

*Approved Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Coral Springs, Florida
March 7, 2012*

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Rachel Jacobson called the meeting to order at 12:40 PM and introduced her Vice Chair, Greg Munson. She recognized Jim Moran, Governing Board member at the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Patrick Hayes, Martin County Commissioner and COL Pantano from the Jacksonville District. Ms. Shannon Estenoz provided some administrative announcements and reminded everyone to take side bar conversations outside since the meeting was being recorded. Ms. Jacobson welcomed Ms. Sally Yozell, new Task Force member representing the Department of Commerce and noted that Commissioner Diaz was unable to attend due to a family matter. She reviewed the agenda topics that include an update on the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) as well as an update from the Working Group (WG) on the public workshops held to date. They will also have an opportunity to bid farewell to Mr. Stu Appelbaum who is retiring and thank Mr. Dan Kimball who served as WG Chair for four years.

The following members were in attendance:

Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior

Greg Munson, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection

James M. Erskine, Water Resources Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

David Hawk for Linda Lawson, Director, Office of Safety, Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of Transportation

Karen T. Marcus, Commissioner, Palm Beach County

Melissa Meeker, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Stan Meiburg for Bob Sussman, Senior Policy Counsel to the Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Patty Power for Jim Shore, General Counsel, Seminole Tribe of Florida

Rock Salt for Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, U.S. Department of the Army

Ethan Shenkman for Ignacia Moreno, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice

Sally Yozell, Director of Policy and Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce

Kevin Powers, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission

Shannon Estenoz, Director, Everglades Restoration Initiatives

Mr. Greg Munson thanked Ms. Jacobson, members of the public and those representing every level of government. He said he continues to be very enthusiastic about the future of the Everglades and noted the renewed sense of partnership he is seeing with the federal partners and stakeholders. He congratulated the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Interior (DOI) for hitting every single milestone so far in the CEPP. He thanked the SFWMD for their hard work and the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes for being present at this meeting. He reported that although the dialogue is continuing they are in the midst of some very productive discussions with EPA in trying to get a water quality proposal that works for the Everglades and improves water quality in the ecosystem. He thanked Administrator Lisa Jackson for her commitment to reviewing the water quality plan Governor Scott put in front of all the federal parties last fall. The Governor is very committed to the plan and the hard work by the federal partners has been heartening. Mr. Munson reminded everyone that they are still in the midst of lean economic times and they need to be continually mindful that they need to make the most of the funds they have. He expressed gratitude to the Florida Legislature, Gov. Scott asked for money to be included for Everglades restoration and it looks like it may be funded for \$30 million next year.

Ms. Jacobson noted the approval of the meeting minutes has been deferred until after the break. She reported that Secretary Salazar continues to have the Everglades as his top priority. Since the last Task Force meeting, DOI announced the establishment of the Everglades Headwaters Refuge and Conservation Area and also announced a rule on the prevention of importation of injurious snakes. The federal government has a robust request in the President's Budget that is currently before Congress for continued Everglades restoration. For the Park Service, they have received Congressional approval to plan for the next 5.5 miles of Tamiami Trail. They have seen a lot of progress but they can't be complacent. She commended the staff on the ground for all of their hard work, describing them as heroes.

Task Force Member Whiparound

Mr. Ethan Shenkman said that he along with Mr. Keith Saxe were delighted to be present on behalf of Ms. Ignacia Moreno. Ms. Sally Yozell said she had the opportunity to take a tour the prior day noting it has been ten years since she had the opportunity to sit on this Task Force. She was very impressed by what she saw with Tamiami Trail. The tour reminded her of the 1990s when they started to see some of the indicators such as the crash of the sea grasses in Florida Bay that told us a lot of what was going on in the Everglades. She will continue to bring up monitoring and harp on the science to make sure they get the water right.

Ms. Melissa Meeker said she wanted to build on Mr. Munson's comments. She always talks about the three legged stool: water quality; CERP with the Central Everglades Planning Project; and state water programs, specifically the northern Everglades Plan where they continue to make progress. The Florida Legislature and the Governor has continued funding in these tight times and it shows the state is committed to moving things forward.

