

*Approved Minutes  
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force  
West Palm Beach, Florida  
September 17, 2008*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Kameran Onley called meeting to order at 1:00 PM. She thanked Ms. Carole Wehle for allowing them to use the SFWMD facilities and thanked everyone who helped organize the field trip that morning. Ms. Onley suggested they wait until the following morning to approve the minutes.

*Kameran Onley, Chair, U.S. Department of the Interior*

*Greg Knecht for Michael Sole, Vice Chair, Department of Environmental Protection*

*Justin Busch for Gary Mast, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture*

*James Christian for Linda Lawson, U.S. Department of Transportation*

*Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Commissioner, Miami Dade County*

*Benjamin Grumbles, Assistant Administrator Office of Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

*Patty Power for Jim Shore, Seminole Tribe of Florida*

*Terry Rice for Dexter Lehtinen, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians*

*Ron Tenpas, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice*

*Carol Wehle, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District*

*J.P. Woodley Assistant Secretary of the Army, U.S. Department of the Army*

*Michael Collins, Chair, Water Resources Advisory Committee*

**Whiparound**

Mr. Greg Knecht announced that Mr. Sole was unable to attend and sends his regrets. He reported the water management district held a workshop the prior week on the U.S. Sugar acquisition and that the presentations that were provided were very informative. He said the water level for Lake Okeechobee was just over 15 feet due to several storms. He noted that Judge Gold ruled to uphold EPA's approval of the phosphorus criterion.

Ms. Carole Wehle expressed concern that the U.S. Sugar acquisition may negatively impact planned projects except for the C-111 SC Phase 1 project, which has been fully funded. She said the completion of the expansion of Compartments B and C would also be fully funded. She complimented the State of Florida for being the only agency that had been fully funding their share of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). She explained that they are pursuing a policy change to use a large portion of ad valorem for land acquisition and state funding for construction. She added that they still have a very robust design and construction program at the District and will not be abandoning any of their priorities.

Commissioner Pepe Diaz thanked the SFWMD for working diligently to make sure the problems that plagued them in the past with flooding did not occur again. He reported that Miami Dade is buying a lot of property and should have about 1500 acres by the end of the next fiscal year for reuse. Ms. Wehle added Miami Dade has stepped up to the plate in terms of addressing water supply issues and protecting the Biscayne aquifer. Mr.

Mike Collins noted that since 2001 the SFWMD has invested roughly \$2.8 billion towards CERP and Everglades restoration and they along with the state have acquired approximately 152,370 acres at a cost of \$1.3 billion. He added they now have the opportunity for a large land acquisition, which could provide some of the missing links to restoration.

Mr. Justin Busch attending for Gary Mast who sent his regrets and reported that USDA continues to work on the Farm Bill. Mr. Terry Rice representing Dexter Lehtinen noted the Miccosukee Tribe has been watching the reaction to Judge Gold's ruling and has seen the letter from Secretary Sole to Congressmen Hastings and Boyd, which seemed to express joy over the ruling. He provided a handout noting the tribe's position that the process is fatally flawed. He encouraged the group to take positive steps as they move into the future. He was concerned that the Water Conservation Areas are at damaging high water levels and furthermore the preliminary modeling for the EAA Reservoir shows worse conditions in WCA 3A. He added that these are the types of things that cannot happen if they are going to restore the entire system.

Mr. Ben Grumbles recognized Mr. Jim Giattina from their Atlanta office. He thanked everyone on the Task Force individually and collectively for what they are doing. He said that EPA was focused on Judge Gold's decision, among many other things, and will be working with their state colleagues on possible next steps. They are also working on rock mining and TMDLs and are hopeful to get closure on the Clean Water Act permitting issues surrounding the Storm water Treatment Areas (STAs). Mr. George Dunlop announced that Mr. Woodley would arrive later that afternoon. He said they are focusing on the resolution of policy issues and are looking forward to accomplish the stated objectives of the entire restoration effort. He noted the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) will produce their second CERP progress report before the next meeting and they have every reason to believe that the report will continue to confirm that they are on the right track and have taken their previously suggested recommendations.

