

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

**2023 INTEGRATED DELIVERY SCHEDULE  
WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

Hybrid Meeting: In-Person at the SFWMD and Virtual Access via ZOOM

September 6, 2023  
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

**Workshop Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDq-JavqJss>

**Attendees:**

Anteneh Abiy	Adam Gelber	Melodie Naja
Caryl Alarcon	Lawrence Glenn	Fernando Navarrete
Becky Allenbach	Danette Goss	Caitlin Newcamp
Lee Angelelli	Charles Grande	Sue Newman
Michele Arquette-Palermo	Rachel Gray	Susan Noel
Kiren Bahm	Chris Guth	Roland Ottolini
Bill Baker	Michael Hensch	Gib Owen
Ernie Barnett	Bud Howard	Peter Paduano
Terrie Bates	Melody Hunt	Mindy Parrott
Carrie Beeler	Lisa Interlandi	Mark Perry
Cory Bell	Bonnie Irving	Luna Phillips
James Booth	Khandker Ishtiaq	Libby Pigman
Isabel Botero	Rashid Istambouli	Nyla Pipes
Wes Brooks	Marci Jackson	Donald Progulske
Kimberly Brooks-Hall	Kara John	Irene Quincey
Kevin Burger	David John	Gina Ralph
Ben Butler	Robert Johnson	Kellie Ralston
Liz Caneja	Amanda Kahn	Jennifer Reynolds
Erin Carroll	Elizabeth Kelly	Elizabeth Ross
Allyn Childress	Lee Killinger	Richard Sanchez
Shawn Christopherson	Jason Kirk	Carrie Scarola
Maria Clemente	Phyllis Klarmann	Sean Sculley
Maya Compton-Grant	Casey Kniffin	Jimmy Sellers
Newton Cook	Parker Knott	Alexandra Serna
Jeffery Couch	Gareth Lagerwall	Michael Simmons
Derek Cox	Jennifer Leeds	Erica Skolte
Dan Crawford	Carol Ann Leonard	Ed Smith
Teresa Daniel	Carrie Lira	Sandy Soto
Paul D'huyvetter	Tom MacVicar	Mailin Sotolongo Lopez
Francesca DiJulio	Michael Magley	Christine Stapleton
Rebecca Dougherty	Alicia Magloire	Ed Swakon
Mike Elfenbein	Ramon Martin	Lauren Talbert
Tabitha Elkington	Rebecca May	Jennifer Thera
Rebecca Elliott	Amanda Mckenzie	Michael Tompkins
James Erskine	Lyanne Mendez	Stuart Van Horn
Mary Fesmire	Molly Messer	Thomas Van Lent
Chrissie Figueroa	Miles Meyer	Eva Velez
Jake Fojtik	Holly Milbrandt	Stephanie Wakefield
John Galvez	Brenda Mills	Caitlin Wall
Vicki Garcia	Carlos Morales	

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

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 Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) workshop. He reminded everyone that this workshop is being held in response to a formal request made by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The IDS provides an overall strategy and sequence for the planning, design, and construction of projects within the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) program. He explained that James Erskine, Chair of the Working Group (WG), will be helping to facilitate the workshop along with Allyn Childress of OERI. He noted that other members of OERI were on hand as well as Nick Aumen, WG Vice Chair, and Lawrence Glenn, Science Coordination Group (SCG) Chair.

James Erskine thanked everyone for participating and reminded everyone that the workshop is being recorded. He invited everyone including WG/SCG members to the table for the workshop discussion. He noted that after the presentations there will be a Q&A session. He welcomed today's speakers, Tabitha Elkington, Michael Hensch, and Gina Ralph, and the additional agency staff available for the discussion portion of the agenda:

- Eva Velez and Dan Crawford from the US Army Corps of Engineers and
- Mindy Parrott and Jennifer Leeds from the South Florida Water Management District.

## **2. Workshop Procedures**

Allyn Childress, OERI, went over the workshop procedures and noted that today's workshop is a hybrid meeting. She provided specific information for the Zoom attendees as there are two ways to participate in the workshop: first through a Q&A session using Zoom's Q&A feature and secondly through verbal public comment using Zoom's raise hand feature. James reminded everyone that a workshop summary will be prepared and that the entire record of the workshop will be formally transmitted to the Corps and SFMWD. The materials from this workshop are available at [EvergladesRestoration.gov](http://EvergladesRestoration.gov).