Mr. Rock Salt said it was cool to be back and noted Ms. Darcy was unable to attend because she was testifying before the Appropriations Subcommittee. They have a good budget proposal for 2013 with \$150 million for Everglades and \$150 million for the Herbert Hoover Dike

remediation. He said they are pleased with their budget request. For those that have engaged with the Congress, he noted that the last couple of years have been very critical of the split of their mission focus. There is a little over \$500 million of the Corps budget that has been for environmental restoration projects and there has been a pretty constant chatter that the Corps needs to focus on its principal mission of navigation and flood control. He noted that Governor Scott sent a positive letter to the president recognizing the efforts on the federal side. They had a conservation gathering and the president included the Everglades as one of his key priorities. He said he was eager to hear about the CEPP which is one of five pilot projects. The goal is to have the CEPP serve as a model of how the Corps does its planning and the days of 10 year studies will be never more. Ms. Jacobson added that restoring the Everglades is not only about the ecosystem but also about much more in terms of human values and benefits. Interior hosted a conservation conference with about 800 participants and the Everglades was a dominant theme.

Mr. Stan Meiburg, Deputy Regional Administrator for Region 4 attended for Bob Sussman. He stated the Everglades is also a top priority for EPA. Their main focus has been in working with state of Florida on their collective obligations under the Clean Water Act (CWA). EPA is very mindful of the relationship among all the elements (Quantity, Quality, Timing and Distribution) of Everglades restoration. This partnership is really important and he thanked Ms. Jacobson and Ms. Estenoz for their leadership. It is clear that everyone wants to ensure that when they are delivering water to the Everglades that it is clean water. They are also very mindful of cost considerations since these are challenging times for all levels of government. He said he was pleased to echo that they are working closely with the state of Florida.

Mr. James Erskine said that it was encouraging to hear the leadership is engaged with the Everglades. The Miccosukee tribe resides mainly in WCA 3 an area called the tribal Everglades. The story in the tribal Everglades is not as bright and there have been a lot of impacts to the tribal lands, culture, tree islands and water quality and those things are central to the tribe's culture and beliefs. He hopes that as the central Everglades project moves forward each of these things can be addressed and communicated with the tribe as expeditiously as the planning is going to move forward. Mr. Kevin Powers said he looked forward to a very productive meeting. Ms. Patty Power attended on behalf of Mr. Jim Shore and said she was also looking forward to the presentations. Mr. David Hawk attended for Ms. Linda Lawson who was unable to attend.

USDA and Everglades Restoration

Ms. Mills said Everglades restoration is a top priority for Secretary Vilsack and the department. The Conference held the prior week was hosted by Secretary Salazar and they celebrated all of the work done by the federal family with its partners in Florida. The president celebrated the Everglades which is good news. They recognize the multiple values of a healthy Everglades to the state's economy, culture and way of life. Recreation and tourism is a \$60 billion a year industry and agriculture contributes \$90 billion a year to the state's economy. She urged them not to lose sight of the incredible bounty that is provided from this area to the rest of the country. They are mindful that they are in tough fiscal times and they have to invest dollars wisely. USDA and NRCS are bringing to the table some tried and true practices. There has been a

significant shift in how they do their work and more and more they are taking a watershed scale approach, looking at the entire ecosystem.

Ms. Mills provided a presentation and noted they have focused a lot in the northern Everglades because that is where they feel USDA can bring the greatest resources to the table. Over the last two fiscal years they have provided \$210 million in financial assistance combined with almost \$200 million through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). They have worked with willing landowners and oftentimes they are visionary landowners who recognize the value of protecting water quality, water quantity and open spaces. In addition to the WRP there are other easement programs and they have invested nearly \$9 million in easement purchases through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and Grasslands Reserve Program. They have also invested over \$16 million in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Conservation Security Program (CSP). As part of her presentation she reviewed pictures of several projects that are ongoing in Florida, some of which are great examples of sheetflow being restored. She closed by saying that they are working in many areas such as in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) with many partners such as the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) which are yielding tremendous benefits to the Everglades. Ms. Jacobson added that the work the FWS is doing in the northern Everglades in the establishment of the headwaters Refuge and the conservation area is distinct from but complimentary to the work that USDA is doing.

Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)

Ms. Meeker said the staff from the agencies deserve a huge amount of appreciation for making this happen. People are interested and very engaged. Some of the themes that have been raised include water supply, Lake Okeechobee, a critical lynchpin and legitimate concerns have been raised on the recreational piece.