Ms. Kameran Onley said she is getting nostalgic knowing that her last meeting will be in December. She recognized Mr. Terry Breyman from CEQ and noted the great attendance at the meeting. Ms. Patty Power said it looks like the House and Senate may move on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and Transportation bills.

### **Working Group Report**

Ms. Onley announced that Mr. Ken Ammon would be stepping down as Chair of the Working Group and presented him with a memento for his leadership and service. Mr. Ammon said it has been an interesting experience and a refreshing change from the day-to-day business.

#### *Overview*

Mr. Ken Ammon said that their objective for this agenda item was to present an overview of the Working Group meetings, provide recommendations to the Task Force, synthesize the most important subjects and topics and get Task Force feedback and guidance. This approach will provide the Task Force with more detail on the issues the Working Group

vets and enable the Task Force to make more appropriate policy decisions. He reported the Working Group held joint meetings with the Science Coordination Group (SCG) in July and August with great participation. They held workshops on the Project Implementation Report (PIR) Streamlining and Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS). He noted the IDS sequence that will be presented shortly is based on best available information and is a work in progress to be updated as information becomes available. Some projects are labeled TBD due to the River of Grass discussions that are ongoing. At the meetings, the question was raised as to how much science was used in the decision making process for the IDS. They also discussed concerns, previously raised at this year's GEER Conference, over areas that are still degrading, some of which may not be able to be restored if something is not done soon. To address these issues a two-day Science Workshop will be held later in the month in coordination with RECOVER. They will discuss and develop methods for identifying regions of urgent ecological concern within the entire south Florida ecosystem and to use those methods to identify regions of critical ecological concern for the ecosystem in general.

Mr. Rock Salt said they are trying to stay focused at a landscape level and the SCG is pleased that the Working Group has asked them to do this. Mr. Collins asked for clarification. Mr. Ammon said the group would review existing science and look at the existing degradation that is occurring and report back to the Task Force or a group like this for consideration. Mr. Collins noted there are a variety of ways of describing and defining degradation, but they have been careful of keeping scientist from making policy decisions. Mr. Ammon said they would be careful not to move from the realm of science into policy and there will be no recommendations on policy or priorities. Ms. Onley added that science is one of many important considerations that need to be considered when making sequencing decisions. She noted there were no public comments.

## **Action Items**

### *Report Overview*

Mr. Greg May presented a summary of the reports that the Task Force prepares for the US Congress, Florida Legislature and the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes. He explained that the Strategy and Biennial Report and the Plan for Coordinating Science are prepared every two years and the Land Acquisition Strategy is prepared yearly. He reviewed the schedule that was used to develop these reports in 2008 and noted that there were multiple opportunities for the partners to review the reports and provide comments.

### *Strategy and Biennial Report*

Mr. May explained that the Coordinating Success and Tracking Success documents combine three reporting requirements in two volumes: Volume 1 (Strategic Plan and Biennial Report) and Volume 2 (Integrated Financial Plan). He said Volume 2 is not being presented since it is just a compilation of all the project sheets and a table summarizing all the projects is provided in Volume 1. He pointed out that the reports are provided in a track changes format and that all comments received to date have been incorporated. He noted that in 2006 the Miccosukee Tribe submitted a Minority Report to the Strategy and Biennial Report. He then presented the Strategic Plan and Biennial Report for approval.

