Why are WCAs FULL? Lack of REAL Fla Bay FLOW!

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5 attachments

Subject : Why are WCAs FULL? Lack of REAL Fla Bay FLOW!

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Attached is a five page document that I plan to present tonight at the Clewiston Public Scoping Meeting on the Western Everglades Planning Project. I have no problem with the continuing priority of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan by the Congress! BUT the Reality is that water is NOT freely flowing under the NEW one mile bridge on the Tamiami Trail, South of WCA 3B!

There are TWO Reasons for that low flow - ONE is the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and the OTHER is a "deliberate design" choice to not build a canal for ecological reasons. Due to the MAJOR problems with BOTH the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and their estuaries - It is TIME to re-visit that no-build Design Choice! Florida Bay is twice as SALTY as the OCEAN! We MUST increase the FLOW of fresh water - NOW! Not in TWENTY years!

For some time I have been very concerned about that LACK of flow to Fla Bay! I have a copy of a 20 page SFWMD document "System Constraints for Moving Water South" which was presented to their Governing Board on 3/12/15 by Jeff Kivett. I have used Page one as my page two, page five as my page three, and page nineteen as my page four. As I understand the history, a decision was made NOT to build a canal SOUTH of the Tamiami Trail for some environmental considerations. However TODAY's disaster on BOTH the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers would seem to require REVISITATION of that decision!

On 6/22/16 the SFWMD announced a plan to send more water to Fla Bay - "By November, double the amount of fresh, clean water per year will start flowing into Taylor Slough, which connects to the freshwater starved Florida Bay. The new plan approved by the Governing Board will send an average of 6.5 billion gallons more fresh water per year to Florida Bay, in wet and dry seasons." PLEASE! This amounts to a "Drop in the Bucket" - MORE water per WEEK is currently going through the EAA Gates S- 351, S-352 and S-354! Fla Bay NEEDS much MORE to reduce salinity from the CURRENT 2X more SALTY than the OCEAN!

A significant constraint is ALSO the CSS Sparrow as an "Endangered Species" concern. However, while the US Fish & Wildlife Service in July issued a five page "Biological Opinion" on the Sparrow - there is NO discussion of issues with PREDATORS in the Everglades. Clearly SNAKES like bird eggs, and the CSS Sparrow is a ground nesting bird! I would think a PREDATOR study of the Sparrow might well show that their decline is due to their own transfer into a hostile environment with NEW predators killing them AND their eggs. They may be "GONERS" no matter what the water level is controlled to be!

No matter if the State Buys ALL the EAA land - IF no SOUTH flow is IMMEDIATELY CREATED from the FULL WCAs - there can be NO Everglades BENEFIT from any EAA purchase! Thus the CURRENT Lake "O" back-up that we NOW have will continue - thus requiring the MASSIVE discharges to both Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers that we currently HAVE! On 8/13/16, Betty Osceola said "Remember the reduction of pollution part. You can get all that in place but Federal regulations won't allow Everglades National Park to accept the water if it doesn't meet water quality standards. Efforts to strengthen and force polluters into compliance must also happen at the same time." The Fla Constitution SAYS that polluters "shall be primarily responsible for paying the costs of the abatement" Let's ENFORCE that provision!

Sorry, but at my age, I feel I can not wait another DECADE or two for a TODAY answer. I love the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan - but LET's pull the PLUG and FLOW the WCA's water SOUTH!

David A. Urich, Life Member of the Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc. Cell is 239-850-2413.

WHY ARE WCAs FULL – LACK of REAL FLORIDA BAY FLOW!