Ms. Taplin provided a presentation and reminded everyone that the CEPP is not new and is a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) with the same goals. They are combining some features in order to move CERP implementation forward. First generation projects are under construction and second generation projects are in the final stages of planning. All those projects are on the periphery and the logical next step is to get to the heart of the system, the central Everglades. The goal is to reduce undesirable discharges to the estuaries; deliver new sources of clean water to the central Everglades and Everglades National Park (ENP) and restore habitat in the central Everglades, focusing on the "River of Grass". The CERP components include storage treatment and conveyance in the EAA, decompartmentalization and sheetflow enhancement, seepage management as well as operational changes within the conservation areas. They are targeting within 18 months to get to a Final Chief's Report. She reviewed each of the four phases (scoping, analysis, review and confirmation) as well the In-Progress Reviews (IPRs) with the Corps leadership which would allow them to get decisions made along the way rather than at the end. From November through January they were in the scoping phase and developed the scope for the study, identified problems, objectives, constraints, considerations and assumptions and identified tools and methods to evaluate potential solutions to identified problems. She reviewed the NEPA comments received which included but were not limited to concerns with water quality

requirements, water quality and quantity assumptions, savings clause analyses, use of existing SFWMD lands, Modified Water Deliveries (MWDs) project features, use of adaptive management, seepage control, incorporation of ASR, recreation and incorporation of new science. The Department of Interior received authorization from Congress for bridging and the assumption is that the 5.5 miles will be constructed. They are currently in the analysis phases and she reviewed all the activities they have undertaken to date. They are trying to focus on the most viable things to address the solutions. Melissa Meeker added that monthly updates are provided to the SFWMD's Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) as well as the Governing Board.

Kim Taplin noted that in order to make the 18 month schedule they are doing things differently and reviewed the formulation strategy. The plan is to look at things north of the red line and do a robust optimization of those features and combination of those features to build their alternative plans. The amount of new water they can deliver will drive how much DECOMP they can do with that new water and not over drain the system. Depending on how much water is moved south will determine how much seepage management is needed. She reviewed the management features that will be looked at north of the red line which include shallow storage, deep storage, Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs), Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) and operations. For the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and ENP, south of the red line, the management measures they will look at include canal plugs and backfill, spoil mound removal, spreader canals, levee removal, gaps, gated water control structures, culverts, weirs, bridging, collector canal and operations. The schedule was reviewed and the goal is to evaluate the final array of alternatives and select the preliminary Tentatively Selected Plan by October 30, 2012. It is a very aggressive schedule but she is confident with the caliber and expertise of the team.

Ms. Jacobson said they have to applaud the Corps and the District for meeting their milestones so far. This plan is thoughtful and smart and she likes the fact that they are recognizing that there are concurrent analyses taking place such as with water quality and they are nimble enough to accommodate those concurrent processes. As they move forward Interior stands ready to assist in any way they can. Mr. Salt thanked Ms. Taplin and Ms. Meeker for all of the terrific work. He admitted he gets an emotional thrill when folks ask the Corps of Engineers to slow down. His goal is to have this become part of the second generation and he would rather not wait until they get another WRDA bill. He said he was exceedingly confident with the team and very optimistic. On Lake Okeechobee, he noted he has spent some time talking to the Corps leadership about the risk related to the current lake operation schedule which is driven almost entirely by engineering concerns with the dike. They are working hard to work on the most critical/weak areas in the dike. He has asked Corps leadership to perhaps consider some appropriate effort to raise the lake levels. The response was that they have spent several million dollars already and are scheduled to spend \$150 million in 2013. They are spending quite a bit of money to deal with these areas and that is a separate effort to look at what modifications are needed. As the team works on this there should be some prudent assumptions as to what will be available in the lake. They should acknowledge that there will likely be relief on the dike stability side.

Mr. Munson said the state appreciates USDA's efforts with Florida's ranchers and farmers. It makes a difference when it can be shown that there can be good business and good environmental policy going on at the same time.