Mr. Collins noted a flaw with the text under Subgoal 1a on page 35, 'Factors affecting achievement of this goal'. He read the paragraph and stated that, as written, there is no recognition that the Florida Legislature with Senate Bill 360 requires the Water Management Districts (WMDs) to review Comprehensive Plan changes to guarantee first that the water would actually be available and secondly that the WMDs will cap withdrawals from the natural system by rule. This could set the stage for unrealistic storage and operational goals for the natural system that could wind up flooding a large portion of the State of Florida. He said they are not allowed to 'raid the natural system' and that the actual cost for developing the alternatives rests with the local government. Mr. Collins drafted language for inclusion in the document which he read into the record. Mr. Jim Giattina, sitting in for Mr. Grumbles, made a motion to approve the document with Mr. Collin's changes. Mr. Ron Tenpas seconded the motion. As there was no additional member or public comment, the Strategy and Biennial Report were approved with all in favor except for the Miccosukee Tribe. Ms. Onley said that October 1<sup>st</sup> was the deadline for the Minority Report.

#### *Plan for Coordinating Science (PCS)*

Mr. Salt said the plan includes all comments that were received since the last time it was presented to the Task Force. Mr. Collins noted his concern that what they have here is another wish list and they do not need all of this to proceed with restoration. Ms. Power made a motion to approve the plan, which was seconded by Mr. Greg Knecht. There was no discussion or public comment and the report was approved unanimously without objection.

#### *Land Acquisition Strategy*

Ms. Theresa Woody noted that some of the most important information in the strategy is in the appendices. She also highlighted the detailed maps and specifically referred to the one that provides an overview of all the lands that have been acquired. There was no discussion or public comment and the report was accepted unanimously without objection.

#### **Project Implementation Report (PIR) Streamlining Analysis**

Mr. Eric Bush said the Working Group was tasked to develop recommendations to streamline the process to develop a PIR. He presented an overview of their analysis and recommendations. He explained that the PIR is the decision document used by both the SFWMD and Corps for approval and ultimately funding of a CERP project. He noted the PIRs are a product of a series of requirements including the Programmatic Regulations and the Guidance Memoranda. He reviewed the entire process for developing a PIR, which takes over three years to complete if nothing goes wrong. He illustrated some of the more difficult challenges they face in trying to use the current process and restore an area twice the size of New Jersey. He explained the actions taken to date as well as the top five Working Group recommendations to improve the PIR process. The recommendations include revisiting the requirements for habitat units, formulating alternative plans for optimizing individual projects, eliminating system formulation and next added increment justification, revisiting requirements for engineering and design, simplifying assurances analysis and revisiting Pro Regs and Guidance Memoranda.

Mr. Collins thanked Mr. Bush and the entire team for their work adding this is one of the best analytical assessments he has seen. He pointed to the C-111 Spreader Canal as the poster child of how not to do this and asked if they would recommend a series of guidelines for the teams. Mr. Ammon said that the recommendations include empowering and training and PDTs as well as the need to elevate issues as soon as possible. Ms. Power said she had a hard time understanding the concept of modeling until you get the answer you want. Mr. Collins added that individual stakeholders decided the initial C111 results were not acceptable, for whatever reason, and models were run multiple times. It is a tool to aide professional judgment and not intended to be a substitute. Ms. Wehle said she did not disagree with anything in the report and they now have two challenges. For any new process moving forward they have identified a new direction for the Project Managers.

Mr. Bush said they are going to have to use the IDS as a tool and go on a PIR by PIR basis since they are at various stages of completion. Ms. Wehle commended COL Grosskruger for having staff in West Palm Beach and she recognized the work done by Ms. Marie Burns who did a great job in ensuring everyone felt they were a part of the team. Mr. George Dunlop noted the NAS report recommended the use of Incremental Adaptive Restoration and asked how that fits into this scheme. Mr. Eric Bush noted they have incremented five PIRs based on the NAS' recommendations but they still have the same requirements for formulation, selection and assurances in order to get a decision document prepared. Mr. Collins said they need a concrete review of the Pro Regs.

