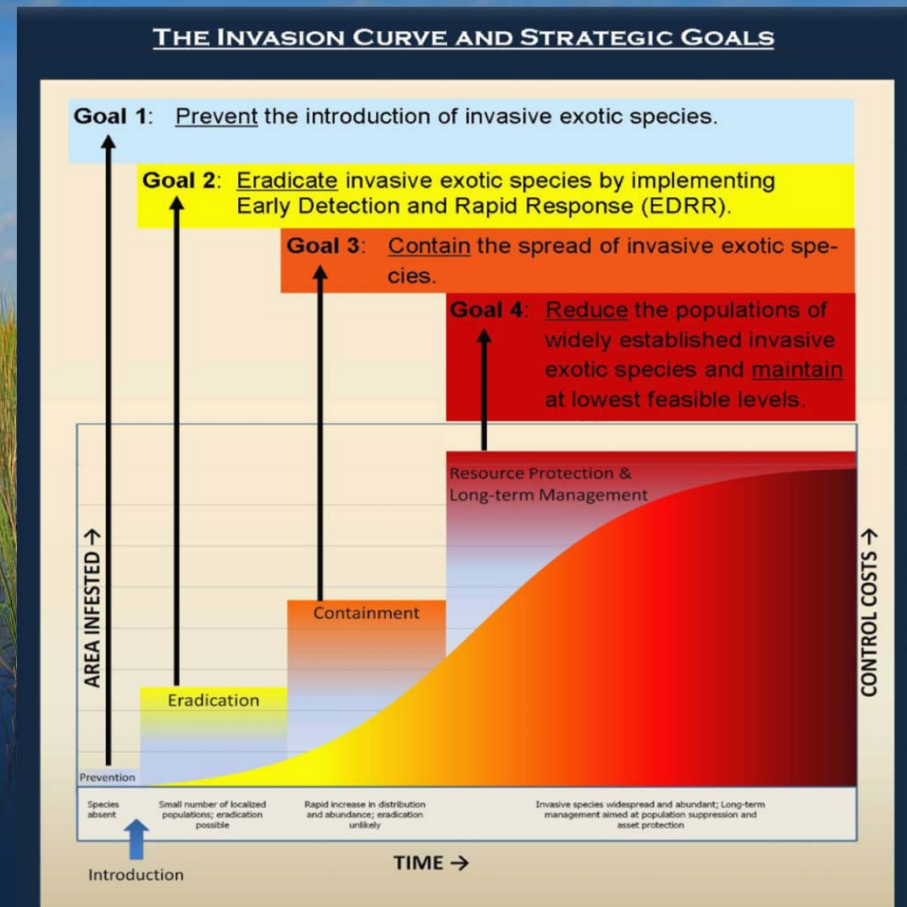
- Identify participants.
- Develop workshop agenda.
- Discuss purpose, audience, timeframe, and other aspects of the indicator report.

Invasive Exotic Species

- **Issue:** There are many new efforts underway since the Framework was first developed.
- **Proposal:** Conduct series of WG-sponsored workshops to discuss updates to the document as well as to the web-based Framework.

Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework

- Core document with goals based on the 4 phases of the invasion curve.
- Case Studies for each phase.
- Preliminary Action Assessment that prioritized specific strategies and actions.



Invasive Exotic Species

- **Today:**

- Obtain commitment from member agencies to provide staff/resources to support the effort.

- **Next Steps:**

- Conduct kickoff workshop in Early Fall 2019.
 - Identify participants.
 - Develop workshop agenda.
 - Discuss updates/edits to the existing document, identify new case studies, and review priority actions.

Florida Bay

- **Issue:** Interest in looking at the influence of groundwater on Florida Bay.
- **Proposal:** SCG participation in looking at the bay's "water budget."

Florida Bay

- **Today:**

- Overview of the Groundwater Exchange Monitoring and Modeling (GEMM) Plan.
- Overview of upcoming SFWMD-sponsored meeting to review the GEMM Plan and gather/review existing groundwater knowledge.

- **Next Steps:**

- Determine future SCG-related efforts.

Communication Coordination

- **Issue:** Interest in better coordination of communications efforts on restoration.
- **Proposal:** OERI to work with members to enhance the web-based briefing tool currently on EvergladesRestoration.gov.

Communication Coordination

- **Today:**
 - Presentation of existing briefing tool.
- **Next Steps:**
 - OERI to reach out to members for new/updated information (via email).

