



Minutes
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION
SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE
Joint Meeting

May 06, 2014, 1:00 PM
 Royal Palm Beach Cultural Center
 151 Civic Center Way
 Royal Palm Beach, FL 33411

1. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
James J. Moran	WRAC Chair / SFERTF Advisor	Present
Rachel Jacobson	SFERTF Chair	Present
Kevin Powers	WRAC Vice Chair	Present
Shannon Estenoz	SFERTF Director	Present
Drew Bartlett	SFERTF	Present
Jo-Ellen Darcy	SFERTF	Present
Jose L. Diaz	SFERTF	Present
Arvin Ganesan	SFERTF	Present
Blake Guillory	SFERTF	Present
Ann Mills	SFERTF	Present
Camille Mittelholtz	SFERTF	Present
Ethan Shenkman	SFERTF	Present
Jim Shore	SFERTF	Present
Herschel Vinyard	SFERTF	Present
James Erskine	WRAC Member/SFERTF	Present
David Hawke	SFERTF (Alternate for Mittelholtz)	Present
Billy Causey	SFERTF (Alternate for Yozell)	Present
Jeff Schmidt	WRAC Member/SFERTF (Alternate for Mills)	Present
Jay Gelderman	SFERTF (Alternate for Shenkman)	Present
Patty Power	SFERTF (Alternate for Jim Shore)	Present
Jim Shore	SFERTF	Absent
Ann Mills	SFERTF	Absent
Camille Mittelholtz	SFERTF	Absent
Ethan Shenkman	SFERTF	Absent
Herschel Vinyard	SFERTF	Absent
Sally Yozell	SFERTF	Absent
D. Albrey Arrington	WRAC Member	Present

Mark Perry	WRAC Member	Present
James Humble	WRAC Member	Present
Kristin Jacobs	WRAC Member	Absent
Douglas Bournique	WRAC Member	Present
Douglas Yoder	WRAC Alternate	Present
Samantha Whitcraft	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Jeff Ward	WRAC Alternate	Present
Shelley Vana	WRAC Member	Present
Bob Ulevich	WRAC Alternate	Present
Chuck Collins	WRAC Member	Present
Harry Cronin	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Jeff Ward	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Vincent Encomio	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Jim Reynolds	WRAC Member	Absent
Kurt Harclerode	WRAC Alternate	Present
Michael Harford	WRAC Member	Absent
George L Jones	WRAC Member	Present
William "Chad" Kennedy	WRAC Member	Present
John T. Lamkin	WRAC Member	Present
Joan Lawrence	WRAC Member	Present
Barbara Miedema	WRAC Member	Present
Linda McCarthy	WRAC Alternate	Present
Kimberly Lawrence	WRAC Alternate	Present
Newton Cook	WRAC Member	Present
Don Fox	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Mary Ann Martin	WRAC Member	Absent
Bevin Beaudet	WRAC Alternate	Present
Brian L. Wheeler	WRAC Member	Present
Joe Capra	WRAC Member	Present
Bud Howard	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Michael Collins	WRAC Member	Present
Medora Krome	WRAC Alternate	Absent
John Lesman	WRAC Member	Present
Ashley Tripp	WRAC Alternate	Present
Maelo Reyes	WRAC Alternate	Absent
Malcolm Wade	WRAC Member	Present
Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch	WRAC Alternate	Present
Neale Montgomery	WRAC Member	Present
Harry Raucher	WRAC Member	Present
Pat Martin	WRAC Alternate	Present
Joshua Kellam	WRAC Member	Present
Cherise Maples	WRAC Alternate	Present
Lance R. Bennett	WRAC Member	Present
Erin Deady	WRAC Member	Present
Adam Gelber	WRAC Member	Present
Jane Graham	WRAC Member	Present
Jason Liechty	WRAC Alternate	Present
Tom Jones	WRAC Member	Present
Mike Sweeney	WRAC Alternate	Present
Pam Keyes	WRAC Member	Absent

Jenny Conner Nelms	WRAC Member	Absent
Nancy Payton	WRAC Member	Present
W. Ray Scott	WRAC Member	Present
Karson Turner	WRAC Member	Present

2. Call to Order - Jim Moran, WRAC Chairman and Rachel Jacobson, Task Force Chairman

Mr. Moran called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and welcomed South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF) Chair Rachel Jacobson. Mr. Moran thanked the WRAC and SFERTF for coming together after seven years since the last joint meeting.

Ms. Jacobson expressed the large amount of information to be covered being that the group has not had an opportunity to meet and suggested that there is more material to cover than time on the agenda. Ms. Jacobson encouraged the public to participate in SFERTF meetings for full inclusion in the process.

Mr. Moran announced the removal of the Integrated Delivery Schedule from the agenda and informed everyone that the topic would be covered at the May 7th SFERTF meeting.

3. Introductions and Announcements

WRAC and SFERTF members each took turns making brief announcements and introducing themselves.

Ms. Jacobson announced a meeting of the SFERTF on May 7, 2014 at the Royal Palm Beach Cultural Center.

Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army Civil Works, took a moment to stress the importance of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and announced that the Civil Works Review Board would be meeting on May 23, 2014 to get the project on its way.

Jane Graham, Audubon Florida, stated that she was glad that the South Florida Water Management District's Governing Board (Governing Board) approved CEPP, but was disappointed when the Civil Works Review Board failed to pass it and is glad that it has been scheduled to be heard again on May 23rd.

Mark Perry, Florida Oceanographic Society stated that people living around the St. Lucie estuary and Indian River Lagoon have been fighting to get those waters clean and moving south and were disappointed in the decision of the Civil Works Review Board to not approve CEPP. Mr. Perry said he was encouraged that the item would be on the agenda again and hoped the Ten Mile Creek project along with others would also be discussed.

George Jones, Ocean Research and Conservation Association, expressed his disappointment in the decision of the Civil Works Review Board and welcomed the news that CEPP would be on the next agenda. Mr. Jones also suggested that projects need to have a way to move faster through the process.

Jeff Schmidt, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), informed the group that he was sitting in for SFERTF member Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Mr. Schmidt reiterated USDA's strong commitment to working with landowners and stakeholders to continue to improve water quality and habitat in the Everglades ecosystem. Mr. Schmidt said that by working with existing partners and creating new partnerships innovative solutions can be found that will benefit and protect Florida's natural resources as well as assist farmers and ranchers that serve as stewards of the natural landscape. Mr. Schmidt briefly discussed the recent passage of the Farm Bill.

David Hawk, US Department of Transportation (USDOT), said he was happy to be filling in for Camille Mittelholtz of the USDOT.

Drew Bartlett, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), expressed Secretary Vinyard's regret for not being at the meeting and thanked Secretary Darcy for reconvening the Civil Works Review Board so quickly to review CEPP.

Billy Causey, US Department of Commerce, informed the group that he was filling in for Sally Yozell, Under Secretary of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and noted the group's commitment to water resources.

Jay Gelderman, US Department of Justice, told the group that he was filling in for Ethan Shenkman, Assistant Attorney General, who regretfully could not attend today's meeting.

Patty Power, Seminole Tribe of Florida, said she was filling in for Jim Shore, the Tribe's General Counsel.

4. Kissimmee River Restoration Update - Howard Gonzales Jr., Chief, Ecosystem Branch, Programs and Project Management Division, Jacksonville District, United States Army Corps of Engineers

Howard Gonzales provided the group with the purpose, benefits, and path forward for Kissimmee River Restoration.

WRAC Member / SFERTF Comment

Secretary Darcy said that Kissimmee River Restoration is remarkable and calling it the "Crown Jewel of Everglades Restoration" is accurate. The Secretary continued that because of the partnership between the USACE and the District, huge ecosystem benefits have been achieved and is happy to know that the project will be complete in a couple of years.