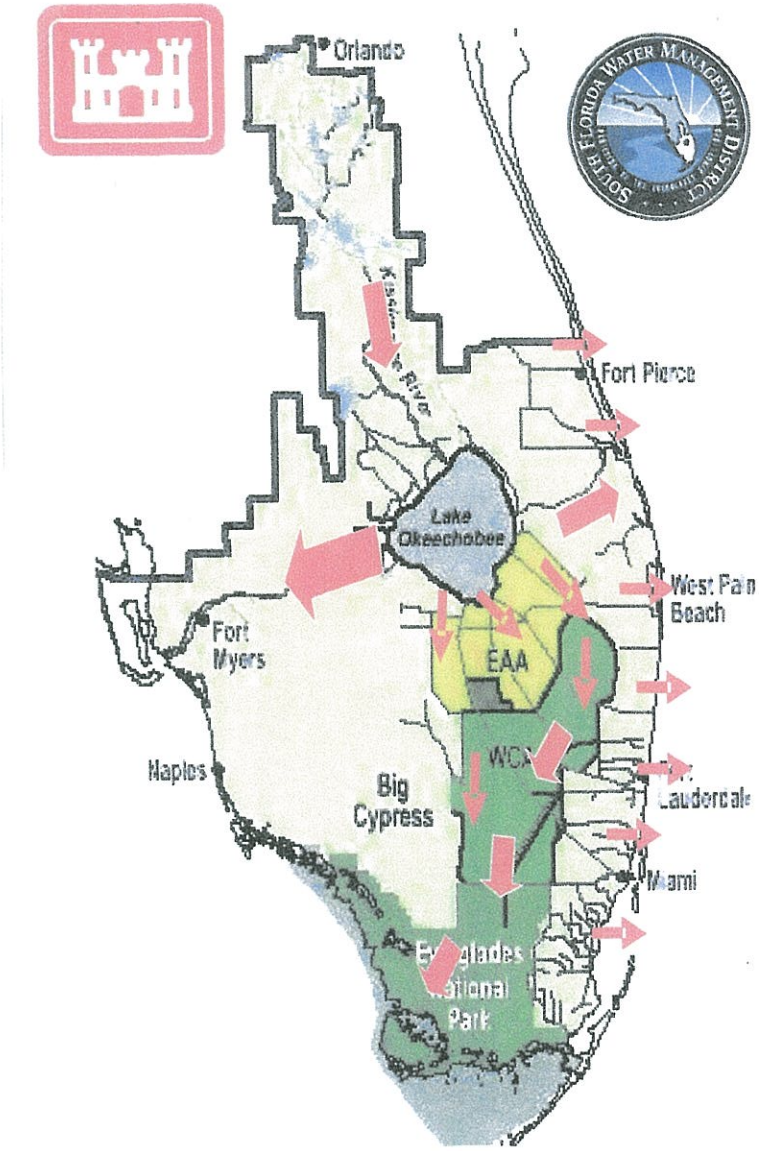
Submitted by: David A, Urich, 8/16/16
Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc.

What is needed is a flow from the South of the WCAs to Fla Bay, NOW! Shown on this page is a page from a 3/15/16 Lee Co. presentation which shows real flow to the South – but that is NOT happening! There is a "plug" at the Tamiami Trail which needs to be opened! Fla Bay needs FLOW!

