

February 12, 2004

Memorandum

To: Task Force Members

From: Greg May
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF) Director

Re: Prioritizing SFERTF Work Effort

Purpose and recommendation summary: The restoration of the South Florida ecosystem is a long-term and highly complex process that includes hundreds of individual projects. This process is being managed by a unique collaboration of agencies and entities at the local, state and federal level. Congress has charged the SFERTF with the responsibility of coordinating this effort and tracking and reporting achievements. The workload associated with restoration will continue to grow over the next several years making prioritization of management efforts more important than ever. While the judgment and experience of the members are the ultimate means of determining these priorities, a more deliberate method of assisting the Task Force to select its priorities would be beneficial. I recommend that the Task Force consider using three concepts to accomplish this goal.

Background:

The South Florida ecosystem restoration effort is being managed on three levels. Agencies or entities carrying out their individual responsibilities operate on the first level. Agencies or entities working in partnerships with each other to achieve common goals, like the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), operate on the second level. And the coordinating and reporting activities of the SFERTF take place on the third level.

The Task Force has a number of responsibilities assigned by statutes and Congressional directives. These responsibilities include general functions, like coordinating and sharing information, and specific requirements. For 2004 these specific requirements include:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Suspense</u>
Science Staffing Support Analysis	February
Update to the Strategic Plan	September
Biennial Report	September
Plan to Coordinate Science	September

Workload associated with implementing CERP and other restoration efforts will continue to increase over the next several years. To ensure that the SFERTF makes the greatest contributions toward achieving restoration and does not duplicate level one and level two management activities, a more deliberate means of assisting the Task Force prioritize their efforts would be very beneficial.

SFERTF priorities can be categorized as non-discretionary, like the Biennial Report, or discretionary, like this year's emphasis on the Combined Structural and Operating Plan (CSOP). The Task Force determines discretionary priorities. Congress specifies non-discretionary priorities that generally must accomplish mandated actions by a specified timeframe.

For determining discretionary priorities, the following three concepts would help the Task Force make the wisest investments of limited resources and provide value added above and beyond agency efforts.

Concepts:

The first concept is that the Task Force should operate at level three and not duplicate level one or level two management activities. Level three coordination activities may identify a gap or duplication at level one or level two that must be addressed.

The second concept deals with the characteristics of level three management activities. The Task Force should focus on activities that meet one or more following characteristics. They are:

- Ecosystem-wide or regional in their application.
- Policy in their nature.
- Strategic and programmatic in their perspective.
- Essential (critical restoration enablers such as a key project or model effort).

The third concept is specificity. Determining the specific aspects of an issue that are appropriate for the Task Force is just as important as determining the right general priority. The following questions would help the Task Force ensure that the right aspects of a priority issue are addressed by the right group at the right time.

What specific issue or question should the Task Force address (what is the value added – providing integration or avoiding duplication for example)?

How does it support the implementation of the Strategic Plan?

What function is the Task Force fulfilling?

- Coordination
- Sharing information
- Conflict avoidance/resolution

What sub-group does the Task Force want to work the issue?

- Working Group
- Science Coordination Group
- CSOP Advisory Team
- Water Resources Advisory Commission
- Office of the Executive Director

Is another forum addressing the issue (courts, legislature, etc.)?

When must the issue be addressed?

Together these concepts can help the members use their experience and judgment to identify specific priority issues for action by the Task Force. These items would complement agency activities and provide maximum value added.