Mr. Greg Knecht said the recommendations are good but they need to drill down more to fix the items identified. He asked what the next steps were. Mr. Ammon said he hoped the Task Force would endorse the Working Group's recommendation enabling everyone to have the same vision from a policy perspective. In addition, the Working Group needs to work on specific language and justification for why they are proposing the recommended changes and present them to the Task Force at its next meeting. Ms. Wehle agreed that she would like the Working Group come back with a PIR by PIR recommendation. Ms. Onley said the Task Force might determine that may not be necessary once they hear the IDS presentation. In summary Mr. May noted the Task Force appreciated the presentation and has endorsed these initial recommendations. The Task Force would like the Working Group and Science Coordination Group to work jointly on more detailed recommendations for each one of these areas and come back to the December Task Force meeting with a timetable for implementation that would coincide with the reorganization of the Pro Regs and other policy documents. Mr. Ammon added that there are some items on the list such as empowering of the Project Managers and schedules and budget issues that he hopes they would go ahead and implement now.

Ms. Wehle said that policy questions, such as the Next Added Increment, need to be addressed. Ms. Onley noted it is her understanding that the agencies would implement the easy things and that recommendations would be brought back to the Task Force for more difficult issues. Mr. Ammon said they need to tease out what they can legally do and he hoped they would have that by December. Mr. Collins said they also need

commitments in writing from the individual agencies that they will be implementing these changes as well as timelines for implementation.

### **Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS)**

Mr. Stu Appelbaum said that following the May Task Force meeting the Working Group was charged to provide an initial IDS at this meeting. He explained that the Broward County Water Preserve Areas and the Picayune Strand projects have been broken into several components. He noted a lot of interest in bringing the ENP Seepage Management and DECOMP projects forward. The cash flow has been optimized and the IDS concentrates on construction between now and 2020. He noted that no projects have been dropped from the IDS and there is a 'TBD' for the elements scheduled after 2020. Regardless of the how River of Grass acquisition plays out over the next several months they have enough good projects on their plate. Once there is more certainty with the River of Grass acquisition they will be able to adapt IDS accordingly. He stressed that the IDS is a living document and things will periodically come up that will require it be updated and revised. He said that the IDS will be used to help determine the prioritization for PIRs. He reviewed the color coding used in the matrix noting that the blue band for example represents projects with existing commitments. The Herbert Hoover Dike project is shown on the schedule but its costs is not reflected since it is funded under a Flood Damage Reduction Program and not out of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program dollars. Ms. Wehle asked that the C-111 SC Phase 1 scheduling data be reflected in the matrix since the revenue has already been appropriated.

Mr. Appelbaum reviewed the federal costs for the IDS through 2020 excluding the Herbert Hoover Dike. Ms. Wehle said they need to be careful because when the state talks about its funding it is only including CERP and not their entire contributions. She said that if we're going to talk about total dollars dedicated to the entire program then it needs to be reported that way for both sides. Mr. Appelbaum agreed that state and federal funding should be reported the same way. He showed a map that reflects the physical features that would be in place if they build everything in the IDS by 2020. He said the next step from a scientific basis is the joint SCG and RECOVER workshop to provide information about urgencies and concerns in terms of where the worst degradation of the system is occurring. He said the Master Implementation Sequencing Plan (MISP), a requirement in the Pro Regs, will be a subset of the IDS.

Ms. Onley referred to the previous presentation on PIR streamlining and asked if they would see a reduction in costs if they were able to implement these recommendations and if so where the savings would occur. Mr. Appelbaum said there would be savings that could be put towards construction noting that the bulk of the estimated program costs are for construction. Ms. Onley asked when the MISP would be finalized. Mr. Appelbaum said they will finalize the IDS quickly, if there is no major heartburn. The MISP requirement it to periodically update it so once the IDS is accepted they will excerpt the CERP pieces for the MISP.