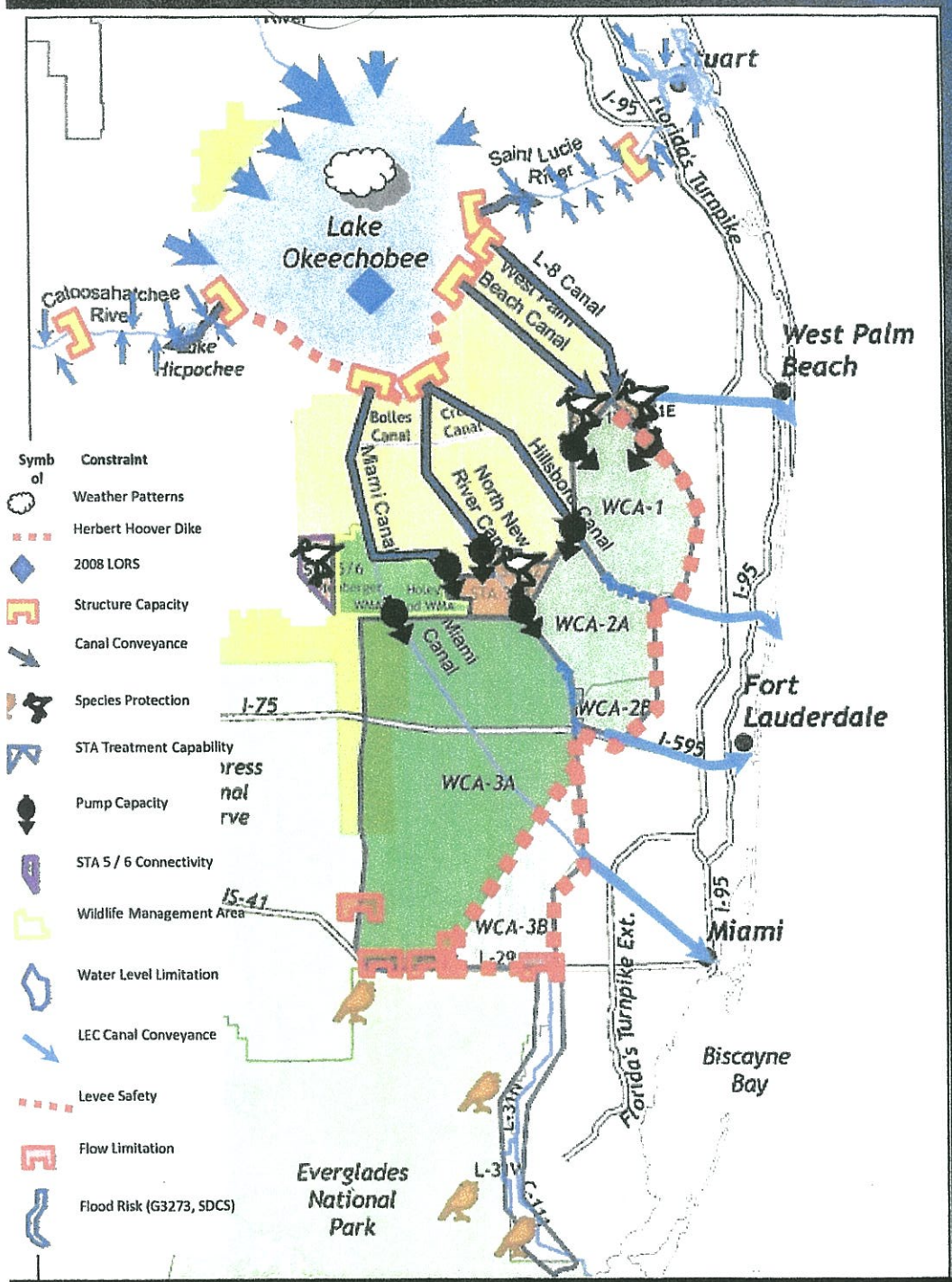
Page Two (from SFWMD) shows that a "deliberate design" choice is one of the true issues, the Sparrow being the other cause. As one can see, the massive plumbing exists from Lake "O" South to the WCAs.

FIVE Canals and FOUR Gates Exist across the EAA – so currently BUYING more EAA land will NOT solve the lack of Fla Bay flow! Page FOUR shows Three Projects in the Queue for 2020-2040 – But Not NOW!

(Continued on Page Four)



Major Constraints Affecting the Ability to Send Flood Releases from Lake Okeechobee to the South