Ms. Power asked about the significance of the red line. Ms. Taplin explained the red line represents inflows to the natural areas in Water Conservation Area 3, so it is the water budget that gets moved south from Lake Okeechobee and the EAA and how they design the best features in the conservation areas to best distribute and handle that water. Mr. Salt added that the National Academy of Science (NAS) kept saying that they needed to get increments of restoration. The NAS asked the Corps how they could get an increment of restoration with the lands they own. They asked how much additional water they could generate from the lake to be delivered for CERP purposes, both restoration and other water related needs. It is that optimizing or designing the combination of facilities with the available lands they have along with what gets done down below to get the most lift on the environmental side.

Ms. Yozell said this is super impressive and asked about the monitoring piece and whether that has been designed to get the right science in there. The jobs and dollars associated with tourism are important and they need to make sure they get it right. Ms. Taplin replied that the monitoring will be part of the Adaptive Management Plan and the monitoring will be tailored to the features in the recommended plan. Ms. Salt added that there is a ton of monitoring that is going on that is part of the base monitoring and this is supplementing the base stuff.

COL Pantano recognized Ms. Taplin and Mr. Matt Morrison for their work on the CEPP. He noted that Ms. Taplin takes the stakeholders' concerns very seriously. He presented her with a coin on behalf of the Jacksonville District and noted how proud he was of her.

Working Group (WG) and Science Coordination Group (SCG) Sponsored Public Workshop

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone that at the October 2011 Task Force meeting the CEPP was kicked off. One of the concerns was that if the planning process was going to be accelerated significantly they needed to ensure the public and stakeholders did not get left behind. The Task Force directed the WG to establish a protocol for enhancing the public and stakeholder dialogue for the CEPP. The broad goals at that time were to maximize and build on existing partnerships and minimize administrative costs. They have applied adaptive implementation principles and she noted that the workshops are in addition to the regular Corps meetings and processes. Nothing has been taken away and the Corps is still doing its NEPA and PDT processes. The workshops have been designed to among other things add value for the public and the agencies involved and provide CEPP planning and technical information to help the public keep up with the volume of information. A draft protocol was developed to outline these goals and guide initial efforts.

She reviewed the graphical representation of the feedback loop to remind everyone that the information from the workshops is passed on to the WG, SCG and the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) and then to the Task Force. The Task Force can formally transmit the information from the workshops to the Corps and the SFWMD, the local sponsor. She noted that five public workshops have been held, four were sponsored by the WG and one

was sponsored by the SCG. Issues are now bubbling to the top and the first set was related to recreation issues and concerns with construction in the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and how those features might impact recreational activities. It was decided to have an entire workshop dedicated to recreation. Recreational issue divided into two parts and the first workshop was held on March 1st with the second one planned for April. Other issues raised included having workshops during the evening not just during the day and at locations further down south. It was suggested that a workshop be dedicated to just science and the SCG sponsored a two-day public workshop in February. That was a successful and well attended workshop with many people viewing the workshops over the web. She reviewed the workshop topics covered to date and noted that a “parking lot” tool allows staff to keep track of what the public is thinking about especially when the time is not ripe to discuss a particular issue. A CEPP web portal was created at www.sfrestore.org and all of the workshop information, handouts and videos are available. There is a tremendous amount of interest in incorporating the science into the planning process. There is a lot of new science and the SCG held a workshop to make sure the public understands. She thanked all of the staff for a phenomenal job in putting these workshops together.

Mr. Nick Aumen, sitting in for Ms. Susan Markley, Interim SCG Chair provided a report on the successful two-day science workshop which was held in February. He noted there is a sense of urgency and that is one of the reasons that CEPP exists. They recognize there are areas of the Everglades that continue to decline and they need to accelerate their efforts to do things about it but not despair. It is clearly evident that there are areas that will respond to their intervention efforts. Current declines can be mitigated or reversed. There is significant new science that is relevant to CEPP since the Yellow Book in 2000. There are new and improved tools, particularly models that will help planners and policy makers make decisions. They were reminded by participants to take a practical focus on what this next increment can accomplish. He noted that Mr. Fred Sklar prepared several slides to show changes in tree islands that could be viewed using 3D glasses. He noted they have good information in certain areas on how tree islands are declining. He provided a 3D presentation contrasting tree islands that have and have not been impacted. One of the outcomes from the science workshop is that they are trying to prioritize restoration in areas that are most in peril but have the highest potential to respond to increased flows. They know more now than in 2000 about the functionality of the ridge and slough landscape. The science has shown them that many of the areas will respond but timeliness is important. One of the things they now know is that the pre-impacted Everglades was significantly wetter than previously thought and flow through Taylor Slough may have been 4 times greater than present, and some sloughs never dried out. They have new modeling tools available with flexible mesh size where the cell size can be reduced. Throughout the workshop they communicated that it is very important to take this new science and use it in a practical way to focus on where CEPP will take us in this next increment.