Jane Graham said that she was relieved to hear that there was an agreement between the USACE and the District on a path to move forward on Kissimmee River Restoration. Ms. Graham stated that the public thinks of restoration in terms of results, finished projects, restored ecosystems and birds returning to the habitat. Ms. Jane suggested that the public is greatly disdained when a project is caught up in bureaucracies or legalities, so she is pleased that a resolution has been reached. Ms. Graham stated that the Kissimmee River Restoration project and the C-111 project in South Dade are instructive to other projects such as CEPP or other Everglades restoration projects moving forward. Ms. Graham continued that there may be interpretation differences between the USACE and the District but these conflicts in interpretation should be resolved quickly to allow projects to move forward.

Newton Cook, United Waterfowlers of Florida, said that the Kissimmee River Restoration project is an incredible success and congratulated all involved. Mr. Cook said the success is due in part to it being north of Lake Okeechobee (Lake) because it is very hard to complete projects south of the Lake. Mr. Cook continued that management of water in the project area is critical to maintaining restoration activities. Mr. Cook continued that the marsh must remain hydrated, particularly during the dry season which will require the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes (KCOL)schedule (KCOL) to be fixed, and the restored portion of the Kissimmee River Restoration project needs to undergo a prescribed burn where willows and buckrush have grown and are a threat to maintaining restoration goals. Mr. Cook said that Florida requires fire to balance the ecosystem.

Mark Perry echoed Mr. Cooks remarks and stated that currently a needed prescribed burn is taking place in Jonathan Dickson State Park. Mr. Perry agreed that the Kissimmee River Restoration project is a success and commented on his recent visit to the restored portion of the Kissimmee River and the abundant nature he was able to view including alligators and birds. Mr. Perry maintained that restoration was not only important to restoring the habitat but for attenuation of water flows upstream in the Kissimmee River Valley because currently water in the KCOL flows rapidly into the Lake resulting in the need to authorize damaging water releases east and west to the coastal estuaries.

Blake Guillory, Executive Director South Florida Water Management District, said that the District is very excited about moving forward with the project and looking forward to meeting with the USACE this week to map out a path forward according the guidance that has been given. Mr. Guillory said that it is important to remember that there is 30,000 ac-ft of dynamic storage that would be created in the new section of backfill. Mr. Guillory stated that another 100,000 ac-ft of storage may be achieved in the upper reaches of the system through the Headwaters project and said there have been ongoing discussions regarding this opportunity. Mr. Guillory thanked Secretary Darcy for moving discussions forward.

5. Invasive Species Management - Dan Thayer, Bureau Chief, Land Stewardship, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD

Dan Thayer led a discussion regarding the Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area.

WRAC Member / SFERTF Comment

Rachel Jacobson thanked Mr. Thayer for the presentation and thanked the District on behalf of the US Department of Interior (DOI) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for its partnership in tackling this challenging problem. Ms. Jacobson acknowledged that some progress is being made but funding continues to be an obstacle and was appreciative of the state's contribution. Ms. Jacobson stated that the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) has allocated about \$1M per year for the effort. Ms. Jacobson continued that the SFERTF has made developing a comprehensive approach to the management, control, or eradication of invasive species in the Everglades its highest priority and will receive recommendations on moving forward at the SFERTF meeting being held on May 7, 2014.

Mike Collins, Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association/Florida Bay Initiative, stated the cooperative effort between the state and federal agencies is remarkable but the shortfall in funding is severe. Mr. Collins said that we have yet to reach a level of rolling invasives back. Mr. Collins continued that although *Melaleuca* is somewhat under control, species such as *Lygodium* and others are out of control and negatively impacting the Everglades. Mr. Collins asked if there was a plan in place of how to get more funding from Congress or how to elevate this on the Congressional priority list. Mr. Collins said he was on the District's Governing Board when the license was renewed and an estimate of the funding amounts that would be required for meaningful control of invasives was determined and since that funding is yet to be met he expressed concern for long-term impacts and determining a solution. Ms. Jacobson responded that since 2001, DOI has spent approximately \$32M in the Refuge on invasives and although it is uncertain how that compares to what has been spent in other particular units, whether the Park Service or Fish and Wildlife Service, although a lot, is not enough. Ms. Jacobson continued that by demonstrating that federal agencies have a partner that is willing to contribute very substantial matching funds, there is an opportunity to do better both in DOI's budget requests and educating Congress about the dangers of invasive species.

Ms. Jacobson asked Sylvia Pelizza, Area Supervisor for the Peninsula of Florida and Puerto Rico to come forward and offer additional comments. Ms. Pelizza stated that since 2002 the Refuge has tried to put funding on the ground and reiterated the \$1M line item in the budget for invasive control which she agreed is not enough. Ms. Pelizza continued that each year the agency requests \$5M, which is the amount believed necessary for five consecutive years to allow moving into maintenance control with another \$2M - \$3M in the following years to remain within the maintenance range. Ms. Pelizza thanked the District for its \$500,000 contribution this year which will be used to move closer to the maintenance goal. She especially thanked Mr. Moran who is one of the Refuge's biggest supporters.

Mr. Moran asked Ms. Pelizza how much more funding would be needed per year and for how long in order to get the problem solved. Ms. Pelizza answered that if the Refuge were to meet its 2017 performance measure deadline, \$5M per year in addition to the \$1M in funding already being allocated to the issue would be needed.

James Erskine, Seminole Tribe of Florida, asked if the \$5M needed to get into the maintenance and control zone would specifically cover both Lygodium and Melaleuca. Ms. Pelizza responded that both species are covered. Mr. Erskine questioned whether the funding took into account other invasive threats such as Laurel Wilt disease and invasive insects. Ms. Pelizza replied that neither rehabilitation nor other invasive species were included in determining the funds needed to move the Refuge into the maintenance and control phase. Mr. Erskine stated that the list produced by the Working Group which will be distributed at the May 7th SFERTF meeting is much larger than Lygodium and Melaleuca.

Barbara Miedema, Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida, stated that controlling exotics is important and if hundreds of millions to billions of dollars can be spent on getting the water right in terms of water quality and water volume, then all of that would be for naught if invasive species are allowed to come in and decimate the population. Ms. Miedema said that 2017 is only a short time away and \$10M-\$15M seems to be an easy investment when compared to the amount of funds being spent on other restoration projects. Ms. Miedema continued that if there was a mechanism in place for both state and federal parties to join together in support of controlling invasive species, then she would be interested in participating. Ms. Jacobson agreed that restoration projects amounting in billions of dollars in cost are threatened to be undone by invasive species which is why the SFERTF directed the Working Group to come up with a comprehensive plan to deal with the invasives challenge. Ms. Jacobson encouraged the group to educate decision makers who have a say in funding this activity to come together and ensure funds are allocated to this initiative.

Adam Gelber, Atkins North America, Inc., added that exotic species management and control is a viable goal that can be accomplished and should be made to be more of a priority especially since the damage being done is clearly visible and getting worse daily.

Shannon Estenoz, Director, SFERTF, commented for the last ten months, under the auspices of the Working Group and under the direction of the SFERTF in coordination with other agencies, private entities, the Tribes and experts in invasive species, a Strategic Action Framework has been being developed, which is intended to serve as a framework that will allow all parties to organize around this issue in a way that meets the magnitude of the problem with the effort that it warrants. Ms. Estenoz stated that this problem is grossly under-resourced on virtually every piece of state-owned, federally-owned and Tribal lands because of tools that are missing not because of a lack of interest. Ms. Estenoz provided that there is no systematic approach for analyzing risk associated with invasive species for the ecosystem in a way similar to that of the agricultural industry. Ms. Estenoz continued that the United States Drug Administration (USDA) and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) have served as a resource in helping to think through the issue. Ms. Estenoz stated that agriculture has a systematic way of looking at known risks, pending risks, and anticipating future risks and analyzing those risks using that information to prioritize and allocate resources. Ms. Estenoz stated that new critters show up in the system daily and some can be intuitively identified as a risk such as the black and white tegu or the ambrosia beetle, however, there is no adequate way to know whether some particular species should be eradicated quickly, so funds are being distributed in a “scattershot”

manner. Ms. Estenoz concluded that the Strategic Framework approach is a way to look at the issue holistically and develop tools, such as cross-cut budgets, that will help decision makers understand how they can and should resource the problem and ultimately attain success.