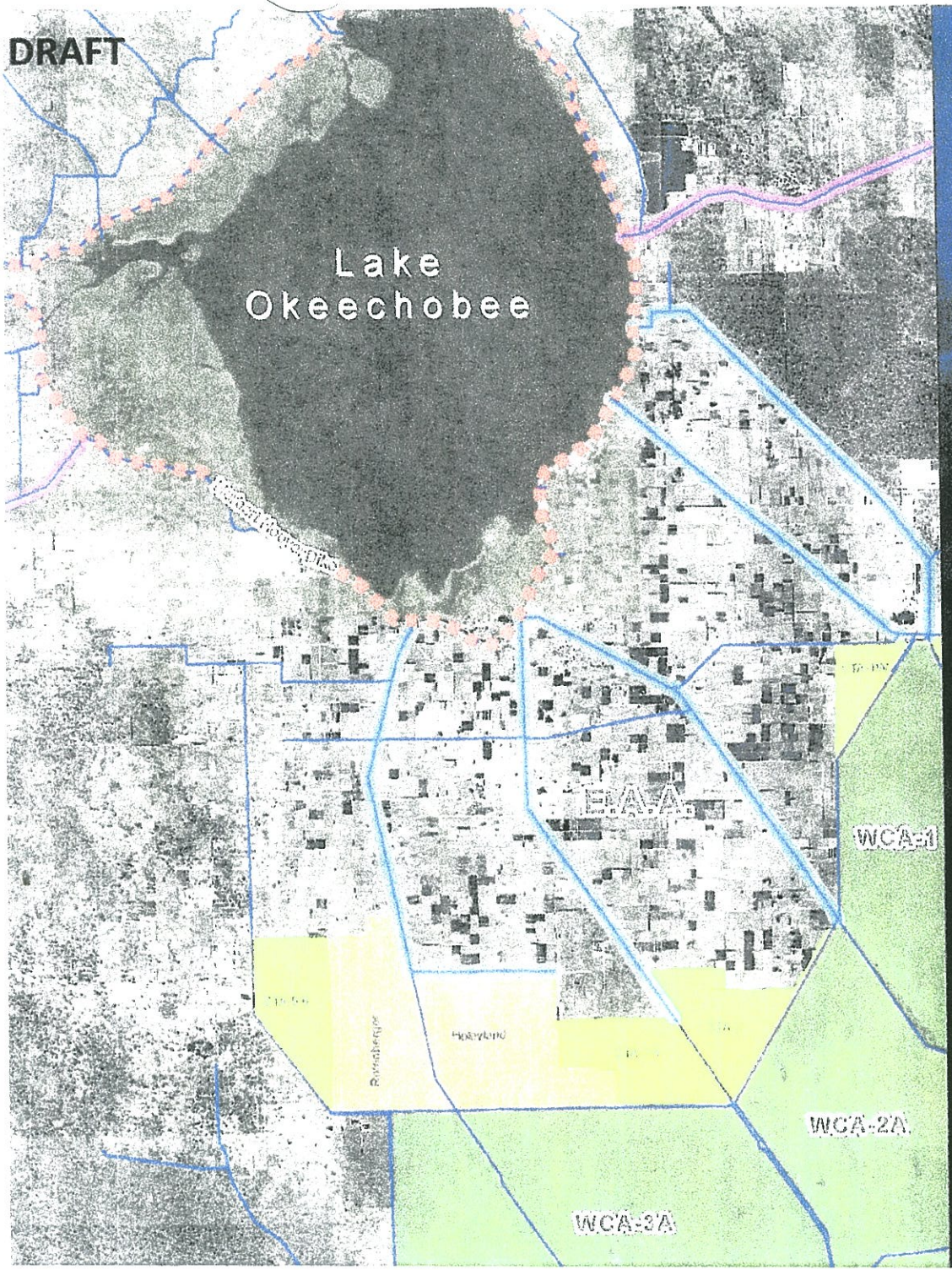


The C&SF Project was designed by the USACE to provide safe water storage in Lake Okeechobee by construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike with high stage safety relief through discharges primarily to the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie Estuaries. Recent efforts to protect the estuaries have highlighted the difficulty in diverting significant amounts of lake water to the south during wet years when the estuaries have been stressed.

In some circumstances the physical design of the water management system imposes strict structural limits on releasing lake water to the south. These are the result of deliberate design choices made.

In other cases more recent impediments, such as water quality or wildlife considerations inhibit the flow.

This presentation is an attempt to catalog the most important constraints limiting water management options today and the efforts to overcome the challenges.



CANAL CONVEYANCE

Moving water through the existing canals:

EAA canals have multiple purposes; they provide both flood control and water supply

At times, the canal capacity is completely taken up with local basin runoff (rainfall), or the canals must be drawn down in advance of a forecasted storm.

At other times, meeting the legally permitted water supply needs take up the entire canal capacity, leaving none to deliver additional Lake water to the Everglades

Making large releases from the Lake to the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) would require a significant enlargement of the primary EAA canals.