Mr. Knecht said they all agree with the sequencing and asked when they would use the IDS to sequence work on the PIRs. Mr. Appelbaum said that although there are uncertainties for FY09, the timing is good and they should use the IDS to make internal budget decisions over the next 60 days. Mr. Salt said he hoped the fruits from the River of Grass initiative would affect the way everyone thinks about project sequencing and that they could take advantage of it. Mr. Collins said that given the timeframes he had seen, it was his interpretation that the answer may be no. If they execute the sale, then the District wouldn't have money for projects not already on their plate for a minimum of 10 years. So barring additional funding from the Legislature which is unlikely in the short term given current economic conditions, he did not think they would need to change the current sequence.

Ms. Onley asked when this would be endorsed as the guiding tool to move ahead. Mr. May said he thought the Task Force had endorsed the initial IDS with the information they have now. As additional information becomes available over the next several months the TBDs will be resolved and the revised schedule needs to be laid out and brought back to the Task Force. Over the long term, as substantial new information becomes available the IDS should be updated accordingly and presented to the Task Force.

Mr. Collins said he did not have an objection. He said that to the degree that the information they have in the IDS is accurate, they can agree to proceed, but there are a lot of caveats. Commissioner Diaz said this is what they have been asking for and they should move forward. Ms. Power asked what was happening with the River of Grass initiative. Mr. Knecht said he did not have much he could share at this time because negotiations are underway. Mr. Collins said there are huge issues with regards to the valuations of the property and the environmental assessments that the Governing Board wants resolved. A two-day workshop was held and the presentations provided to the Governing Board are available to anyone interested on the District's website at: [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Martha Musgrove (Decision Makers Forum) said she thought Mr. Appelbaum did a marvelous job in bringing some important projects forward. She requested that DECOMP PIR 1 be moved up to 2011 so that there is a continuation of projects needed for DECOMP in light of the current schedule in the IDS. She noted that DECOMP is the project that provides the most benefits to Everglades National Park. A great deal of the country is unaware that we haven't gotten the \$8 billion and they need to prioritize what they need and then work on the funding. The TBDs are all the SFWMD projects and she suggested they do not publish this document for Congress to see with all the TBDs. She added that if River of Grass deal is not consummated then it will be sold so she urged the dates for those projects be included in the IDS. Ms. Onley said they have a commitment to try and have those dates by the December meeting.

Ms. Megan Tinsley (Audubon of Florida) thanked Ms. Musgrove for her comments and hoped the Sugar deal would give them the potential to store much more water in the EAA

and deliver that water south. It is very positive that this is living document that will enable them to incorporate things that are learned along the way. She hoped this continues to move forward with the goal that the projects that provide the greatest restoration benefits move forward.

Mr. Ammon asked the Task Force members for their comments regarding the Next Added Increment Analysis and System-wide Analysis modeling being eliminated from the development of a PIR and rely on qualitative rather than quantitative data. Mr. Salt said the last time they did this they had agreed on a smaller set of analyses but were overruled by OMB. He was not sure how much latitude they had. Ms. Wehle said there was no disagreement that that this issue along with the habitat units must be bumped up. Mr. Collins said they can take the lessons learned and explain to the Congressional leaders why they are saying this and show how much money they are wasting. Mr. Ammon asked if Interior supports the elimination of those two model runs and potentially readdress the habitat unit issue. Mr. Salt said he said he would recommend eliminating as many as they can as long, as they can still meet the intent of the law. Mr. May said that it would be important to address the underlying needs for the components of analysis being recommended for elimination. He said it was important to estimate the projected benefits of a project, but that the current system is taking a tremendous amount of resources and not providing the type of information that is useful. Ms. Power agreed that this issue needed to be addressed. Mr. May noted there are different screenings that are used to get projects to Congress for authorization and funding.

Ms. Wehle said that if OMB is the problem then they need to engage and educate them and give them an opportunity to hear why it isn't working and maybe there is an alternative that meets their concerns. Currently no one is being served, including OMB and they need to fix this problem systematically. Ms. Wehle said the goal should be to have someone talk with OMB. Mr. Salt said they still have work to do on this. Mr. Ammon suggested they engage the NAS and see if they could also support this.