James Humble, Miami-Dade Agricultural Practices Advisory Board, stated that Redbay or Swamp Bay is 99% dead from Krome Avenue along Tamiami Trail to Naples. Mr. Humble stated that the same 45 species of beetle, including the Ambrosia beetle, that are killing the Redbays are causing Laurel Wilt disease and negatively affecting avocados. Mr. Humble stated that these beetles cost the avocado farmers \$500K dollars this past season and now trees are being inoculated, using specially developed equipment and with EPA approval, at a cost of about \$2-\$3 per tree. Mr. Humble said that only about 120 trees have been lost since the implementation of the treatment. Mr. Humble stated that the issue may be difficult to get ahead of in Everglades National Park (Park) with treatment approaches having to pass through bureaucratic approvals including permitting. Mr. Humble stated that the python is a problem, but due to specified rules, it cannot be hunted in the Park. Mr. Humble stated that if the problem does not have a solution, then no matter how much money is dedicated to the issue, the problem will go unresolved. Ms. Estenoz responded that the invasion curve is a tool used around the world that says that prevention is the most cost effective measure that can be taken on the issue but is hard to do especially when 85% of plant species enter through the Port of Miami, but the next most cost effective action is early detection and rapid response. Ms. Estenoz continued that control is expensive and maintenance is the least cost effective method used to contain invasive species which is where Lygodium and maybe pythons are in the process, which is why there is a need to establish methods to identify and respond quickly to species that may harm the natural environment.

Joshua Kellam, the ESG Companies, stated that \$5M to \$15M is not a lot of money considering the benefits of controlling invasive species. Mr. Kellam asked Ms. Jacobson who the group should be targeting for the education and funding requests as mentioned in her previous statement. Ms. Jacobson responded that the more the public is made aware of these challenges and the more the Working Group is empowered to bring back concrete suggestions to the SFERTF and the more ideas that are generated from all sources, the more DOI can make the case that these investments can be used wisely. Ms. Jacobson reiterated that the more the public is educated and engaged along with the decision makers who decide the collective federal budget. Mr. Kellam asked if the funds had to be budgeted or if there were funds that could be pulled from elsewhere and applied to the invasive species issue. Ms. Jacobson said that it is best to use budgeted funds, however, in the past funds have been redirected from other projects to invasive species control.

Jane Graham commented that this is an extremely important issue and suggested working to identify a dedicated funding source so that once management and control begins, it is not stopped and re-growth does not occur due to lack of funding.

Mike Collins said the biggest problem is the cultural issue that exists within the federal family of a comfort level in the research and planning stages as opposed to implementing the plans and the research. Mr. Collins stated that it seems that plans are

formulated and researched and then a new plan begins before implementation of the original plan. Mr. Collins continued that it appears that the federally family is a lot more comfortable with funding plans and research rather than plan implementation. Mr. Collins said that he commends the effort to roll out a Strategic Action Framework and actually implement the program, but contends that the problem will never be resolved if there continues to be a constant state of planning. Ms. Jacobson said that while she has been at DOI she has not witnessed a culture that wants to continue to study and not implement researched plans. Ms. Estenoz added that she also has not witnessed this culture of planning and stated that one of the areas that is grossly underfunded is research. Ms. Estenoz described a field experiment done with python sitings and expressed the difficulty in finding the species even when tracking software denotes their location. Ms Estenoz asked that it be recognized that it is not only federal agencies who lack funding on the issue, but everyone is under-resourced on invasive control. Ms. Estenoz stated that funding for exotic management needs to be taken seriously and everyone involved across agencies should make an effort to try and secure more funding to address the problem.

James Humble asked when the disconnect between the importance of the problem and the public began and why the message is not being received by the public so that they can advocate for funding.

Chuck Collins, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, said that it is important for members of different agencies to come together, bring a multi-faceted view of both plant and animal invasive species, and formulate a plan so that there is no duplication of efforts in light of funding shortfalls. Mr. Collins stated that FWC has expended over \$21M this year on invasive plant control alone which outlines the necessity of bringing multiple agencies together to create a plan and workable solutions so that people can get behind it. Mr. Collins appreciates the direction the issue is headed and suggested that a timeline be provided.

Barbara Miedema mentioned an organization called Friends of Loxahatchee, along with similar organizations, could serve as a natural ally to gather interested parties and stakeholders and lead the effort in finding funds for research and implementation through fundraisers, galas and challenge grams.

Billy Causey said the challenge of invasive species does not stop at the shoreline. Mr. Causey said that the Lionfish is a huge threat all over the Caribbean and along the eastern shoreline. Mr. Causey said that NOAA discovered that there must be a combination of well-managed scientific effort combined with implementation and action. Mr. Causey continued that NOAA is using a combination of public engagement, scientific research and implementation activities to resolve the Lionfish issue.

Mr. Moran commented that he has been briefed on the Refuge and gone out to visit it first hand and the work being done is not without some success, and asked for an update on the successes of dealing with Melaleuca and Brazilian Pepper. Mr. Thayer stated that the original research on Melaleuca was conducted at the Refuge in the early 1980s and many implementation programs used throughout the District were initiated in the Refuge. Mr. Thayer continued that invasive control has always been a matter of funding needed to get ahead of the curve. Mr. Thayer commented that in other parts of

the world there are screening processes used before plant and animals are introduced into the ecosystem. Mr. Thayer said that academic research has been generated that provides that plant or animal species that are currently known to be damaging to the natural system, had they undergone the screening process, would have been identified as damaging 90% of the time. As a huge proponent of prevention, Mr. Thayer said that these screening processes exist primarily in Australia and New Zealand and are being used on about 5% of the world's trade in plants. Mr. Gelber added that another success story is the removal of about 4,000 acres of farm lands overgrown with Brazilian Pepper from the Everglades, which through consistent funding, has worked to restore hydrology in that region.

Ms. Pelizza stated that including the Friends of the Loxahatchee Refuge, the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation also contributes to the Refuge, mainly through public education, but may provide some advocacy for invasive species management and control. Ms. Pelizza stated that the Refuge is doing more than chemical control through aerial spraying or manual application. She said that biological controls are also being used to control invasive plant species such as controlling Lygodium with the Brown Moth so all methods to deal with the issue are being employed. Ms. Jacobson reiterated the partnership with other agencies, as the USDA is responsible for partnering to release the Brown Lygodium Moth.

Public Comment I

Ezra Appel, Friends of the Spoil Islands, said that in addition to his 12hr/day job, he works to save the most diverse estuary in north America by writing letters to politicians, donating money, attending rallies, and offering support to other organizations with the same mission. Mr. Appel asked that stakeholders also do their jobs to protect the estuary because of the power of their decision-making authority and the audience being reached. Mr. Appel said that everyone has a right to clean water and should work together to save the rivers, send water south, protect marine life and ensure the resource is available to all future generations.

