

Working Group Sub-teams and Advisory Bodies

The Task Force (TF) and Working Group (WG) recognize that some issues are better addressed in smaller teams or subgroups. Subordinate and advisory teams are created by the WG to enhance the flow of factual information to enable them to make informed decisions on their role and involvement in issues of importance to the restoration process. These teams ensure adequate exploration into these important issues that and in some cases require further examination by specialists, these teams also aid the WG in meeting its goals, and completing assigned tasks.

Regional restoration coordination teams are advisory teams to the WG that look at local issues in geographic and basin-based regions of the ecosystem, and determine local issues that need further discussion and exploration. Task and issue based teams are designated by the WG to evaluate a specific issue, or complete a specific task and prepare reports/recommendations for consideration by the WG. Other teams, like the Science Coordination Team, serve more as a standing committee to address ongoing issues/topics, and are assigned new tasks as needed by the WG or TF.

Regional Advisory Teams:

Regional Restoration Coordination Teams were created with the recognition that some issues are better coordinated at a local level, by those most familiar with these issues, instead of through a broader system-wide perspective. During the early phases of the restoration efforts, Project Coordination Teams (PCTs) were formed to help identify and prioritize local needs. PCT's have provided local input to the WG systemwide plans, including, but not limited to the Strategy Document, CERP Implementation, and the Multi-Species Recovery Plan. More recently, the Kissimmee Valley, Biscayne Bay, and the Southwest have shown a continued interest in maintaining regional teams to help identify, evaluate, and prioritize regional restoration based needs. These teams inform the WG of regional progress and challenges, as well as make recommendations on key issues of importance in their respective regions. Regional teams provide a forum for enhanced public involvement, outreach and interagency coordination and communication. These teams are comprised of federal, state, local, and tribal entities, and public stakeholders from private and non-profit businesses and organizations, and general members of the public.

Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team (BBRRCT):

The BBRRCT was formed at the suggestion of the Biscayne Bay Partnership Initiative, to preserve, protect, and enhance Biscayne Bay and its connected waters. Using the final report of the BBPI as a guide, the team will integrate and coordinate restoration, enhancement, and preservation projects, plans, and activities, and will work toward maintaining a functioning ecosystem while promoting a sustainable region. In addition to WG participation, this team has public membership with representation from boating, fishing, commercial, and environmental interests. This team will coordinate with other Bay efforts and initiatives. Currently, the team's focus is to:

- Integrate and coordinate restoration, enhancement, and preservation projects, plans, and activities, using the final report of the BBPI as its guide
- Identify priority issues for action and create teams to address those issues
- Identify performance measures related to key issues and assess the achievement of goals

- Identify funding requirements
- Review elements of the CERP that affect Biscayne Bay

The team is tasked with providing the following deliverables:

- An Annual Progress Report
- A Biscayne Bay Action Plan
- Identify and address Bay issues as necessary

In March 2003, the BBRRCT presented their second Annual Report at the WG meeting. Their 2002 Annual Report provided a detailed description of the Bay's needs, and a list of prioritized project recommendations for 2004. The report was forwarded to the State Legislature by the SFWMD. At the present time, the team meets monthly throughout Miami-Dade County.

Southwest Florida Regional Restoration Coordination Team (SWRRCT):

The SWRRCT was created from the recommendations of a regional forum commissioned by the WG in March 2001. This advisory body coordinates regional restoration based on input from local basin coordination groups (e.g. Big Cypress, Charlotte Harbor) and provides a forum for public outreach and involvement. This team also provides a means for information sharing and cooperation among the basin groups. Currently, the team's focus is to:

- Integrate, coordinate, and evaluate the region's environmental restoration activities, and make recommendations to the WG
- Promote public outreach and involvement
- Periodically inform the WG of its progress and to make recommendations related to regional issues/concerns for all challenges in the major restoration projects including CERP and MSRP, as well as for any the WG of smaller regional restoration efforts

The team is tasked with providing the following deliverables:

- Analyzing and developing suggestions related to ecological conceptual models for use in the region
- Preparing a priority needs report, including restoration and scientific research needs
- Preparing an annual progress report of restoration efforts in the region for the WG

In June 2002 the team formed two sub-teams to focus on Big Cypress/Estero Bay and Charlotte Harbor/Caloosahatchee. The team will present its recommendations to the Working Group in the summer of 2003.

Kissimmee Valley Regional Restoration Coordination Team (KVRRT):

The KVRRT was formed from the recommendations of a regional forum, commissioned by the WG in April 2001. This advisory body reviews restoration in the Kissimmee River upper and lower basins, and provides a forum for public outreach and involvement. Currently, the team's focus is to:

- Integrate, coordinate, and evaluate the region's environmental restoration activities, and make recommendations to the WG as appropriate
- Develop a report card for the region
- Develop a conference for the region
- Promote public outreach and involvement

The team is tasked with providing the following deliverables:

- Suggestions related to ecological conceptual models for use in the region
- An Annual Report Card on the progress of the restoration efforts in the region
- An Annual Regional Restoration Conference to increase awareness, understanding, and support for ecosystem restoration among leaders in the region and the public

The team is currently meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers to work on the scope for the EIS for the Upper Chain of Lakes. An update will be provided at the June Working Group meeting.