Ms. Estenoz noted she was one of the webcast viewers of the science workshop and one of the take home messages for her was that when they talk about more flow it doesn't mean deeper water. The next workshop is scheduled for March 9th and the workshop on recreation will be scheduled in early April. The WG/SCG recommendations are that the TF transmit the entire record of the public workshops to the Corps and staff will prepare a transmittal letter from the

Task Force Chair to the Corps transmitting the workshop record, highlighting what has been heard during the public workshops and outlining next steps. Ms. Jacobson congratulated them on these efforts that go above and beyond the normal process of engaging the public. It is encouraging to see the participation in the science workshop. Ms. Meeker made a motion to accept the WG/SCG recommendation which was seconded by Ms. Karen Marcus. All voted in favor, none opposed. Ms. Estenoz noted that as they move into the analysis phase there is concern that the process of transmittal be relevant and be as efficient as possible. Staff recommends that henceforth the Task Force authorize staff to transmit the public record of WG/SCG workshops to the Corps on a continuous basis as the workshops occur. Ms. Meeker made a motion which was seconded by Ms. Marcus. There were no objections, motion carried.

Recognition of Mr. Stu Appelbaum

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Stu Appelbaum for 34.5 years of service. Ms. Estenoz read an abbreviated version of his biography and thanked Mr. Appelbaum on behalf of her staff and herself for all he has done for Everglades restoration. Mr. Salt said he will miss the presentations and fun in Stu's briefings more than anything else. He is sad and happy for Mr. Appelbaum as he moves on. Ms. Yozell said that this is bittersweet for her. She said they owe so much to him for everything he has taught them. Ms. Meeker said that when they think about Everglades restoration, the most familiar face is Mr. Appelbaum's. He leaves behind big shoes that they can't fill.

Mr. Meiburg said he hears consistently how much people have respected Mr. Appelbaum from all levels at EPA. He congratulated him and wished him well. Ms. Power said she has been working on this for 16 years this month. The Everglades has sustained its top policy commitment for all these years and she has often asked why and recognized that it has to do with the people. She thanked Mr. Appelbaum for all his efforts and said she hopes he doesn't go too far. Mr. Kimball noted that it has been 8 years since he came to ENP and they have accomplished a lot with the bridge on Tamiami Trail, wrapping up the 8.5 square mile area and the C-111 SC. He thanked Mr. Appelbaum for all he has done a lot on the ground for ENP.

Mr. Appelbaum was presented with a Clyde Butcher print. Ms. Jacobson noted that people don't ever leave the Everglades. Mr. Appelbaum said he had the opportunity to be up in the Kissimmee the prior day with a Canadian film crew and it gave him the chance to reflect on what they have done and that this effort is a trailblazer and the role model for everything. They get so many calls and requests from around the country and overseas. Others want to be the next Everglades. He said he was proud of what they have done and it is really about the people that he has had the privilege to work with throughout the course of his career. He is proud to be a part of this.

Mr. John Arthur Marshall (Arthur R. Marshall Foundation) noted he has stood in front of more of Mr. Appelbaum's presentation than anyone else in the environmental community. He presented the newest cover of *My Everglades* to COL Pantano for his good work in opening up the flood gates and allowing guys like Mr. Appelbaum do what his does.

The October 2011 meeting minutes were presented. Ms. Meeker made a motion to approve which was seconded by Ms. Power. Minutes were approved without discussion.

Public Comment

Ms. Martha Musgrove (Florida Wildlife Federation) noted how useful it is to have programs such as the EQIP program which is directed towards producers. She complimented the Task Force for the CEPP workshops and the interactive nature which has made them very successful. She said she is somewhat concerned with the April 1st deadline to line up ideas. Several members of the Everglades Coalition plan to submit a letter asking for serious study of consideration of the impact of water through 3B. The WCAs are state owned and do not have the same protection as ENP. The Federation reaffirms its full support in getting the restoration done and the concept that was in CERP is still part of their mantra. They would like to see what trade-offs and balances can be struck in maintaining a mosaic of landscape within the WCAs. One of their hydrologists is putting together a conceptual design of how they can maintain some deep water that will be included with the letter. The Lake Okeechobee schedule and not using the PIR to effect a change is a wise idea. It is impossible to move water around without looking at the schedule.