Aidan Lewey, River Kids, thanked the District for supporting the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). Mr. Lewey contended that although CEPP will not fix all of the problems with the Lagoon, it will greatly improve the conditions and urged the USACE to move forward with its approval. Mr. Lewey said that the Lagoon is important to both kids and adults and asked that the SFERTF prioritize CEPP. Mr. Lewey also offered to help the District with invasive species management

KC Traylor, Palm City Resident, spoke about invasive species and the importance of funding the species that are considered to be in the "red zone." Ms. Traylor urged prioritizing funding invasive species control.

Alicia Castle, Indian River Lagoon, said that this past summer is the worst the Lagoon has ever been. Ms. Castle stated that the water is brown and toxic to humans and animals and seeing turtles and dolphins and other wildlife dying due to their destroyed habitat is devastating. Ms. Castle pleaded with the group to stop politicizing the issue because all are in some way dependent on the estuary and Lagoon.

Megan Remick, Martin County Resident, said she was representing every person represented and the time for pointing fingers is over. Ms. Remick contended that the River is for everyone and works to lower property taxes for residents, impacts local businesses and the local economy, tourism and personal health. Ms. Remick stated that residents have battled the issue for several decades but there continues to be more research, more planning, more projects and more red tape. Ms. Remick said that she's been to Clewiston, Ft. Myers, Fort Pierce and Washington DC to discuss the need to move water south. Ms. Remick left the group with three words storage, filtration and shared adversity.

Drew Colello, Martin County Resident, said that he has seen the destruction of the rivers and lagoons and invasive waters is the current pressing issue. Mr. Colello said that fresh and salt water do not mix well together and create toxic algae blooms and kills fish. Mr. Colello stated that last year he could not fish the Indian River Lagoon or take his kayak in the water and was forced to drive three hours to take part in these activities to Mosquito lagoon where there was brown tide. Mr. Colello contended that not just the Indian River Lagoon is being impacted but the waters of the entire state and groups need to organize and band together to work to ensure clean water is available for the entire state and not just in Martin County. Mr. Colello said that it is time to stop pointing fingers at septic, agriculture, cattlemen and others and work together. Mr. Colello noted that some Miami-Dade residents are upset that Martin County residents are trying to find other ways to send water being released to the east but the key is working together for a solution for all.

Joan Bausch, Sewall's Point Resident, stated that she attended the last SFERTF meeting in September of 2005 and at that meeting Theresa Woody reported on land acquisition and status of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) along with a status of natural lands report. Ms. Bausch said the reports indicated that lands needed for natural wetlands restoration or Cypress Creek, would be in August 2014. Ms. Bausch stated that the Cypress Creek land needs to be purchased by the state which is a part of the St. Lucie watershed. Ms. Bausch said that if that property had been purchased as planned, the impact of the water releases of 2013 would have been less harmful. Ms. Bausch asked for an update on the land acquisition plans for natural properties.

6. C-111 South Dade and Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park Update - Howard Gonzales Jr., Chief, Ecosystem Branch, Programs and Project Management Division, Jacksonville District, United States Army Corps of Engineers

Howard Gonzales provided WRAC and SFERTF members a status update on the C-111 South Dade and Modified Water Deliveries (Mod Waters) to Everglades National Park projects.

WRAC Member / SFERTF Comment

Ms. Jacobson commented that DOI is motivated to move forward with the USACE on Mod Waters deliveries and appreciates the recent advancements and progress made by the USACE.

Mike Collins said that this is good news and asked when the USACE will have an operating plan in place. Mr. Gonzales responded that the first increment of the operations tests would be conducted in January or February of 2015 and the operations plan would be worked on concurrently. Mr. Gonzales said that an operating plan is scheduled for completion in three years.

Jim Humble, Miami-Dade Agricultural Practices Advisory Board, stated that when the C-111 project was being considered there was an assurance given that little to no negative impacts would occur to surrounding land users. Mr. Humble stated that during the comment period the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) made comments concerning the possibility of severe impacts to south Miami-Dade should the project go forward. Mr. Humble stated that the project has caused significant negative impacts to the area including extensive damages last year. Mr. Humble said that large quantities of water delivered to the south end of Miami-Dade county has nowhere to be discharged causing grove owners to be negatively affected. Mr. Humble continued that the expansion project was not intended to cause harm to land owners and growers but it has done so. Mr. Humble expressed concern regarding a lack of importance given to concerns brought forth by area landowners or residents when projects are being considered for implementation.

W. Ray Scott, FDACS, stated that several state and federal agencies met last week to discuss Mod Waters and C-111 and there is a belief that there is a path forward but it will be several years before the project is complete and the issues brought forth by Mr. Humble are resolved. Mr. Scott continued that last year the community within the project area was put at risk due to project operations and an unusual amount of rainfall which could have been devastating if a late season storm had come through. Mr. Scott maintained that the water has not yet receded and is still creating problems. Mr. Scott pointed out that while a long-term solution is being worked out, it is critical to find interim measures that will address the issue and provide relief to landowners and farmers in the impacted area. Mr. Scott said that FDACS will be looking to recommend a deviation to current operations.

Jo Ellen Darcy stated that last week's meeting between the agencies is characteristic of the way problems should be resolved together and appreciated the willingness of the group to work the issue as a team.

Blake Guillory thanked Secretary Darcy for moving the project forward and said although it will take some time to complete, it is an exciting project and recognized the need for agencies to coordinate to get it done. Mr. Guillory said that the C-111, Tamiami Bridge, CEPP and the proposed 2.6-mile bridge projects are all designed to move water south and urged stakeholders to read Appendix A in detail and understand the methodology the District is required to follow under the Consent Decree. Mr. Guillory stated that when the District's Governing Board (Board) made its recommendation to approve CEPP, there were many comments made concerning the language in the resolution regarding water quality and clarified that the wording was more informational

and reflected the sentiments of the Board and not intended to serve a condition placed on CEPP. Mr. Guillory stated that this language was based on fact and the reality that more water could have been moved south last year. Mr. Guillory said that in 1991 the water entering into the Park was at concentration 17ppb and in 2012 there was an exceedance at 8.9ppb vs. 8.8ppb, and after two years of litigation, an agreement was made between the District and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to avoid this type of conflict in the future. However, two years of litigation has caused the District to exercise extreme caution when considering opening a gate or operating a pump that might possibly result in an exceedance. Mr. Guillory continued that all stakeholders that were involved in developing Appendix A should engage in a discussion that carefully considers sampling methodology in the future as water will be entering the Park in different locations, at different times, at varying levels of water quality and in varied volumes causing an increase in the potential for an exceedance. Mr. Guillory maintained that stakeholders need to have a meaningful discussion about the implications of Appendix A in regards to moving water south.

Mr. Moran said that with all of the projects that are planned to help move water south, including CEPP, the District cannot move water south due to the constraints provided in Appendix A. Mr. Moran stated that until there is a revised compliance methodology for Appendix A, moving more water south may not be possible. Mr. Moran defined Appendix A for the public audience and included that it is a scientific formula for the amount of phosphorus allowable in water that enters the Park, imposed on the District during the 28-yr-long, USA Lawsuit. Mr. Moran said that \$2B has been spent on phosphorus reduction and the District has had great success in reducing phosphorus loads from about 70ppb up to 150ppb to the low teens to about 20ppb. Mr. Moran stated that the District and the state of Florida agreed to spend an additional \$880M to fine tune the process so as water is moved south, phosphorus is removed along the way in order to deliver clean water to the Park. Mr. Moran stated that the goal is to reach 10ppb, however according to Appendix A, as flows increase, the allowable level of phosphorus is reduced to under 10ppb which could result in exceedances if more water is moved south. Mr. Moran continued that tremendous amounts of energy, taxpayer dollars and federal and state employee efforts were put into debating the difference between 8.9ppb and 8.8ppb which cannot continue. Mr. Moran said that the state's federal partners and stakeholders that are parties in the USA Lawsuit must come together and agree to a revised compliance methodology or water will not be able to move south in the foreseeable future. Mr. Moran said it is imperative that all of the parties come to this realization and devise an accommodation. Mr. Moran said that this sort of agreement is possible and could be as simple as rounding to whole numbers, not using tenths of a part per billion, or revisiting the locations chosen for withdrawing water quality samples. Mr. Moran stated that these suggestions are not meant to dump dirty water south, but about fine-tuning the method so that more water can be moved south and planned projects can be implemented. Mr. Moran appreciated Mr. Guillory's comments and noted that his comments are fundamental to moving water south.