Issue and Task Sub-Teams:

Throughout the course of the restoration process, specific issues and tasks have been identified as needing further exploration by sub-groups to find solutions and fill information gaps. These teams are formed when an issue or task would be better addressed in a smaller group and are disbanded when the issue is resolved or task completed. The Land Acquisition Task Team, Aquifer Storage and Recovery Issue Team, Goal 3 Steering Committee, Noxious and Exotic Weeds Task Team, and Dispute Resolution Team are the currently established issue and task teams of the WG.

Land Acquisition Task Team (LATT):

In April 2000, the GAO issued a report entitled "South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: A Land Acquisition Strategy would help Identify Lands That Need to be Acquired." Subsequently, the TF directed the WG to develop a strategy for land acquisition needed for federally or joint federal and non-federal ecosystem restoration projects. The WG formed the LATT to create the Land Acquisition Strategy, which will build on the "Graham Map" - an ecosystem-wide acquisition map, and the Task Force's Strategy Document. This strategy will focus on:

- An assessment of the lands with both state and federal interest needed to accomplish each of the goals of the restoration
- A description of the purpose for which lands will be acquired and how they will be managed
- An estimate of the cost of these lands
- An estimate of when the lands will be needed for related restoration projects
- The agencies responsible for acquiring the lands

The Land Acquisition Strategy was accepted by the Task Force in February. The team has developed a new draft directive and has added in local government representatives. The draft team directive was presented to the Working Group in March.

Aquifer Storage and Recovery Issue Team (ASR):

An ASR Issue Team established by the WG in 1999 produced a report identifying ASR implementation issues, and determining which areas are in need of further exploration. The CROGEE (Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystems) produced a report on ASR in early 2001 concluding that regional science, water quality, and local feasibility must be addressed beyond the scope of the proposed ASR Pilot Projects. The findings of these two reports led the WG to continue the ASR Issue Team activities intact under a new charter.

Their new purpose is to periodically review and monitor the progress and direction of the CERP ASR Project Delivery Teams for the pilot projects, the Regional Study regarding the resolution of issues presented in the Issue Team and the CROGEE reports and other issues that may arise during implementation.

This team is tasked with:

- Providing regular briefings to the WG on resolution of ASR issues
- Preparing written papers for the WG on new information and how that would impact resolution of CERP ASR issues
- Assisting the Task Force in providing the CERP ASR performance update
- Providing a forum consistent with CERP protocols to facilitate achievement of consensus on ASR issues
- Coordinating with the SCT on ASR related issues

The team continues to review the CROGEE report on ASR, Project Management Plan's for Pilot ASR Projects and the Corps ASR Regional Study for the Working Group.

Dispute Resolution Team:

In April 1999, the GAO published a report on the importance of resolving disputes in a timely fashion to avoid increased costs and delays. An expert panel was commissioned by the TF in January 2001 to create a report, and directed the WG to develop recommendations based on the panel's findings. The Dispute Resolution Protocol Team was formed in May of 2000, to develop protocols, procedures, and guidance to facilitate the resolution of interagency and intergovernmental conflicts associated with the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem.

The team is tasked with providing the following deliverables:

- Proposed protocols and procedures for selecting and addressing conflicts issues
- Guidance protocols and procedures to assure sufficient documentation and other information is provided to assure the WG a clear understanding of the conflict issues that have been selected for facilitation
- Proposed guidance on how to deal with issues which are already the subject of litigation
- Recommendations on how best to work with the Corps and the SFWMD in helping to facilitate the resolution of conflicts related to the CERP

The team briefed the TF at the June 2002 meeting and was asked to revise their document. The team will be reassembled in the near future.

Noxious and Exotic Weeds Task Team (NEWTT):

Over 25,000 species of exotic plants have been introduced into Florida. 125 have been identified as posing a serious threat to natural areas, and 65 of those are considered to be highly disruptive to native plant communities. In 1997 the Task Force established NEWTT to incorporate invasive exotic species issues into restoration planning by developing a comprehensive strategy to cover the issues and problems, and to assess the status of invasive plants in Florida. NEWTT includes managers and scientists working exotic pest plant issues from federal, state and local agencies, and Indian tribal representation.

The team is tasked with:

- Developing an implementation plan for integration and coordination with Florida-wide planning and establish liaison and coordination links with national planning efforts
- Writing a science plan to identify short and long term science needs and funding requirements
- Prioritizing species for control and writing their control plans
- Developing a meaningful level of standardization needed for common level of inter-operability among agencies
- Developing an early-warning and rapid-response capability
- Developing a comprehensive science plan for research to support the implementation of Florida-wide Invasive Plant management Strategy and Implementation Plans
- Developing a coordinated multi-agency budget to identify and support the implementation of the Invasive Plant Management Strategic Plan and science plan

NEWTT's strategy and assessment documents were presented to the WG at the May 2002 meeting. In February 2003 the team hosted a workshop and conference in Miami on detecting invasive exotic plants. The team is working on compiling the results of the workshop and conference. The WG will be updated at their May meeting.