Reporting Efficiencies

- **Issue:** Interest in assessing if there is a way to improve reporting efficiencies for the various reporting requirements.
- **Proposal:** OERI to discuss possibilities with member agencies.
- **Example:** Review of the system-wide ecological indicators may provide improved timing, coordination, and consistency of indicator reports.

Task Force Reports

- **The Strategy** (As needed; 2016)
 - Responds to Congressional direction (House Conference Report 106-479) to outline how the restoration effort will occur and identify resources needed; organized by three strategic goals.
- **Biennial Report** (Every two years; 2018)
 - Fulfills requirements of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996 to report biennially on:
 - the activities of the Task Force;
 - the policies, strategies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and priorities planned, developed, or implemented for the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem; and
 - progress made toward the restoration.

Task Force Reports

- **Integrated Financial Plan (IFP) (Annual; 2018)**
 - Fulfills requirements of WRDA 1996.
 - Contains detailed project sheets.
- **Cross-cut Budget (Annual; 2019)**
 - Fulfills requirements of WRDA 1996 regarding coordinated budget requests for the funds proposed to be expended by agencies and entities represented on the Task Force for the restoration, preservation, and protection of the South Florida Ecosystem.

Example Agency Reports

- **South Florida Environmental Report (SFWMD; annual; 2019)**
 - Consolidates multiple required reports into one annual report and associated project database.
- **System Status Report (RECOVER; every 5 years; 2019)**
 - Evaluation of systemwide performance measures and their targets.
 - Provides input for the CERP Report to Congress.
 - New this year: associated Everglades Report Card (2017).
- **CERP Report to Congress (USACE and DOI; every 5 years; 2015)**
 - Required by WRDA 2000.
 - In consultation with partner agencies, tribes, and Task Force.

Reporting Efficiencies

- **Today:**
 - Brief overview of the Task Force's reporting requirements.
- **Next Steps:**
 - OERI to reach out to members with similar reporting requirements to look for efficiencies (via email).

Task Force Strategy

- **Issue:** Interest in improving restoration communications by trying to “humanize and localize” restoration efforts.
- **Proposal:** OERI staff to work with membership to highlight results by strategic goal along those lines.
- **NOTE:** NOT to be an intensive report-focused work effort or constrained by reporting timelines.

Task Force Strategy

- The Strategy had been combined with the Task Force's Biennial Report.
- To simplify reporting requirements, the Biennial Report now reports restoration progress by program area instead of by strategic goal.
- However, expressing progress by goal area may help a broader audience connect to the restoration effort.

Strategic Goals

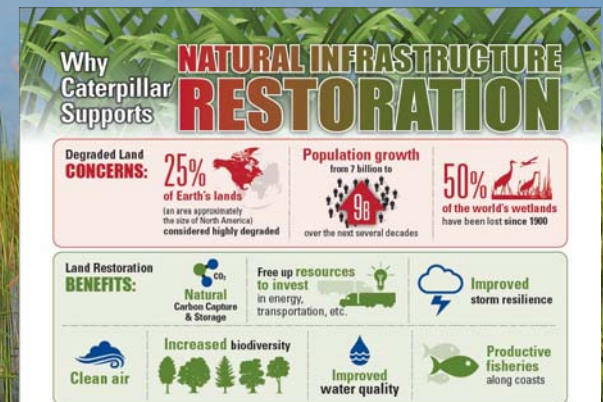
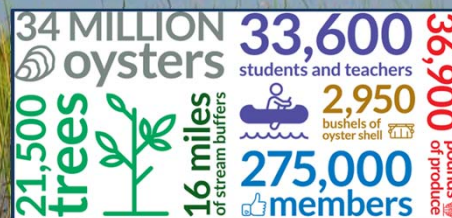
Goal 1: Get the water right.

Goal 2: Restore, preserve, and protect natural habitats and species.

Goal 3: Foster the compatibility of the built and natural systems.

Task Force Strategy

- Develop infographics and web-based highlights that recognize that Everglades restoration is:
 - More than CERP (3 goals),
 - A successful interagency partnership, and
 - Providing benefits to residents and visitors in addition to habitats and species.



Task Force Strategy

- **Today:**
 - Discussion of possible end products and uses/users.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Call for information from members (via email).

Schedule

- Summer 2019
 - Identify participants for IES and Indicator workshops
 - Provide input for communications pieces (Briefing Tool and Strategy)
- Early Fall 2019
 - IES workshop
- Late Fall 2019
 - Indicators workshop
- October 2019 – Progress update to Task Force



QUESTIONS?