### **General Public Comment**

None

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

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**Welcome and Administrative Items**

Ms. Onley called the meeting to order at 8:41 AM. The May meeting minutes were presented. Mr. Woodley made a motion to approve the minutes which was seconded by Mr. Christian. The minutes were approved without objection. Ms. Onley said that she would like to propose that Mr. Dan Kimball be appointed as the Chair of the Working Group and Mr. Greg Knecht be appointed as Vice Chair. Mr. The proposal was passed without objection.

Ms. Onley announced that Mr. Bush wanted to clarify some of the comments made the prior day during the PIR discussion. He said the model is a conceptualization of how they are going to operate any given project and it is a system-wide operation. When the modeling results are unacceptable because they cause adverse impacts to habitat or a savings clause problem, the results have to be fixed operationally and they will adjust the models until they solve the problem. So they keep modeling until they pass some legal thresholds.

Mr. Collins said they had a problem with the original C-111 project which is now organized into Phase I and Phase II. The model runs did get out of control but the problem has been fixed. Ms. Onley said there are some good case studies that would help the members see the challenges. Mr. Woodley agreed the case study concept would be excellent. Mr. Ammon suggested the case studies be presented when they come back with the detailed recommendations at the next Task Force meeting. He said models will only go so far and they can get the information they need in the field through adaptive management. Mr. Collins said that is why we need buy-in from the leadership and they need it in writing. Ms. Onley said a case study would be helpful and they can discuss what it is they need from the leadership and how it should be memorialized.

**Consultation**

*C-111 Spreader Canal Phase I*

Mr. Michael Collis provided a presentation reviewing the project purpose and location. The purpose is to increase flows through Taylor Slough into Florida Bay. The team is working on the project assurances, water reservations, the draft Biological Assessment and the writing of the report. He reviewed the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) (Alternative 2D) and the changes that were made as a result of the value engineering. He noted there are slight changes to the TSP from what was presented several months ago. The draft PIR will be completed by November 2008 and published in the federal register by February 2009. The design test, originally estimated at \$4.2 million, will be a miniature version of the spreader canal. The target for having the design test completed is FY09 and the NEPA process has been started.

Mr. Collins noted they spent a lot of time negotiating with FDOT to try and pick a bridge location and asked if the test feature could eventually be used for the actual spreader canal. Mr. Collis said it will be unlikely that the location of the design test will be the permanent location adding the goal of the test is to learn from it and determine where the full scale feature should go. Ms. Onley asked why there was a gap in the schedule. Mr. Collis noted the period in between November and February is the time for independent technical review and external peer review.

Ms. Power asked how it compares to the project in the Yellow Book. Mr. Collis noted the Yellow Book never had the project split into two PIRs and they are focusing on the first PIR. The PIR II will look more like what was envisioned in the Yellow Book. Mr. Collins said they were able to get a lot of buy-in by dividing it in half. The goal was sheetflow and to restore a lot of the wetland areas and mangrove shoreline along Biscayne Bay.

Mr. Stu Appelbaum said the plan that was authorized in WRDA 2000 was \$94 million. While there is nothing prohibiting them from recommending a better plan, the question will be whether it will exceed their existing authority. It becomes more of a strategy of what it is needed to achieve authorization.

Mr. Salt emphasized that the NAS' recommendation for IAR were really saying look at ways to do increments that achieve significant restoration lift. This will be the first project where the first increment is intended to make a difference in Taylor Slough. There are a lot of uncertainties in the models and rather than rely on the models they will lay out a series of features on the ground and adjust the operations. They are trying to strike a balance in restoring sheetflow in a way that does not flood property owners to the north. He is disappointed that they can't figure out where to put the bridge, but right now there is a lot of uncertainty.