Ms. Mills noted the Farm Bill may be up for re-authorization this year. There are approximately 46 members in the House Agriculture Committee and 50% of them are brand new.

Ms. Sara Fein (Everglades Law Center) thanked Mr. Appelbaum for always being very candid. She remembered working with him on the one mile bridge for Tamiami Trail. She thanked the SFWMD and the Corps for being willing to engage the public the way they have. They are very excited about the process and said this is the way to build consensus and serve as a model for the rest of the country. They look forward to participating in this process in the future.

Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (NPCA and Everglades Coalition) said she considered herself privileged to have been able to work and learn from Mr. Appelbaum. The Everglades community is extremely committed to the central Everglades process and they are ready to “roll up their sleeves”. She acknowledged the herculean effort by staff to stay on track. A resolution (Encl. 2) was passed in January by the 56 organizations that make up the Everglades Coalition, very strongly supporting the completion of a PIR that addresses the key obstacles recognizing that significantly reduced planning times are going to be a great asset to Everglades restoration. She closed by saying that the model that was created with the workshops has created a forum where stakeholders that don't always talk to each other have begun to do so. She thanked the Task Force for ensuring that all of the records from the workshops get sent over formally and be included in the process.

Ms. Jacobson said the resolution will be a part of the record for this meeting.

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) thanked Ms. Mills for her leadership as well as the entire USDA team for bringing to light the ways they can use creative cooperation and find ways to reach some of their restoration goals. There is a concern with the proposed wind farm project in Palm Beach County with it not being compatible with restoration. They are trying to work with the company to ensure enough studies are ongoing to see what the impacts will be. This may be a topic that may be appropriate for further discussion at the WG level. On the central Everglades issue she noted that at the last meeting she brought the Audubon fact sheet which discussed the tipping points which was also brought out by the NAS' report. They may be

nearing a point from which they can't return. So many of the recommendations to avoid that have been incorporated into this process that they are more encouraged that they can avoid that type of irreversible tipping point. The hope this will move beyond a pilot and become a model for restoration. She ended by saying that this whole effort is about people and not agencies or organizations. If everyone made a list of individuals who were trailblazers every list would have Mr. Appelbaum's name on it.

Ms. Jacobson said that they will put the wind farm issue in the 'parking lot' since it is something to keep in mind as they continue with restoration. They have to find that balance of promoting renewable energy and preserving and conserving bird populations.

Status of Northeast Shark Slough/L-31 N Shallow Seepage Barrier

Mr. Tom MacVicar noted the Lakebelt project is being funded by the Miami Dade Limestone Products Industry. The Lakebelt was an initiative of the state in the 1990s and all the planning took place concurrent with the CERP planning. He reviewed the location of the project noting it is about 65,000 acres. Half of limestone products that come from the state of Florida come from this area of Miami Dade County. In order to fund a consistent mitigation program for mining it imposed a fee on every ton of lime rock that comes out of that boundary. The proposed project is for a 7 mile underground seepage barrier from Tamiami Trail to the levy at the 8.5 SMA. This feature is needed to allow for more water to flow under the bridge. The project is currently under construction, however, they are not building all 7 miles now. The L-31 North is one of the busiest canals in terms of water flow and it acts as a permanent drain on ENP. This has been a long identified problem that was taken on by CERP and they are trying to get a jumpstart on it. He provided a technical overview of how the test wall was built and analyzed, how the mitigation credits are calculated as well as how the wall is built. Price tag is about \$7.8 million. There is intense monitoring to ensure that it is impermeable, so far every test looks good. They will monitor performance during the June through November wet season. He closed by saying that the entire project has been built with a fee on limestone products shipped out of Miami Dade County.

Mr. Kimball said they have worked closely with Mr. MacVicar and gave him and his team great credit. They have great monitoring out there. If this pilot proves to be a success will it be a huge benefit to ENP. Mr. Munson added that when they talk about a wall that is 30 foot deep and 7 miles long, that is truly impressive. He reinforced when they have businesses out there trying to do the right thing.