Ms. Jacobson, on behalf of DOI, stated that the agency is very motivated to move water south and have started to engage in dialogue about compliance methodology and is committed to being "at the table" to lend their considerable expertise to the discussion. Ms. Jacobson said that whether discussion centers on ways to implement current methodologies or whether new methodologies are needed remains to be seen,

however, DOI shares in the District's concern that an agreement is reached about these issues so forward progress is achieved. Ms. Jacobson complimented the leadership of the USACE, particularly Secretary Darcy, for advancing so many projects on behalf of the USACE.

Commissioner Shelley Vana stated that as an elected official charged with being a problem-solver, parties must work together to realize what is physically possible, what cannot be changed and what may take longer to implement in order to make progress in regards to Everglades water quality. Commissioner Vana was encouraged by Mr. Guillory's remarks and Ms. Jacobson's response that DOI was vested in discussing the issue and moving forward.

Newton Cook, United Waterfowlers, thanked commenters for the honesty that was expressed. Mr. Cook said that for the last ten years he's watched hundreds of thousands of acres of marsh be destroyed by the number ten. Mr. Cook continued that duck hunters love and depend on clean water, but oppose assigning numeric values on every lake, river, stream and waterbody in Florida. Mr. Cook said that placing this type of criteria on waterbodies has destroyed more habitat than it has helped and if it can be imagined that these types of criteria were applied across the state at every structure going from Kissimmee to the River or from Toho to other places, the state would be in a disaster because water would be backed up everywhere causing flooding and destroying marshes. Mr. Cook said if 10ppb continues to be a requirement, the Modified Water Deliveries to ENP and the C-111 project will never be completed and the billions of taxpayer dollars expended on the effort will be wasted. Mr. Cook said that half of the stakeholders around the table would not be here in 2030 to see CEPP completed and thanked Mr. Guillory for plainly speaking about the issue.

Bubba Wade, US Sugar Corporation, stated that this issue has been avoided or not directly dealt with for a long time and suggested that at a future WRAC meeting a full-disclosure presentation of the issue because the realities of the issue have never been in the open for discussion or debate. Mr. Wade said he has involved in serving on both Governor Chiles' and Governor Bush's commissions, the Water Management District Governing Board, WRAC for the past twenty-five years and has witnessed the billions of dollars spent on the southern Everglades to get to ten. Mr. Wade continued that 120,000 acres of Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) farmland has been taken and converted to marshes or is being planned for conversion with the new restoration plan. Mr. Wade said in his twenty-five year history, phosphorus has gone from about 150ppb to roughly 17ppb-30ppb coming out of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs). Mr. Wade said that if a Harvard MBA business school were given this issue as an assignment and had achieved the current results including the amount of time invested, financial expenditures and possibilities of future reductions, they would probably agree that they have accomplished all they could on this project and move on to something else such as in the estuaries north of Lake Okeechobee where 150ppb – 200ppb are still being emptied into the Lake with about 150ppb going out through the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. Mr. Wade said that energy, focus and another \$885M continues to be directed to getting phosphorus levels in the south down to 10ppb coming out of the STAs. Mr. Wade said if data was properly analyzed it would show that phosphorus levels are at about 17ppb to 30ppb within a couple of miles south of the STAs and 10ppb in the marsh and holding at 10ppb for miles until it reaches the Tamiami Bridge.

Mr. Wade stated that once the water reaches the bridge, Appendix A stipulates that phosphorus levels be 8.8ppb but when determined to be at 8.9ppb, a two-year dispute began which is absurd. Mr. Wade contended that if parties were able to come to agreement on reasonable phosphorus requirements in Appendix A, water could begin to move south immediately. Mr. Wade concluded that this issue has lingered far too long and needs to be addressed promptly.

Mike Collins stated that in the 1980s, prior to the filing of the USA Lawsuit, the primary area of concern in the south end of the system was the increased presence of cattails that signal eutrophication in the system and headed towards the Park, however, the cattail population is currently flourishing in the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and it has nothing to do with nutrients but much to do with oxidation due to lack of water. Mr. Collins said that he listened to a recent US House Transportation and Infrastructure meeting where WRRDA was discussed and the Committee Chair pointed out that the current state of the system may lead to problems related to the Clean Water Act in that unless the state, as the local sponsor, can provide reasonable assurances that water quality standards will be met, projects cannot begin. Mr. Collins stated that despite the many good projects that are currently planned or being constructed, a brake point has been reached. Mr. Collins agreed with Mr. Cook in regards to the impacts occurring across the WCAs and other places resulting from the 10ppb constraint where the flora in those areas need more than 10ppb. Mr. Collins informed Ms. Jacobson that this issue may be raised by the Florida Legislature in response to their constituents raising questions about the issue and partnerships related to this issue. Mr. Collins thinks the best course is to work together to get out ahead of these types of conversations.

Adam Gelber stated that when offered the opportunity to join the WRAC, this specific topic, as it relates to Florida Bay and the people in the audience as well, was of particular interest to him. Mr. Gelber stressed the benefits of fresh water delivery to the Park on fish and wildlife and mentioned the importance of the canal plug in Buttonwood Canal at Flamingo as a direct affect to receiving those benefits. Mr. Gelber continued that once the canal was plugged, Coot Bay became a beautiful place along with the entire coastal fringe located from West Lake to Trout Cove which lights up from June through August. Mr. Gelber said that the reason this issue needs to be resolved is partly for recreational anglers and other recreators who use these natural resources to escape their day-to-day grind and for the people located to the north who are concerned with the health of their river and estuary. Mr. Gelber said that focusing on the habitat and what is needed for the area to thrive is what is needed and not the miniscule difference between 8.8ppb and 8.9ppb.

James Erskine said that when discussing the requirements of the Settlement Agreement also termed Appendix A, that is used to establish water quality standards when moving water from the north into Everglades National Park, it is important to realize that those requirements were set to protect the unique ecosystem in ENP. Mr. Erskine said that it is his belief that all biologists and ecologists in the area recognize the needed requirements of fresh water inputs into the system and balance of water moving into the system, but the Clean Water Act must also be recognized. Mr. Erskine continued that the Clean Water Act entitles everyone in the room to have fresh and clean water and that entitlement is embodied in the Settlement Agreement/Appendix A requirement for ENP. Mr. Erskine professed that the Clean Water Act and Appendix A