People, businesses and cities in the EAA must be protected under any plan to move additional water through the system

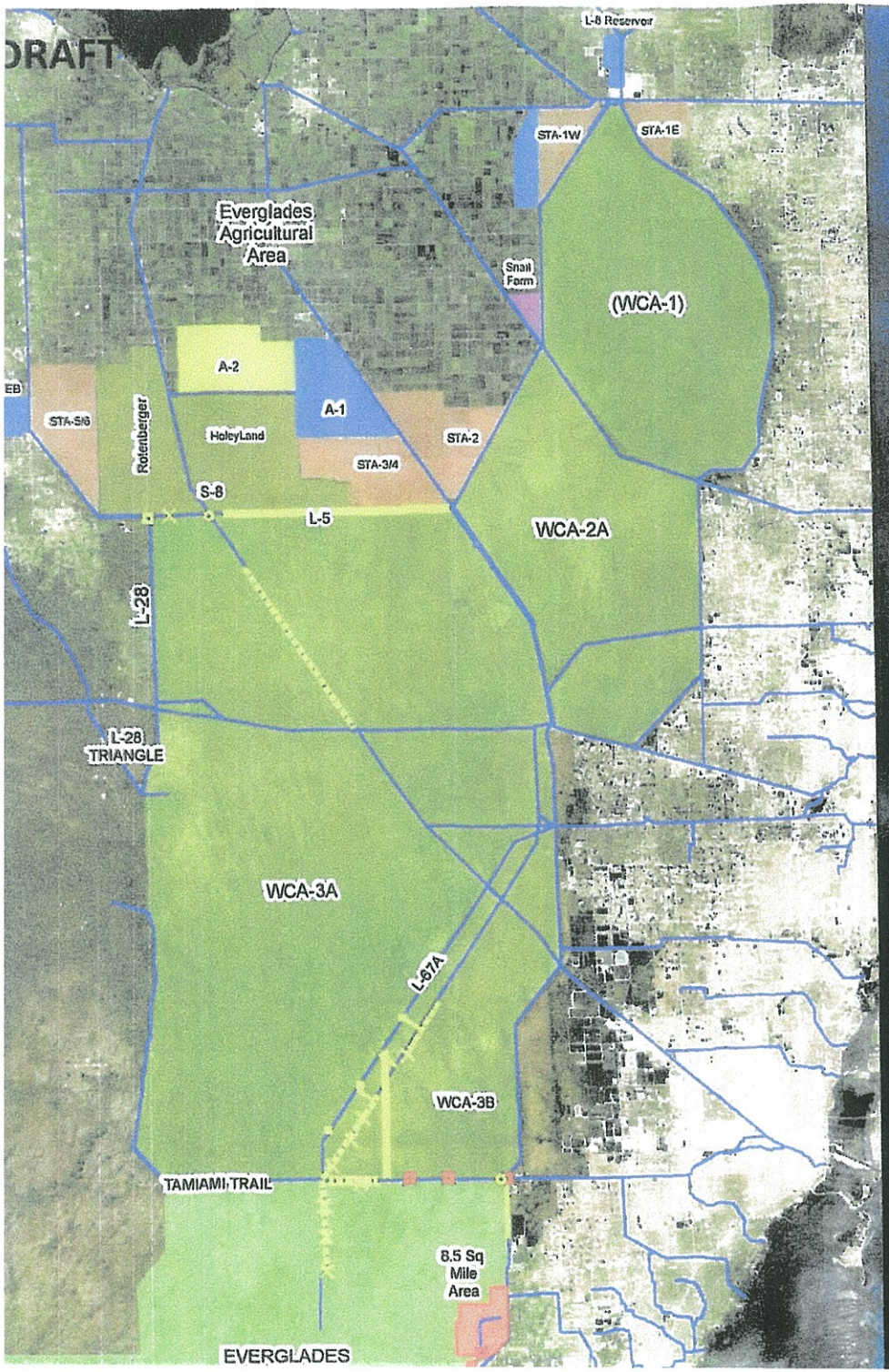
Similar constraints to moving water through the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie outlets occur at high flow rates.

Current Initiatives:

Restoration Strategies (Construction EAA A1 FEB, L-8 FEB, expansion of Bolles Canal)

Coordination of Lake Releases South when capacity is available

Implementation of Central Everglades Planning Project



Projects in the Queue:

South of the Lake

Three major projects that are necessary to consistently move excess Lake water to the south are either underway or in process. When completed an annual average of 210,000 acre-feet of Lake water can be sent south.

