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Independent Scientific Review of Phase I of the Plan for Coordinating Science

**Presentation to SFERTF Science
Coordination Team
November 2, 2005**

Independent Scientific Review Process

- **Technically qualified and experienced reviewers**
- **Diversity in reviewers**
- **No vested interest in outcome**
- **Clearly communicate technical boundaries**
- **Maintain integrity**
- **Maintain consistency**

Independent Scientific Review Process Reviewers & Qualifications (page 3 of document)

Name	Experience in/Scientific understanding of the specified ecosystems							
	Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Principles	Complex, Multi-organizational Scientific Coordination	South Florida, Everglades Ecosystem	Hydrologic, Water Quality, and Biological Conditions	Freshwater Wetlands Ecology	Surface Water Hydrology and Modeling	Ecosystem Ecology	Water Quality and Nutrient Analyses
John Brawley (Ph.D.)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Jennifer Field (M.S)	X		X	X			X	
Carlton Hunt (Ph.D.)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Norman Richardson (M.S.)	X			X	X		X	X
Ron Thom (Ph.D.)	X	X		X	X		X	X

Questions Provided by Science Coordination Group

Question 1: Do you feel that the plan employs a reasonable and useful approach for helping to coordinate the larger science picture among the agencies represented on the Task Force? If not could you please explain why and provide suggestions for ways we might be able to better coordinate these big picture science issues?

Question 2: Given the non-traditional nature of this approach to coordinating science do you feel that the method of using the RECOVER Conceptual Ecological Models with expert teams to identify “critical science needs, gaps and actions” is a good one and appropriate to our goals? If so do you have any suggestions for improving the process? If not how would you do this?

Question 3: Are the critical science needs, gaps and actions we identified pertinent to the issues of restoration based on what information is currently available? If not what needs and gaps do you believe are missing, or what restoration issues are not being considered?

Question 4: Are the identified needs, gaps and actions unambiguous and the remedies clear? If not, how do you think we could make them so?

Questions Provided by Science Coordination Group (con't)

Question 5: Would the actions recommended in this plan help the Task Force coordinate and persuade agencies of the importance of “filling the gaps” in the critical science needs? If not, would you tell us why you think it would not and offer your suggestions to the Task Force for doing this.

Question 6: Does this plan address the concerns expressed by the GAO in their March 2003 report?

- a) Development of a science plan focused on key science information gaps, a comprehensive monitoring plan, and progress reports for each plan*
- b) Establish a process to identify key resource management issues that need to be addressed by science planning*
- c) Identify and implement methods or processes (e.g. Establish Independent Scientific Review Committee) to ensure that the SCG, Working Group, and Task Force develop sound and justifiable priorities for science issues that are critical to restoration decisions including those that require synthesis or meta-analysis*

Independent Scientific Review Findings

General Formatting / Content Issues

- **Plan sufficiently addresses coordination issues**
- **Improved by additional specificity on problem definition, including:**
 - **Summary of historic activities**
 - **Diagram of coordination process / framework**
 - **Use matrix-type tables to better visualize scientific needs associated with CEMs**
- **Include more specificity in defining gaps and actions**

Use & Application of CEMs

- **Broad consensus that use of CEMs is appropriate and preferred in regional restoration efforts**
- **Recommended improvements include:**
 - **Reorganize needs-gaps-actions by eco-regional module**
 - **Clearly show in where scientific inputs to the Task Force occurs, and whether it creates a new “need” or fulfills one**
 - **Use CEMs and indicators to assess research and management needs**
 - **Develop CEMs for Kissimmee River Basin, Florida Keys, and Western Big Cypress Basin**

Assessing Needs, Gaps, and Actions & Measuring “Risk of Ecosystem Restoration Failure”

- **Presentation of needs, gaps, and actions was straightforward.**
- **Plan could benefit from more explicit linkages among them.**
 - **One table for each eco-regional module showing needs, gaps, and actions.**
- **Specify the risk for each need and gap using CEMs to focus coordination efforts on those that, if not addressed, could lead to a “high risk of restoration failure.”**
- **Clearly state consensus derived research / monitoring / modeling priorities, and link with specific actions.**
- **Comprehensively assess “who is doing what, and where.”**

Suggested Next Steps

- **Assess identified gaps relative to one another in each eco-regional module**
- **Define an “Actions Process” to identify what agency / agencies is best positioned to address an action**
- **Adopt quality protocols**
- **Create a web based mechanism for information sharing**
- **Specify an Independent Review Process (peer review)**
- **Create a “Progress Tracking Process” to show how agency activity’s address gaps and needs**
- **Focus on a small, robust set of system-wide, ecosystem health indicators when developing Total System Science gaps**
- **Develop an approach for addressing uncertainty to allow for management decisions to move forward**

Question & Answer Session

- **Reviewers shared an appreciation for the complexity of coordinating Everglades restoration science**
- **Thank you for the opportunity to support Everglades Restoration!**
- **Questions?**

Contact Information

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