are intertwined, so when speaking about a modification of the Settlement Agreement/Appendix A, it is important to not oversimplify the issue and make sure the public is aware of the complexities of the issue and that this discussion may modify Florida's water quality standards. Mr. Erskine stated that attempting to modify Florida's water quality standards would have to go through federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and stakeholder review and comment. Mr. Erskine said that moving forward, it is imperative to realize that the issue is not as simple as looking at Appendix A and deciding how to get more water into ENP. Mr. Erskine stated that there are planned projects that address the issue which are included in Everglades Restoration Strategies as devised by the District and approved by the Florida legislature, and moving its associated projects along as fast as possible will address the water quality criteria need for ENP. Mr. Erskine said that as water comes down from the north on its way to ENP, it moves through WCA3 at phosphorus levels quite a bit higher than the 8.8ppb that is being discussed. Mr. Erskine contended that if water entering WCA3 or the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge at all points was 8ppb this discussion would not be necessary. Mr. Erskine said water is entering WCA3 at 70-90ppb with 25,000 acre-ft per year coming through the L-28 canal system which is a situation that inhibits the ability to provide the assurances referred to by Mr. Collins for water coming out of the bottom of the system. Mr. Erskine said that because clean and not-so-clean water is mixing in the basin area of WCA3 it is hard to provide an assurance that at the bottom of the system the water is going to be clean. Mr. Erskine said that Restoration Strategies is a grouping of projects that will achieve the water quality standards outlined in the Settlement Agreement/Appendix A. Mr. Erskine said that addressing all of the inflows into the WCAs is a path to reaching the goal along with the solution of storage and treatment. Mr. Erskine said that when conversations regarding modification to Appendix A or new monitoring methodology occur, the Clean Water Act and water quality standards must always be taken into account. Mr. Erskine stated that if this was done, it would lead to a solution that gets all of the water out of WCA3, which is critically harming 300,000 acres of land which he stewards on behalf of the Miccosukee Tribe. Mr. Erskine stated that he and the Tribe wants that water to move through the system too, but it must be clean and in proper quantities, timing, and distribution as theorized by Everglades restoration.

Mr. Guillory agreed with Mr. Erskine that the issue is complex and pointed out that the Governing Board's Resolution does not advocate degrading water quality or hurting the Park but gave direction to look at the next generation to determine if there is a better way to proceed. Mr. Guillory stated the \$880M to be spent on Restoration Strategies is to clean up water that is going south now in order to meet current water quality standards, not to clean up water in CEPP or additional water south in the future. Mr. Guillory said that if there is an increase in water flows south, more water must be cleaned. Mr. Guillory pointed out that in the middle of last summer when considering sending more water south the discussion continuously turned to the creation of an exceedance for attempting to do so. Mr. Guillory stated that no one could tell him what the exceedance was, whether 8.9ppb or 9.2 – 10ppb, the number was unknown. Mr. Guillory continued that water could not be moved south due to the uncertainty of an exceedance and having knowledge of the contents of the federal order. Mr. Guillory encouraged a broad discussion with all of the stakeholders so that all points of view can be expressed so that perhaps there is a phased approach that can be adopted so that when the proposed projects come on line in the future, there will not be the same

constraints that currently exist. Mr. Guillory would like to have this discussion at a future WRAC meeting.

Joe Capra thanked Mr. Guillory for his explanation and clarified that there has been no discussion regarding changing any of the existing restoration plans. Mr. Capra stated that one of the problems with changing plans is the long and cumbersome board approval process which could delay projects for up to twenty years. Mr. Capra stated that the map received at the morning portion of the meeting shows why water is moving south but does not depict enough projects in Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee or the Caloosahatchee and does not see many projects in the St. Lucie, although this county has more projects depicted than any of the others and he understands that some projects are not depicted because they are in the purview of the USACE. Mr. Capra pointed out that if certain projects could not be started for the next two to three years due to inability to sort out water quality issues, the focus should turn to projects that can get done. Mr. Capra declared that too much time is spent talking about projects that never get built. Mr. Capra stated that no single agency is to blame but the fault of everyone in the room who protests to progress because of some small issue. Mr. Capra suggested that stakeholders place all of these items on the table, fix as much as possible, and move forward. Mr. Capra said he was surprised that many participants have focused on changing the plan just because the issue is complex. Mr. Capra continued that water quality is a complex issue to solve, but it will get done, whether the method of retrieving the data is changed or otherwise. Mr. Capra stated that this could be tested for the next three years, but in the meantime he suggested that other projects move forward because there is a lot of work to be done and he would like to see the work completed within the next ten years as opposed to the next fifty years.

Neale Montgomery concurred with Mr. Wade's comments and indicated that waiting for two to three years to resolve the issue is too long. Ms. Montgomery said that while water quality may not be clean enough under today's standards to send water south, there seems to be little to no concern when sending water out through the Caloosahatchee and the citizens in southwest Florida are tired of the impact on Estero Bay and the Caloosahatchee River. Ms. Montgomery concluded that issue needs to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Public Comment II

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Town of Sewall's Point Commissioner / Alternate WRAC Member, informed the group that the Town of Sewall's Point lies in Martin county is at ground zero for the releases from Lake Okeechobee and their own canals, so she thanked the District for moving forward with efforts to fix Ten Mile Creek and hoped the USACE would also move toward a fix. Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch urged meeting attendees to exercise any and all efforts to move forward on CEPP. Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch showed the group a handout depicting the effects of Lake releases to the inlet in the proximity of Sewall's Point that she then gave to Ms. Jacobson. Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch concluded that the law is the law and what is right is right, but stated it is wrong that such poor quality water is being discharged through the St. Lucie estuary.

Captain Donald Vass, One Florida Foundation / Marine Cleanup Initiative, asked that Ten Mile Creek move forward and be turned over to the District to convert the project to

stormwater retention for Martin and St. Lucie counties. Captain Vass commented on his disappointment in CEPP's failure to be approved by the Civil Works Review board. Captain Vass stated that if water were cleaned up in the northern portion of the system there would be no problem moving it south.

Caroline McLaughlin, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), stated that she is happy that the NPCA and the state of Florida through the Department of Transportation has made a financial commitment to move forward with the construction of the next 2.6 miles of the Tamiami Bridge. Ms. McLaughlin stated that the Tamiami Bridge is important to the NPCA and is looking forward to breaking ground once the parties have secured funding and decided how to transform their commitments into reality. Ms. McLaughlin continued that the NPCA recognizes the huge threat that invasive species pose to the greater Everglades ecosystem and supports interagency collaborative efforts to address this issue. Ms. McLaughlin stated that NPCA is ready to assist the agencies in locating long-term sources of reliable funding for this cause. Ms. McLaughlin stated that NPCA is pleased that the District and the USACE are moving forward with Kissimmee River Restoration and the C-111 South Dade project which is an essential component of Everglades restoration which, when combined with the Tamiami One-Mile Bridge project, will help move more water south through the Park and Florida Bay. Ms. McLaughlin expressed NPCA's excitement that agencies have identified a resolution on Contract 8 and C-111, however it is apparent that this has been a policy issue that has lingered for quite some time and should have been resolved much sooner. Ms. McLaughlin stated that NPCA is hopeful that other policy related project resolutions do not take as long to reach and momentum can be built from this point and applied to other areas such as CEPP. Ms. McLaughlin shared NPCA's disappointment that the Civil Works Review Board delayed the approval of CEPP as it is a critical component to Everglades restoration. Ms. McLaughlin stated that NPCA is pleased to know that there will be another opportunity for CEPP to be heard at the May meeting of the Civil Works Review Board and expects swift approval of the item at the upcoming meeting with a Chief's Report soon following. Ms. McLaughlin concluded with NPCA's gratitude that WRRDA contained four key restoration projects and thanked all agencies involved in working to get the bill passed.

KC Traylor, Palm City Resident, spoke to the tough weather conditions of last summer and stated that many children missed being able to play in the water for the entire summer. Ms. Traylor was pleased to hear that Contract 8 will be completed and agreed that Appendix A should be amended so that more water can be sent south.

Camille Ryan, Save the Indian River Lagoon, referred to the "lost summer of 2013" by stating that numerous social media pages, community action teams, organized protests, fund raisers, trips to Washington, DC and Tallahassee had been formed or taken place in reaction to the Lake releases and the inability to participate in water related activities in Martin and St. Lucie counties. Ms. Ryan stated that the sea life and ecosystem was significantly harmed by the releases and urged agencies to protect water resources and the environment.