The Restoration Strategies Project (shown in aqua) is an $880 million project so runoff from the EAA, and a limited amount of Lake water, can meet final water quality standards. The project is scheduled to be fully operational in 2029.

The Modified Water Deliveries Project (shown in red) is essentially complete but will not be fully operational until 2020.

The Central Everglades Project (shown in yellow) has a cost estimate of $1.9 billion and is necessary to move additional water south. The plan has been approved by the USACE, but not authorized by Congress. Full operation is forecast in the 2030-2040 time frame.

Page FIVE is the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan – which NEEDS to be FAST-TRACKED! If This CERP were REALITY now, we would NOT be faced with such an issue!

COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN CENTRAL EVERGLADES PLANNING PROJECT

INTEGRATED PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Non-federal Sponsor: South Florida Water Management District

April 2014

PROJECT BENEFITS

As the next increment in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) effort, the **overarching objective** of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) recommended plan (illustrated in detail on the reverse side of this fact sheet) is to capture freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee, otherwise discharged to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, and provide the additional water to the **central Everglades** to restore seasonal water depths, durations, distribution and timing of water flow to support a natural mosaic of wetland and upland habitat (i.e., the ridge and slough system and tree islands characteristics of the historic Everglades). This improved habitat will promote natural plant and animal diversity vital to the health of the ecosystem. At the same time, the plan is designed to maintain existing level of service for flood protection and water supply, meet water quality standards, and not adversely affect Lake Okeechobee ecology and freshwater flows to Biscayne Bay.

The Benefits

Restoration success is measured scientifically using hydrologic performance measures such as drought intensity, seasonal timing/uniformity of sheetflow, conditions for slough vegetation, and salinity levels. Restoration "targets" or goals are established for each. **The CEPP recommended plan achieves ~70% of its targets for its focus area, the central everglades (WCA 3 and Everglades National Park - ENP), while also delivering benefits to the northern estuaries (Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries), and Florida Bay.** Ecological targets are also measured such as those for small fish distribution and wading birds, recognizing species interdependence. Future increments of CERP will provide further benefits to these areas.

In tangible terms, the recommended plan improves ~ **1,500,000 acres of habitat,** providing essential foraging and lifecycle opportunities for a variety of species including over 68 threatened species. Other benefits include an improved quality of life for residents and visitors; increased water supply for the municipal and agricultural users; reduced fires and greenhouse gases; improved commercial fisheries; increased recreation opportunities; and climate change adaptation to delay sea-level change effects, among many others.