Leadership of the WG and SCG

Ms. Estenoz noted the WG and SCG have provided nominations for new leadership. Mr. Kimball is rotating off as Chair of the WG after 4 years of service. The WG is nominating Mr. Greg Knecht as Chair and Mr. Barry Rosen as Vice Chair. Motion made, seconded, none were opposed, motion carried. The SCG has been under acting leadership of Ms. Susan Markley for several years. Ms. Markley will stay in that acting position since her organization is currently undergoing a re-organization. The SCG is nominating Mr. Nick Aumen to serve as Vice Chair. Motion made, seconded, none were opposed, motion carried.

Recognition of Mr. Dan Kimball

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Kimball for his extraordinary chairmanship. Mr. Kimball was at the helm during the development of some very important WG products including the briefing papers on new science, climate change and invasive exotic animals. His leadership on climate change has been particularly important because the Everglades is the laboratory where they are seeing the effects of climate change. He also led the WG in the development of the 2008 and 2010 Reports to Congress and he moderated the first two CEPP workshops. She acknowledged that as Superintendent, he already has one of the busiest jobs in the world and to have taken on the role of Chair is quite extraordinary.

Mr. Kimball was presented with a Clyde Butcher print of Tamiami Trail on behalf of the Task Force. Mr. Kimball recognized Mr. Knecht who has been an able Vice Chair, filling in for him on occasions. He is pleased that the WG and SCG could be involved in the CEPP which is an exciting effort and they are ready to move forward into the analysis phase. He noted that as Chair of the WG he has gotten a chance to meet and work with the Everglades community which will help him as he continues to manage ENP.

2012 Task Force Reporting Requirements

Ms. Estenoz noted that one of the reasons they are shooting to have four Task Force meetings this year is because it is a biennial year and the Task Force has some reporting requirements (Strategy and Biennial Report, Integrated Financial Plan, Plan for Coordinating Science and the Land Conservation Strategy). They produce a fifth document, The Cross Cut Budget which is the most useful. She noted the purpose of the reports is to provide an overarching framework for coordinating individual efforts; document our collective and individual plans and efforts; and communicate progress to key audiences and constituencies. The primary goals for 2012 are to revise some of their key objectives to better highlight progress and results and to explore options for improving some of the less specific quantifiable metrics. She explained that they are trying to move away from producing so many hard copies of the reports and move towards an interactive web based product. She provided a live demonstration of how to access information contained in the Strategy and Biennial Report which is available at www.sfrestore.org. She reviewed the proposed schedule for getting the report to the Task Force for approval/acceptance in October or November.

Ms. Jacobson added that it is through those documents that they officially tell their story. Ms. Estenoz added that the TF directed the SCG to reassess some of the changes that are happening in the monitoring program to ensure that as they move forward in the years to come that they continue to use a solid bevy of ecological indicators. The good news is that all of the data necessary for the 2012 Biennial Report has already been collected. She thanked COL Pantano and Ms. Meeker because between the three of them they were able to pull together the minimum dollars needed to actually produce the Stoplight Indicator document that will go into the 2012 Strategy. They will have a full complement of the existing indicators to report to Congress. The SCG will provide recommendations at the June or October TF meeting.

National Research Council (NRC) Update

Ms. Jacobson noted that consistent with the requirements of WRDA 2000, the NRC is to produce a report every two years on an independent scientific review of restoration progress.

Mr. Bob Johnson stated that these reports are jointly sponsored by the Corps, SFWMD and DOI as required by WRDA. No matter how much they may disagree on how to move forward with Everglades restoration there is agreement that they need to use the best possible science. Even before the requirements in WRDA there was recognition to do the best they could in terms of external peer review. In 1999 the National Academy of Science (NAS) established the first of three committees, the Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem (CROGEE) to do external peer review on Everglades restoration efforts. A series of reports were prepared by the CROGEE. The Committee on the Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration (CISRERP) was established in WRDA 2000 and has prepared three biennial reports in 2006, 2008 and 2010. The fourth biennial report is due to come out in June 2012. The CISRERP tasks include: 1) assessment of progress in restoring the natural system; (2) discussion of significant accomplishments; (3) evaluation of scientific and engineering issues that may impact progress; and (4) review of monitoring and assessment protocols to evaluate progress. Mr. Johnson reviewed the process undertaken by the CISRERP to determine the topic for the report. He reviewed the topics that the committee spent the most time on as well as what is likely to be included in the 2012 Report.