7. Herbert Hoover Dike Project; Update on Dam Safety Modification Study - Ingrid Bon, P.E., Project Manager Forward, Herbert Hoover Dike Project, Jacksonville District, United States Army Corps of Engineers

Ingrid Bon discussed the background, purpose, background, timeline and next steps of the USACE Dam Modification Study.

WRAC Member / SFERTF Comment

Mark Perry asked that when the dike and culvert repair are complete and the Dam Safety Modification Study is final and if risk to holding greater levels of water is determined to have been reduced; would the USACE be willing and able to hold more water in the Lake or reduce Lake discharges to the estuaries. Colonel Alan M. Dodd, Commander, USACE, Jacksonville District, responded that once the Dam Safety Modification Study is complete and has undergone a public review and comment period, it will reveal the areas of greatest risk. However, currently the USACE is operating the Lake under the 2008 Lake Operation Schedule (LORS 2008) with minor adjustments in some portions of the Schedule. Colonel Dodd stated that once the study is complete, the information will be used to determine what areas can be further adjusted and how the USACE will implement those changes. The Colonel continued that substantial completion of the Dike does not simply imply that more water can be stored; risk to human life and environmental impact must also be re-evaluated. Colonel Dodd stated that he does not anticipate major changes to the Lake levels allowed in LORS, however, more time might be afforded and possibly higher levels of temporary Lake storage may be attainable before having to make the decision to make major Lake releases due to storm events. The Colonel stated that it is a matter of how much risk the USACE is willing to accept that will determine the outcome of any possible modifications to LORS. Mark Perry stated that it was encouraging to see the USACE being a little more flexible in the current operating schedule during last summer's rain events. Mr. Perry stated that there is no water quality treatment at the site of discharge and as it comes into the estuaries. Mr. Perry said it infuriates him and other members of the community that there is an argument regarding 8.8ppb versus 8.9ppb when last year 136 billion gallons of water was discharged from the Lake and 73 metric tons of phosphorus and over 953 metric tons of nitrogen were dumped into the St. Lucie estuary. Mr. Perry stated that nitrogen really kills the estuary and causes algae blooms and all other sorts of negative impacts for which there is no treatment. Mr. Perry said what is needed is completed Dike repairs and a project that moves water south that can store, convey and treat the water coming out of the Lake with a capacity to move water at an appropriate rate. Colonel Dodd responded that although Lake Okeechobee is the central part of the system, the C-44 project will help with storage and treatment and the Modified Water Deliveries, C-111 and the Kissimmee River Restoration projects, once complete will contribute to the system and the way it is operated and work together to help reduce impacts to the estuary and Indian River Lagoon. The Colonel listed CERP components and CEPP as additional projects that will help with timing, quality, storage and distribution of water lending to the effectiveness of the entire system. The Colonel recognized the complexity and the amount of time that would be needed to bring these projects to completion and recognized the District's and the USACE's recent coordination and commitment to working together to resolve issues and move projects forward.

Newton Cook stated that the Lake is currently in the best shape it has been in his lifetime for several reasons including no major storms impacting its turbidity. Mr. Cook warned that if the Lake is held above 15 ft for any length of time the subaquatic vegetation needed to clean the water will be killed. Mr. Cook said that the idea of using the Lake as a reservoir and holding water at levels above 15 ft for weeks at a time will harm the environment in ways that may be irreparable.

Jane Graham reiterated Mr. Cook's assessment of the current ideal conditions of the Lake and attributed that to LORS and stated that it is recognized that the Lake must fluctuate in order to maintain its current state even though at times water can be held at higher levels. Ms. Graham spoke to Lake water quality by stating that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is currently devising a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan (Lake O BMAP) that will assist the state in meeting the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Lake as presently the loads are extremely high with the target being 140 metric tons when the current five-year averages are showing 400 to 500 metric tons. Ms. Graham stated that she hoped the Task Force would view the Lake O BMAP as a priority project due to its impact on the entire ecosystem but pointed out the effort will require a source of funding moving forward.

Barbara Miedema, Sugar Grower Cooperative, asked everyone to remember that LORS 2008 was passed as an interim Lake regulation schedule with a commitment given at the time that storage ability would be regained in order to meet a 1:10 level of service capability for the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA). Ms. Miedema stated that she has been in several meetings with Audubon Florida and Dr. Paul Gray has speculated that the Lake could be safely kept at a level of 16 ft without causing harm to its ecology. Ms. Miedema continued that although half a foot does not sound like a lot, it can make a lot of difference in being able to provide base flow releases to the Caloosahatchee when needed reducing the conflict between user communities. Ms. Miedema stated that Lake Okeechobee is not a natural lake because the levees that have been built around it has transformed it into a managed reservoir that is being treated as a lake. Ms. Miedema stated that it cannot be forgotten that man has altered south Florida, which would not exist without those alterations having laws and policies put in place so that people could live here. Ms. Miedema said CERP in 2000 was developed to find ways to ensure the system was sustainable for the next fifty years, grow the water pie, capture water lost to tide with the Lake being central to all of that. Jane Graham clarified that Audubon's position is that the Lake at some points can be held at 16 ft with the distinction that it cannot be held at that level over a long course of time and needs the ups and downs to maintain a healthy ecology.

Shelley Vana stated that there has been lots of discussion on protecting the wildlife and plant species in the Lake, but as County Commissioner, she represents the people that live around the Lake. Commissioner Vana said that the last time she took a look at flood maps related to possible escalating home owner insurance costs and during various discussions related to the Lake, there were varying perspectives regarding the actual level that can be maintained once the Dike is repaired and asked for an explanation about the purpose of the Dam Modification Study. Colonel Dodd replied the study serves as the most in-depth analysis in the USACE's possession regarding the

Herbert Hoover Dike. Colonel Dodd said that the study would identify the areas of risk and at what levels and funds allocated beginning in 2017 will be dedicated to the highest risk areas. Colonel Dodd continued that from a public safety point of view it is important to address the areas of highest risk as soon as possible to reduce the risk to people. Colonel Dodd clarified that the Dam Modification Study does not function to change LORS2008 nor does it affect the current water levels. Colonel Dodd stated that for the next several years the USACE would operate the Lake according to LORS, until the study is complete and stakeholders and the public have commented. Colonel Dodd said a modification of the schedule, based on new data, could be considered upon completion of the study. Colonel Dodd stated that the Lake level is maintained based on future projections of waterfall, especially during the wet season with possible hurricanes on the horizon.

Mike Collins stated the Colonel seemed to be stating that as the risk analysis is being completed, there may possibly be new alternatives for stormwater discharge. The Colonel clarified that currently cut-off walls and water control structures are being built and since it is very expensive, the USACE is looking at alternative construction methods to try and reduce costs, not a change in the operating schedule.

Karson Turner stated that he represents the people in Clewiston, which is a poor community that has been paying flood insurance for a number of years and people who live on the toe dike in Pahokee do not pay flood insurance even though they are further south and live at a lower elevation. Commissioner Turner continued that the USACE has an incredible mission before them to protecting human life, but the public perception of the organization is that they are a difficult entity to get an answer from on these projects. The Commissioner invited the USACE to Hendry county to participate in an all-call meeting to discuss the realities of what can be expected from the Dam Safety Modification Study, a true timeline for completion, what is actually being accomplished and the benefits of those accomplishments, and how much money has been spent on the Herbert Hoover Dike project. Colonel Dodd responded that the area of most risk was Reach-1, and that's where they completed the cut-off wall. The Colonel stated that the next highest risk areas were the water control structures so the USACE is investing money in what it sees as the highest areas of risk. Colonel Dodd expressed the importance of completing the study so that it can inform the USACE where it needs to next invest funding on this project. The Colonel offered himself and other USACE staff to come into the community to meet and discuss the project with constituents. Commissioner Turner responded that the answer the Colonel gave was status quo and a meeting between stakeholders who could discuss how the dike design could assist in moving more water south might be more beneficial than discussing the same designs and using the same methods that were originally employed. The Commissioner stated that when previously talking to USACE staff he was told that their concern was the dike and nothing outside of the dike mattered, which is an unacceptable answer. Colonel Dodd assured the Commissioner that USACE staff cares deeply about what they do, however, every staff member does not have access to the same information and is tasked with concentrating on their specific assignment and does not know the big picture which is why discussions need to happen at the senior level and encouraged discussions with himself, Colonel Greco and Dave Hobbie. The Colonel continued that the USACE is working diligently to repair the Dike but need to do it in a fiscally responsible way by allocating the appropriate resources with a focus on the high risk

items first. In addition to completing Dike repairs, the Colonel said that after the Dam Modification Study is complete, the next steps would be to look at LORS2008, but now is not the time.