## **3. Introductory Remarks**

James Erskine introduced COL James Booth (USACE) and Jennifer Leeds (SFWMD) for some brief remarks. COL Booth also introduced Major Cory Bell (USACE) who is the new Deputy Commander for South Florida. COL Booth welcomed everyone and said they are currently making unprecedented progress thanks to the increased state and federal funding in recent years in addition to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. Currently seven projects are under construction representing about \$1 billion in public investment. He hopes the IDS is a useful tool for stakeholders and thanked OERI for hosting the workshop, the SFWMD for being their partner and local sponsor, and the USACE staff for presenting the draft IDS today.

Jennifer Leeds welcomed everyone to the SFWMD for the annual public workshop on the IDS. She stated that not only is restoration a partnership between all the agencies, but that they rely on stakeholder input to make the projects better. Looking at the IDS illustrates the volume of work being undertaken due to record level funding and the resources put towards this by the implementing agencies. The IDS is a one-page representation of an amazing amount of work underway.

#### 4. IDS Presentations

Tabitha Elkington, USACE, was pleased to present the draft 2023 IDS and the new logo that highlights habitat types of the western Everglades. For the 2023 IDS, they provided two listening sessions earlier this year: August 4<sup>th</sup> and August 18<sup>th</sup>. They utilized the 2022 IDS to orient the public as to the contents of the IDS. They will be presenting the draft this afternoon to the WG/SCG and anticipate the final being presented to the Task Force on November 15<sup>th</sup> at their meeting in Washington D.C.

Tabitha proceeded to describe the IDS “placemat” layout and contents. Her presentation covered page 1 as well as the 68 CERP components on page 2. Following her presentation, an overview of additional items on the second page of the IDS was provided by Mike Hensch and Gina Ralph.

- [Overview of the 2023 IDS](#), Tabitha Elkington, USACE
- [The Restoration Framework: System Operating Manuals](#), Michael Hensch, USACE
- [RECOVER Science Framework](#), Gina Ralph, USACE

#### 5. Q&A Discussion

James Erskine announced the discussion portion of today’s workshop. James called on in-person attendees and Allyn Childress read out questions from the Zoom Q&A feature.

##### Q&A: In Person

**Kellie Ralston**, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, thanked the Corps, SFWMD, and Task Force for the workshop. It would help people to understand changes in timing in the IDS for individual projects between the iterations, perhaps include those changes on a slide. Thank you for including the monetary aspects. It is helpful to those who advocate for projects in Congress. The celebrations, ribbon cuttings, and other important milestones are important to show policy makers progress and for bringing people together. As we make progress, RECOVER needs to know we are doing the right things; we were also underfunded on RECOVER, and I would like to see those estimates as well.

**Newton Cook**, United Waterfowlers of Florida, stated that this workshop is the best meeting of the year. People here have studied restoration for years and they are looking into the future and the IDS is very helpful to stakeholders. Let’s talk about self-imposed stressors: Lake Okeechobee, the heart of the Everglades. There is nothing positive coming from LOSOM, a driver. Even the USACE says it is not the best for the Lake. How can we establish an IDS when the heart of Everglades is being destroyed. Theoretically should have 35,000 acres of SAV and we have 2. There hasn’t been any work on the Lake since Hurricane Irma to clean the water. At least we weren’t planning to hold the Lake above the level that vegetation will grow. The Corps knows we are killing the Lake. How can we move forward with LOSOM and destroy the heart? That water will be going to the Caloosahatchee, St. Lucie, and Everglades. It’s full of muck and algae and unless it’s down to 12 or 13’ for a significant part each year, it’s going to get worse and worse. Why are we putting stress on the heart of the Everglades.

**Holly Milbrandt**, City of Sanibel, acknowledged that the C-43 reservoir was delayed due to contractor issues and the completion date was moved back. She asked if the new date, moved

back a year, is realistic? A lot depends on the completion of that reservoir. She added that she appreciates that the District and the Corps are working as quickly as possible but they really need that project completed. **Mindy Parrott**, SFWMD, explained that there was a lot of conversation about the date and hopes to meet the schedule shown. She noted that work continues and there are very recent photos of construction work going on out there in her presentation for the WG/SCG. They are working and every day they get closer to finishing. They are moving it forward regardless of earlier troubles.

**James Erskine**, WG Chair, asked if all of the operating manuals require federal NEPA actions? **Mike Hensch**, USACE, clarified that not all are NEPA actions as some are just administrative updates. On the GANTT charts, those with a “1” are new actions.