994,000 acres in WCA 3 and ENP


86,000 acres in the northern estuaries


476,000 acres in Florida Bay

EXAMPLES OF SPECIES


Endangered

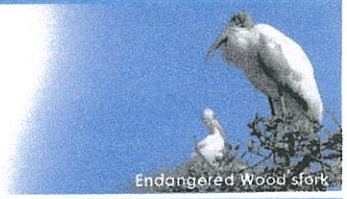

Small Fish


Endangered Manatee

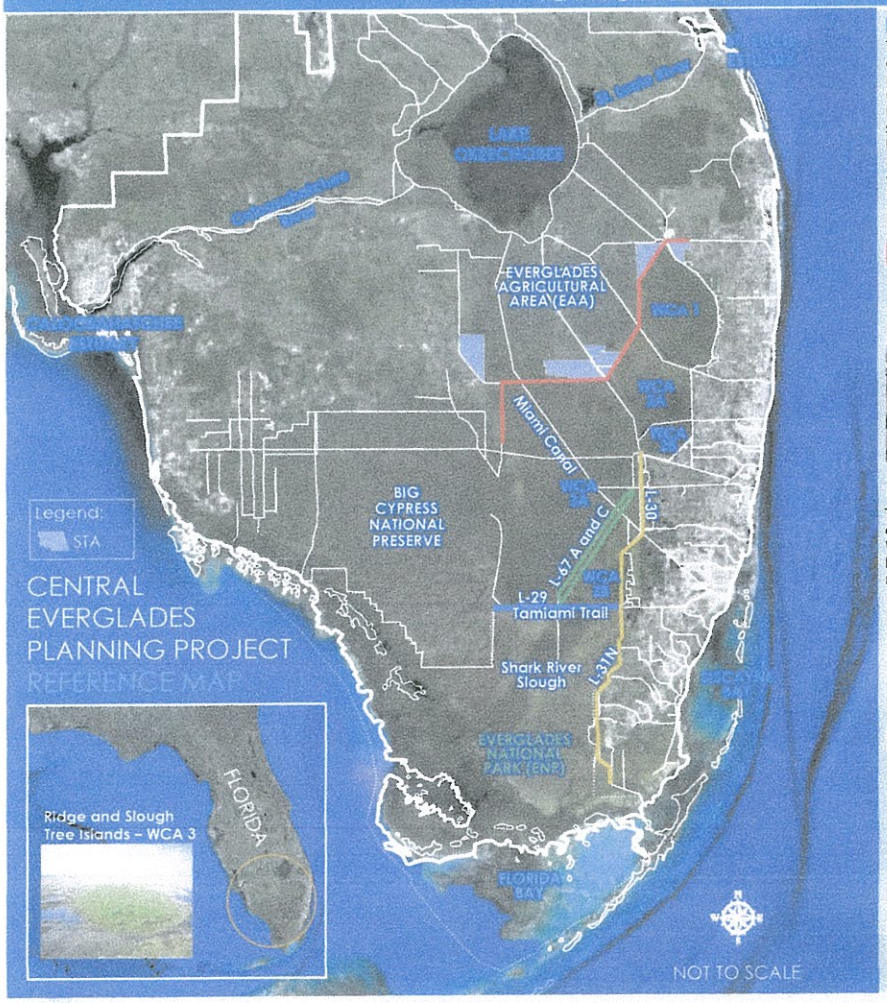

Endangered Snail Kite

PROJECT COST

COST CATEGORY	FEDERAL	NON-FEDERAL	TOTAL
Total First Cost	$ 950,875,000	$ 949,125,000	$ 1,900,000,000
Annual OMRR&R: New CEPP Features	$ 2,075,000	$ 2,075,000	$ 4,150,000
Annual OMRR&R: State Facilities	$ 2,000,000	$ 2,000,000	$ 4,000,000
Annual OMRR&R: Invasive Species	$ 1,550,000	$ 1,550,000	$ 3,100,000
Ecological Performance Monitoring (per year for 10 years)	$ 1,350,000	$ 1,350,000	$ 2,700,000
Statutorily Required Monitoring (per year for project life)	$ 1,400,000	$ 1,400,000	$ 2,800,000


Endangered Wood stork

PLAN FORMULATION

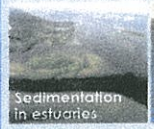


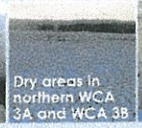
PLAN FORMULATION STRATEGY

The plan formulation framework used a spatially explicit and additive approach that followed the natural southerly flow of water from Lake Okeechobee through the Everglades ecosystem to Florida Bay. The study area was divided into four sub-regions recognizing that although the natural hydrology of the Everglades is interconnected, physical and environmental boundaries create distinctive water management issues. This allowed for the development and screening of alternatives, by sub-region, to proceed from upstream to downstream.

STORAGE AND TREATMENT

Formulation began with consideration of management measures north of the Everglades in the Everglades Agricultural Area to capture, store, and deliver water south to the Everglades.


Sedimentation in estuaries


Dry areas in northern WCA 3A and WCA 3B

CONVEYANCE AND DISTRIBUTION

The sequential formulation which followed considered measures for redistributing water within WCA 3A, creating additional hydrologic connectivity between WCA 3A, WCA 3B, and ENP (and ultimately more fresh water flows into Florida Bay).


Islands in Southern WCA 3A


Fires in WCA 3 and ENP


Mangroves in Florida Bay

SEEPAGE MANAGEMENT

Methods to effectively manage seepage along the eastern boundary of the Everglades were developed to maintain flood control and water supply for adjacent communities and Biscayne Bay, and to retain the new water in the natural system.