Commissioner Diaz said the mandate is clear on the flooding issues and asked 'who pulled the trigger and said no on the bridge issue'. Mr. Ammon said they had initially agreed to a location but in the PDT process they could not get concurrence from the partners on the location. There were concerns with the impacts of a lot of water coming through that location on the existing level of service flood protection provision in WRDA. That is one of the reasons they started looking at the two PIR phase to collect field data by actual operation of a small scale spreader canal. There were also concerns associated with the topography. Because of those two issues it is his understanding that FDOT will put in culverts where the bridge is proposed and asphalt type base will be used to raise water levels without affecting the road and the bridge is deferred until the test is complete. It will put more of a burden on the state and federal governments for the construction of the bridge, but it will be in the right location once the test is done. Commissioner Diaz asked about the costs sometime in the future and the potential for it to never get built. Mr. Collins said cost is an issue and a concern and they do not know what it will cost until the location has been determined adding that he also has concerns with Phase II. Mr. Collins said this is the case study for how not to do something.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Julie Hill (Audubon of Florida) said Audubon appreciated the way Phase I was dealt with and they look forward to Phase II adding it is one of the projects where they will quickly see benefits.

Mr. Mark Lewis (Superintendent, Biscayne National Park) said he has a number of concerns including Mr. Collins' comments that Phase II is problematic. Phase I is a great project but unless they do Phase II they will be doing environmental harm to one of their National Parks and they must do Phase II. Mr. Rock Salt said he is not as pessimistic and they are committed to making sure they do not have negative consequences.

Ms. Onley said she heard general consensus for this project and strong concerns expressed concerning Phase II. Mr. Salt said the concerns are due to the uncertainties but once they have the empirical data it will be easier for everyone to come together and work to move forward.

### *Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands*

Mr. Ernie Clarke provided a presentation reviewing the project scope and location. He noted the project objective is to restore a more natural hydrology to support the native habitats and organisms. He reviewed the management measures in the Alternative Formulation Phase noting there were twenty alternatives with the final array containing five alternatives. Alternative O was selected as the desired endpoint and it was decided to phase the project. Alternative O Phase I includes the low hanging fruits and they redid the calculations of benefits and costs. He reviewed the major features noting they extend as far north as the Deering Estate and as far south as the Florida City Canal. The total cost is estimated to be \$498 million. The project meets the two constraints in WRDA 2000: no elimination or transfer of existing legal water sources and maintain existing levels of service for flood protection. Upcoming tasks include independent technical review in October with model certification ongoing. The report will be published in the Federal Register in January 2009 with authorization projected for WRDA 2010. Compared with the Yellow Book, the BCW was approximately \$300 million for the conceptual plan and we estimate that plan to cost \$1 billion today. There is a new requirement where the planning models have to be certified and will be done by an outside consultant.

Mr. Woodley asked if they were able to determine any opportunities in this process for IAR and whether some feature could be done on a smaller scale. Mr. Clarke said that is the approach they are taking and there may be opportunities to conduct field tests south of the Florida City canal.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Khalil Kettering (National Parks Conservation Association) noted two issues they are concerned with is water storage capacity during the dry season and what will happen with lands the District is looking to purchase in light of the US Sugar negotiations. He asked for the timeframe and costs associated with Phase II.

Mr. Clarke said that for Phase I a total of 754 acres still need to be acquired from private parties or FPL and there is currently no schedule for Phase II. Mr. Collins said the reason there is no storage is because there is no land available.

Mr. Mark Lewis said this project could be the poster child for modeling problems and those problems along with not figuring out the benefits make it difficult to tell what the project will do. The only time they will be able to provide benefits is when it is raining and the vegetation and ground is wet anyway. He questions how this project will provide 75% of the benefit. If Phase I does such a great job, then why spend another \$400 million on Phase II. Phase I was half the price of Alternative O six months ago and now it is 20% of the price and he asked what was going on. He was concerned that they are somehow turning Phase I into the entire project. This is probably the most expensive land in the county, but there is an opportunity to do some good things here and he said he was not sure this plan adequately projects what they can accomplish.