**Adam Gelber**, OERI, stated that a lot goes into the IDS and the sequencing and interjecting late in the process is difficult. Have advocated for the backfilling of the L-67 extension and didn't realize that it is way down the list, but the fill material is available now. If there is a way to advance that conversation and the project that would be great.

**Lawrence Glenn**, SCG Chair, stated that in thinking about the recent RECOVER MAP update, science for ecosystem restoration is such an important part. We all want to have the science right, we design projects to get the science right. This update is so important to the MAP, HCs, and CEMs because this is a long-term project and science is iterative. We are learning new relationships all the time. Having this update is so important to ensure our science is sound and being able to say a change is happening because of a driver that we are changing in CERP. People ask why aren't there any ecological changes yet? It might be we need 10 more components to be put in the ground and operated first. Helps to establish the timeframe where we might see that change. We know through CEMs that changes are drivers that will push endpoints in different directions. The IDS is an important tool for scientists to know when to do their science and for the stakeholders to know when they can expect changes in the ground and ecosystem response.

**Gina Ralph**, USACE RECOVER, added that the IDS helps RECOVER scientists know what the agencies need five years in advance so they can be prepared with needed tools. The Interim Goals and Interim Target Report in 2020 was mostly a modeling exercise and showed that we are not going to get benefits in coastal systems for quite some time. This helped spur BBSEER to be on the IDS in 2022 and 2023. We also know we are going to need some of the same tools for Southern Everglades that we used in BBSEER, for example performance measures (PMs) developed to understand soil erosion, accretion, subsidence, what's going to happen with SLR, etc. RECOVER is now working with the authors of that PM to expand the footprint for the Southern Everglades project. She thanked Kellie for her comments about showing RECOVER funding needs on the IDS.

**James Erskine** thanked Gina and noted that the IDS is a tool for decision-makers and it is important for them to see money spent on science and long-term monitoring as well as for project planning, engineering, and implementation.

#### **Q&A: Online**

**Allyn Childress**, OERI, opened the Q&A online portion of the agenda by answering a question regarding where to find the draft 2023 IDS on [evergladesrestoration.gov](http://evergladesrestoration.gov). Currently it is found under meeting materials for today's WG/SCG meeting or the IDS workshop.

**David John** asked if there is an update on the Broward County WPA C-11 impoundment project? **Eva Velez** stated that the C-11 impoundment is on the front of the IDS in the purple section; it was authorized in 2014 and is currently in design with the first construction contract projected to occur in FY 2024.

**Mark Perry** noted that the C-44 project was completed in 2021 and originally testing was going to be done in 2024, and now it is 2026. Why 5 years of operational testing before it can be operated? **COL Booth**, USACE, responded that during the operational testing and monitoring phase they put about 1' of water into the system and checked the embankment. At about 10 feet up, not in the embankment, but further out in the drainage canal they noticed some seepage. It is not a dam and levee safety issue, but they are trying to understand with science and geology of what is going on and looking to design a way to prevent that seepage. They are looking at two different actions and should have a decision in the next couple of months. Then they will start full design, contracting, award, and construction of that fix. **Eva Velez**, USACE, added that they do have the ability to hold up to 10' of water in the reservoir right now and that is providing incremental benefits to the St. Lucie River and Estuary as they work on that issue. The target depth is 15' so a very large portion of it is available and in use now.

**Mark Perry** noted that the C-23/24 reservoir is now in blue (state) rather than in black (federal) and asked if there is a reason for the change? **Mindy Parrott**, SFWMD, noted that Governor's Executive Order 2306 asked the SFWMD to do more right now and they decided to take over and expedite the design and construction of that reservoir while Corps constructs the north reservoir. **Eva Velez**, USACE, said they welcomed the change because it highlights the great relationship with the sponsor and no one in the nation has a sponsor like they do here in Florida. **Jennifer Leeds**, SFWMD, added that when they implement the C-23/24 STA the Corps will have benefits ahead of the reservoir being built and that they always try to get things online and get benefits right away.

#### **Q&A: In Person, Continued**

**James Erskine** asked if all the dollar figures will be available for the Task Force meeting. **Tabitha Elkington**, USACE, and **Mindy Parrott**, SFWMD, answered that both their agency's funding in the gray bar on the IDS will be ready and complete for the Task Force meeting.

**Newton Cook** said that the C-23/24 is a good place for the public to recreate and hopefully when we get to the STA it doesn't go all to cattails. Every project is supposed to have public access and if it doesn't get in during planning, it is difficult to do it after. As a reminder, every dollar spent, a certain percentage is supposed to go to public access and recreation. He reminded everyone that September 25, 2023, is the SFWMD recreation group meeting.