Public Comment II

Lee Shepard, Intracoastal Eco-Systems, said that he wants clean water for the children and wild sea-life in his community. Mr. Shepard said he and his partner have leveraged their retirements and developed a system that will clean water and restore sea-life which are currently operational in lagoons. Mr. Shepard appealed to meeting attendees to do what they can to help citizens get clean water and a healthy estuarine system. Mr. Shepard said he's been working very hard and donating his time and money to the state and Palm Beach County but there is currently a proposal to use explosives to expand the Port of Palm Beach. Mr. Shepard pleaded with all agencies to block this proposal.

Stayce Sherwood, FWC, stated that clean water, particularly the Indian River Lagoon is of great concern. Ms. Sherwood asked what happened to the \$8B dollars that was allocated to CERP in 2000. She said that the planned 30-yr project should be half way through but it is not complete and there are still questions about which projects should move forward and how. Ms. Sherwood asked what happened to all of the money that was slated for CERP and what has been done to date. Ms. Sherwood spoke in support of invasive species removal as the situation is getting worse. Ms. Sherwood said that it does not make sense that the CEPP project approved by the District should need to receive federal approval since the projects were part of the original suite of projects presented in CERP. Ms. Sherwood called for an immediate stop to any dumping in Florida's water ways including from agriculture, medical, human waste and lawn care. Ms. Sherwood said that the Indian River Lagoon is making the Green Sea Turtles sick with a cancerous tumor. Ms. Sherwood reminded meeting participants that they are public servants and work for the citizens.

John Marshall, Arthur R. Marshall Foundation, stated that the Foundation's approach to invasive species is to plant native trees where they have been removed or where disturbances exist as a preventative way of repopulating natives and keeping invasives from growing. Mr. Marshall further discussed tree planting program and stated that they are not robustly funded but has had some help from the District and stated that they are currently working on restoring the pond apple forest on Torry Island. Mr. Marshall encouraged attendees to visit a fundraising website and donate in support of this effort. Mr. Marshall said that if flowing water south is a serious proposition, revegetation and restoration of peat soils will help reestablish natural flows and filtering.

Jennifer Hecker, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, spoke about the Caloosahatchee River and stated that the River continues to deteriorate through losses of seagrasses, oysters, harmful algae blooms and mass manatee deaths. Ms. Hecker said that the District could assist by updating the minimum flows and levels (MFL) for the Caloosahatchee based on the current, best available science and the recovery plan for the River which currently only relies on the C-43 reservoir which will need to be augmented with additional flows to meet minimum flows for a healthy river. Ms. Hecker stated that the Conservancy is looking forward to the District finalizing the C-43 reservation rule so the project can be authorized and funded. Ms. Hecker said that the

Conservancy would like to see a revised version of the Adaptive Protocols because it is inappropriate to restrict the Caloosahatchee when other Rivers are not being restricted. The Conservancy would like the Caloosahatchee Visioning Process to resume so that a holistic restoration plan can be developed for the River. Ms. Hecker said that FDEP could assist by controlling water pollution at its source, develop a total nitrogen TMDL for Lake Okeechobee as nitrogen is the pollutant of concern to the Caloosahatchee River and 60% of the load comes from the Lake. Ms. Hecker stated that it is not fair to have to choose between water quality and water quantity as both are interrelated and need to be fixed to restore the whole ecosystem including the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers.

8. General Public Comment

Final WRAC Member / SFERTF Member Comment

Mark Perry reiterated that he was glad that the Civil Works Review Board would hear CEPP and asked if there might be an avenue to get authorization for the project outside of WRRDA. Mr. Perry also asked for follow up on WRRDA opportunities, CEPP update and Ten Mile Creek as a means to provide additional storage. Colonel Dodd responded that the items in the WRRDA bill are completely up to Congress and that there is an offer on the table from the state regarding Ten Mile Creek that is being reviewed. Secretary Darcy stated that WRRDA is still in conference and is hoping for a conference report this month but it has not been scheduled on the agenda of either House or Senate. Ms. Darcy also stated that if a WRRDA bill were to pass, CEPP would not be included because there is no Chief's Report. Ms. Darcy continued that there are many competing projects that would like to be authorized in a WRRDA and it has been said that the original two-year schedule for WRRDA bills would resume allowing additional opportunities for more projects to be authorized.

Barbara Miedema thanked Ms. Estenoz for pulling today's joint meeting together and requested that the meetings occur more often.

Bubba Wade referred to the maps in the room and noted that there are lots of projects that have been done or in planning stages south of the Lake in order to meet the established standards or restore the Everglades which has progressed for over twenty years. Mr. Wade pointed out a 4,500-sq mile area north of the Lake that has been drained, dredged, ditched and developed similar to the Everglades Agricultural Area that is being dumped into a 700-sq mile Lake that used to be 1,000-sq miles. Mr. Wade said that when the 4,500 acres get an inch of water it drains into the Lake and can create four to six inches worth of flow to the Lake which is the reason the locks have to be opened wide and water discharged east and west. Mr. Wade said that the Northern Everglades Restoration plan called for 800M to 1.2M-acre feet of storage reservoirs and STAs to store or clean up water before it is discharged into the Lake. Mr. Wade said that if the Northern Everglades projects were completed first, many of the impacted public would not be present at the meeting today and the storage and treatment would be available to clean the water going into the Lake. Mr. Wade said the obstacle to Northern Everglades Restoration is the availability of large parcels of land for acquisition, so until alternative such as chemical treatments or others are looked at the

problem would not be resolved but the problem cannot be resolved with the thought of sending more water south with just the 500 acres in the EAA and the requirement to stay within water quality standards. Mr. Wade said that if the thought is to concentrate solely on moving water south, the Lake will have been written off because dirty water from the north is still going into the Lake. Mr. Wade stated that the original intent of the Dam Safety Modification Study was to resolve a planning flaw that would fix the design of the seepage walls in the first few Reaches because there was not enough property due to the levee's proximity to the road with the secondary reason being price. Mr. Wade said that in the interim constructing the culverts is a good plan, although the pace is slow, and he'd like to see the project's completion as soon as possible.

Joe Capra agreed with Mr. Perry on the USACE turning over the Ten Mile Creek project to the District. He said that there is no room to fail on any of these projects and thinks that the state has placed a good offer on the table to the USACE. Mr. Capra revisited the CEPP timeline and stated that the planning was originally to take 18 months, but there have been considerable delays that are disappointing especially in light of the constant reminders that a Chief's Report had to be complete before a WRRDA bill was passed. Mr. Capra stated that he does not know how the schedule slipped and the public is going to view it as a failure.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Moran thanked WRAC and Task Force members for their presence and stated that it had been a very productive meeting.

Ms. Jacobson agreed that the meeting was very productive and robust and invited everyone to the Task Force meeting taking place on May 7 in the same building.

Mr. Moran adjourned the meeting at 4:24 pm.