General Support Sub-teams:

From the early days of the Task Force science, public outreach and education have been recognized as integral parts of the restoration process. The WG established the Outreach, Environmental, and Economic Equity Coordination Team, and the Science Coordination Team, to tackle issues within their subcategory under the direction of the WG.

Outreach, Environmental, and Economic Equity Coordination Team (OEEECT):

Outreach and education have been recognized as two important keys to early and continued success of the restoration process. WRDA 2000 emphasized the importance of a strong outreach and environmental justice program to provide socially and economically disadvantaged communities and individuals access and information to support and participate in ecosystem restoration. The OEEECT was established in 2001 to develop a comprehensive interagency strategy for a system-wide approach for Outreach and Environmental Justice initiatives that support achievement of economic and environmental equity related to restoration efforts. This team seeks to optimize interagency collaboration and coordination, discourage duplication of efforts, and encourage cost sharing without infringing on existing missions, authorities or jurisdictions of the participating agencies. This team's initial focus is to:

- Develop a strategy for WG consideration to identify gaps where additional environmental justice or outreach initiatives are needed
- Provide recommendations that reduce duplication, increase communication and coordination, avoid misunderstandings, and improve the outreach messages
- Identify potential applications and linkages between governmental and nongovernmental programs that could enhance shared WG environmental justice goals in the region
- Provide input to the development and revisions to Goal 3 of the TF Strategic Plan, as appropriate

The team is tasked with providing the following deliverables:

- An inventory of current Outreach, Economic, and Environmental Equity effort, including environmental justice and related outreach that supports restoration efforts in south Florida
- A team work plan that supports WG goals
- A strategy for integrating Outreach, Economic and Environmental Equity programs needed for ecosystem restoration projects, including environmental justice efforts, that will improve existing WG member's programs and initiatives, seek a common message, and encourage partnerships when practicable

The team presented a draft to the Working Group at the March 2003 meeting for comments. The team will bring a new draft for WG consideration at the May 2003 WG meeting.

Science Coordination Team (SCT):

The SCT is the group that provides scientific review, input and analysis specifically for the TF and WG. The SCT is generally responsible for recommending research plans and priorities and facilitating the integration, synthesis, and application of the best scientific information available for restoration. SCT actions included previous and present work on CERP, the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration Conference, Water Quality, Flows and Levels, CROGEE, and ASR. Currently, the team's focus is to:

- Provide a scientific basis for the development of ecological and societal goals and objectives, and performance measures for South Florida ecosystem restoration based on the best existing scientific information
- Ensure the completed and ongoing data sets for the South Florida ecosystem restoration effort are catalogued, cross-referenced, and integrated
- Ensure coordination of the design, implementation, and progress of system-wide ecological monitoring programs that support the evaluation of restoration success and its sustainability
- Identify key gaps in management information for the South Florida ecosystem and related social systems and propose coordinated research, inventory, monitoring, modeling, and information programs to address the gaps
- Describe expertise and scientific investigations required to respond to key gaps in support of restoration management objectives
- Describe and coordinate the expertise and scientific investigations required to document long-term ecosystem and social system effects realized by implementation of restoration and management objectives
- Identify future science needs and recommending priorities for a coordinated science and research program to address long-term restoration requirements
- Periodically review and revise priorities based on evaluation of progress toward achieving sustainable restoration objectives
- Facilitate the exchange of scientific information and the use of interdisciplinary and partnership approaches by establishing advisory panels and convening scientific meetings, conferences, and symposia on topics relevant to the South Florida ecosystem
- Assist CROGEE and/or other appointed technical advisory panels by facilitating their access to the information required to carry out their responsibilities.

Inactive Teams:

The following teams have completed their tasks and are in Inactive status. They are waiting for WG and TF review to determine their future.

Goal 3 Steering Committee (Goal 3):

The Strategic Plan identifies three major ecosystem restoration goals, 1) Get the water right; 2) Preserve, protect, and enhance natural habitat and species; and 3) Foster compatibility of the built and natural systems. The Goal 3 team was established to facilitate refinement of the Goal 3 section of the Strategic Plan. In September 2000, the WG approved the team's revised sub-goals for goal 3 and draft text for incorporation into an updated Strategic Plan. The team will be dissolved pending approval of the new Strategy Plan.

Lake Okeechobee Issue Team (LakeOIT):

The LakeOIT was formed in 1998 to develop an action plan for Lake Okeechobee to restore water quality and prevent further degradation of Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries. The team presented its action plan to the WG in 1999.

Sustainable Agriculture Task Team (SATT):

The SATT was created to develop the Sustainable Agriculture Plan for WG review and incorporation into the TF Strategic Plan. Encompassing over 10.7 million acres, and contributing \$45 billion dollars in economic activities, agriculture is one of Florida's three major economic legs. In South Florida agricultural lands buffer natural systems from urban areas, and inhibit urban sprawl, while providing extensive employment opportunities and agricultural products. Thus, the loss or conversion of farmlands to urban development undermines the restoration process. The team completed its work in 2001.