**Kellie Ralston** asked if the funding numbers on the IDS include O&M? She added that having O&M costs available is very helpful and important as they advocate for more funding. **Eva Velez**, USACE, answered that no, O&M is not included.

**Allyn Childress**, OERI, answered a question in the chat regarding the workshop recording. It will be available online under our public engagement workshop tab on [EvergladesRestoration.gov](http://EvergladesRestoration.gov).

**Mark Perry** asked about the second page of the IDS, under Yellow Book Name and Code, it shows under Planning Feasibility, Item 28, Lake O ASR GG project. After the ASR pilot projects

and regional study, we showed the limit of 78-80 ASR wells north of the Lake, can the 200 ASR project still continue? **Eva Velez**, USACE, answered that the Yellow Book (CERP Plan) has Component GG as Lake Okeechobee ASR. The Yellow Book had a pretty large implementation on that and as we learned more, that number has been reduced over time. Back to Gina Ralph's comments about science driving the process, the Corps and SFWMD are currently undertaking additional scientific study of water quality risks associated with large-scale implementation of ASR. It is happening as the team also works on the science plan.

**Mark Perry** commented that the gray box on the top right is very important; the investment dollars in the 2022 IDS showed a total of \$11.3 Billion. Also, the top lines showing projected budgets for each fiscal year is very important as it shows our expected commitment, both federal and state.

## 6. Public Comment

James Erskine announced the public comment portion of today's workshop, including both in-person attendees and virtual attendees using the Zoom Raise Hand feature.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT: Online**

**Nyla Pipes**, One Florida Foundation, thanked Lawrence Glenn for his comments about the importance of this document. She stated that sometimes it feels as if nothing is happening and over the years this document shows precisely what is happening. This is an incredibly important tool for communication. She reiterated others' comments about the importance of adding the dollar and cents. She's excited about LOCAR and the speed at which they are moving ahead with that reservoir project. She also thanked the agencies for keeping the rest of IRL-South moving.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT: In Person**

**Caitlin Newcamp**, Audubon of Florida, emphasized and supported WERP. WERP will reestablish sheetflow into Big Cypress National Preserve, improve water quality by reducing nutrients in the area, and lessen the threat of wildfires. Water quality concerns in the western section of WERP will be addressed by sheetflow partially and critical source control of nutrients north of the project. The new alternative will provide 23 percent improvement in overland flow during the dry season and during the wet season, changes in that overland flow will be pretty minimal. This project was a commitment to both Tribes many years ago and so we know it shouldn't be delayed any further so we support it being authorized in WRDA 2024 as indicated in the draft IDS. Last month, the schedule for the C&SF Section 216 study was changed for a new target completion date for WRDA 2026; we support this effort and acknowledge its importance given impacts to aging C&SF infrastructure from storm events, population increases, sea level change, and saltwater intrusion. She asked the SFWMD to expedite it as there is an urgent need for flood risk management and projects like this that focus on coastal salinity control structures will help solve these immediate risks. She appreciated the overview of the RECOVER science framework. Audubon supports the added focus of Southwest Florida with the new module. More science in southwest Florida will support upcoming projects like WERP and the new module will increase our understanding of this less studied area of the Everglades. Funding and support for monitoring and data collection is key for the western Everglades to

determine ecological changes and make adjustments where necessary. Showing funding for RECOVER would be helpful especially for metrics related to resiliency as the area has suffered from altered hydrology for many years and that will be exacerbated by climate change impacts.

## **7. Closing Comments and Adjourn**

James thanked OERI and the District for hosting the workshop today. James asked for final comments from the panel.

Tabitha Elkington, USACE, closed by inviting everyone to the November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Task Force meeting in Washington DC and thanked the OERI, the SFWMD, and the stakeholders.

Adam closed by thanking the District for the venue and support in hosting the workshop today. He reiterated some comments heard today, that it would be helpful to represent the changes from year to year on the IDS as well as include the RECOVER funding. The OERI will be working on the transmittal of the workshop proceedings to the Corps and SFWMD. And yes, please attend the Task Force meeting in November at the Main Interior Building in the Yates Auditorium. Please refer to the [EvergladesRestoration.gov](https://www.EvergladesRestoration.gov) website as well as our YouTube channel for the workshop recording.

James thanked everyone again for participating.

Workshop adjourned at 11:00 AM.