The fact checking document will be out to the sponsors in mid-June and the final report will be formally released at the end of June. In the fall of 2012 they will begin the establishment of CISRERP IV and they should start thinking now about what things would be useful to get in front of the committee.

Restoration Program and Project Briefings

Mr. Howie Gonzales provided an update on first and second generation projects. First generation projects include Site 1 Impoundment, Indian River Lagoon – South (IRL S) and Picayune Strand Restoration Project. All were authorized for construction in WRDA 2007 and construction is ongoing. Second generation projects include C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) and Broward County Water Preserve Area. They are currently working on second generation projects which are all nearing completion.

Mr. Tom Teets reviewed the FY 2012 engineering and construction budget which includes \$60 million for O&M and \$106 million for restoration and other projects for a total budget of \$166 million. O&M capital projects include levee protection features, canal bank stabilization, structure replacement and pump station refurbishment. He reviewed the work that is being done on the East Coast Protective Levee to get it up to the standards that are needed for flood protection as well as the work to rehabilitate the S-5A Pump Station which was built back in the 1950s. Restoration and other projects include but are not limited to Compartment B&C, Lakeside Ranch, L-8 Reservoir, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1, Deering Estates and a state of the art environmental laboratory. Ms. Meeker, referring to the Compartment C STA expansion, said that these are very highly managed systems. People think about the

construction costs but not about the O&M that are long term, significant and continue to rise over time.

Ms. Mills said the STAs are quite remarkable. The work that USDA and Interior are doing in the northern Everglades will hopefully reduce the need for these.

Ms. Karen Tippett reviewed the overall President's Budget for the last couple of years. They have been fortunate over the last couple of years and have been able to accomplish quite a bit. She reviewed what was appropriated and thanks to AARA in FY10 they were able to initiate a lot more construction than anticipated. For FY12 they have \$93.9 million for the C&SF, \$45.6 million for Kissimmee and \$3.0 million for Critical Projects. For FY13 they have \$123.8 million for C&SF, \$27.5 million for completion of the Kissimmee and \$2 million for Critical Projects. The Corps and the SFWMD are in the process of updating the cash flow scenarios based on completion of ongoing CERP construction, completion of first generation projects, bringing generation 2 projects online and the CEPP to ensure they keep the 50/50 cost share balance. The Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) will be then be updated and the TF will be briefed on this in the future.

Mr. Salt agreed that IDS needs to be freshened up and asked for the WG to get involved in this so that it is not just a Corps document. Ms. Jacobson agreed that it makes sense for the WG to do this. Ms. Meeker said the Corps and the SFWMD has to go through some internal scenarios first and make some recommendations to the WG. Mr. Salt agreed that the SFWMD and the Corps need to sort out their game plan but the question is how to fold in the CEPP.

General Public Comment

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) said they are enthused to be at this stage where they are actually completing projects. Encouraged everyone that as they move into the operations phase, they look into active adaptive management and grapple with what that means.

Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (NPCA) announced that the Florida Legislative passed an Everglades Day and April 7th will be recognized in the State Legislature to elevate the importance of the Everglades.

Closing Comments

Next Task Force meeting scheduled for June 19th at Main Interior in Washington, DC. Meeting will be webcast.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55PM.

Enclosures:

Briefing Book

1. Administrative Items
 - i. Logistics
 - ii. Agenda
 - iii. Draft meeting minutes, October 2011

2. CEPP Update
3. WG and SCG Sponsored Public Workshops Update
4. Leadership of the WG and SCG
 - i. WG Charter
 - ii. SCG Charter
5. 2012 TF Reporting Requirements presentation
6. National Research Council
 - i. Presentation
 - ii. WRDA 2000 excerpt
7. Restoration Program and Project Briefings
 - i. Corps projects presentation
 - ii. SFWMD presentation
 - iii. Corps budget presentation
8. Background Information
 - i. WRDA 1996 excerpt
 - ii. TF Charter
 - iii. TF Membership
2. Everglades Coalition Resolution