Mr. Clarke said everyone acknowledge the modeling did not work in this case, but the benefits evaluation they used depended on the historical record not the modeling. The cost of Alternative O Phase I is roughly 40% adding there was an error when they assigned O&M costs for a much larger plan. The area they indicate will be hydrated by the plan represented the team's best guess.

Ms. Onley noted there was general support for Phase I recognizing that they start something and learn from it and that they will never be able to model these things perfectly. Mr. Woodley said that as policy makers they need to make certain that the management of this project will be in accordance with the adaptive technique emphasizing that the idea of using incremental approach is to learn, not to build Phase I and then walk away and that is not the motivating spirit behind it.

Ms. Power noted Mr. Lewis' statements were concerning and this is an example where the modeling was not sure and you have diametrically opposed positions. She said she was glad to hear those concerns adding it is not something you hear often. Mr. Collins said he did not see it as a counterpoint and they had Congressmen and farmers concerned. He said he does not for a second believe they are not going to proceed further on this issue. If they do not move forward, then all the concerns that have been raised will be realized.

Mr. Appelbaum said they have very dedicated, passionate people working on these PDTs who try to work through the issues. When the PDTs get stuck the issues are elevated and resolved at a high level. If you go back to the Yellow Book this particular project was sequenced late because of the wastewater reuse. It was moved forward because of concerns with land not being available in the future. Ms. Susan Markley (DERM) said that as a PDT member there are a lot of passion and assertive personalities. The PDTs are trying to use the limited modeling tools to maximize the benefits and sometimes that requires them to back up. Miami Dade County is very supportive of this project and they are concerned with the impacts of the canal discharges. Ms. Onley said that it is helpful to hear from different people who are working on these projects.

Mr. Kettering (National Parks Conservation Association) noted the timeline for this project adding the footprint for the BBCW is constantly under duress. He questioned how much of a benefit can they have if development and mining is permitted.

Mr. Ammon said they worked multiple years with consultants to develop new models but at the end of the day those models did not work. Although it is nice to have models there are alternative methods.

### **General Public Comment**

Mr. John Arthur Marshall (Arthur R. Marshall Foundation) said he appreciated the discussions adding the ultimate purpose of the models is to generate data. The fall back for best professional judgment is to go back to the Conceptual Ecological Models (CEMs). He has never heard consensus on habitat units being the best way to go and there has to be a better way and he urged them to look for alternative methods. In 1981 Art Marshall talked about the C-111 and what they needed to do in the Marshall Plan and he urged them to get this done.

Mr. May agreed the CEMs are a wonderful tool. He said that Mr. John Ogden is trying to quantify the input and output for the current CEMs. Currently the input and output can't be quantified and at ant rate best professional judgment is the ultimate tool. At the system-wide and CERP level they have the system-wide indicators and the system status report. Both tools have objective metrics and the next step would be to integrate the knowledge from these tools into policy decisions. He encouraged anyone who is interested in these types of things to attend the Science Workshop planned for September 25 – 26, 2008.

Ms. Onley announced the next meeting is planned for December and the members will be polled on their availability. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

### **Enclosures:**

1. Administrative Items
  - a. Agenda
  - b. Draft Meeting Minutes, May 2008
  - c. Evaluation Summaries
2. Working Group and Science Coordination Group Recommendations
  - a. Strategy and Biennial Report
  - b. Plan for Coordinating Science
  - c. Land Acquisition Strategy
3. Project Implementation Report (PIR) Streamlining
4. Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS)
5. Consultation Workshop
  - a. C-111 Spreader Canal Draft Project Implementation Report (PIR)
  - b. Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Draft Project Implementation Report (PIR)