

**Minutes**  
**South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Meeting**  
**South Florida Water Management District**  
**West Palm Beach, FL**  
**Nov 19, 2014**

***Welcome, Goals for the Meeting and Administrative Items***

***Mr. Michael Bean called the meeting to order at 10:02am noting this was the first meeting he was chairing. He said he was honored to be a part of this Task Force and added he was no stranger to the Everglades which he first visited in 1969. He thanked those present for the critically important work they were doing for the future of the Everglades. He recognized Mr. Nick Wiley from the Florida Wildlife Commission and Commissioner 'Alligator' Ron Bergeron. He thanked Mr. Blake Guillory and Mr. James Moran for hosting the meeting at the SFWMD. He welcomed Mayor Kevin Ruane from the City of Sanibel, a new member of the Task Force. Mr. Drew Bartlett, Vice Chair of the Task Force announced Mr. Ernie Marks has left DEP and will be replaced by Mr. Ed Smith.***

***Task Force Member Introductions and Opening Remarks***

***The following members were in attendance and provided opening remarks:***

***Michael Bean, Chair, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior***

***Drew Bartlett, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection***

***Billy Causey, Regional Director Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region National Marine Sanctuary, U.S. Department of Commerce***

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

***James M. Erskine, Acting Water Resources Director and Rory Feeney, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida***

***Jay Geldermann, Acting Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice***

***Blake Guillory, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)***

***David Hawk for Camille Mittelholtz, Acting Director, Office of Safety, Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of Transportation***

***Lee Hefty for Jose 'Pepe' Diaz, Commissioner, Miami-Dade County***

***Cherise Maples for Jim Shore, General Counsel, Seminole Tribe of Florida***

***Heather McTeer-Toney, Regional Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency***

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

***Kevin Ruane, Mayor, City of Sanibel***

***Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives***

***Jim Moran, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission***

***Mayor Kevin Ruane said the Everglades and the environment are very important to those living in Sanibel. He saw it as an opportunity to be present and welcomed the challenge. Ms. Heather McTeer-Toney said she is the Regional Administrator for EPA's Region 4, appointed by President Obama in January 2014. She served as a former Mayor for Greenville, Mississippi for two terms prior to joining***

*EPA. She was very familiar with the Mississippi Delta and issues regarding water quality. The Everglades is very important to the Administration. Mr. James Erskine welcomed Mr. Bean to the Task Force and said he appreciated the time everyone puts on tribal issues. Mr. Russell Morgan, State Conservationist in Florida attended for Ms. Ann Mills. Mr. Jim Moran noted the progress made over the last decade and said he looked forward to continuing that progress. Mr. David Hawk from the Federal Highway Administration attended for Ms. Camille Mittleholtz. Mr. Barry Rosen, Vice Chair of the Working Group (WG) and Mr. Nick Aumen, Vice Chair of the Science Coordination Group (SCG) were also present. Mr. Aumen reminded everyone of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (GEER) Conference scheduled from April 21 – 23, 2015 in Ft. Lauderdale.*

*Mr. Lee Hefty, Director of Environmental Resources Management for Miami-Dade County attended for Commissioner Jose 'Pepe' Diaz. Mr. Jay Geldermann noted the Justice Department's appreciation for the continued collaboration of the federal and state partners and the members of this committee in making progress towards achieving the water quality goals of this Task Force. Mr. Billy Causey announced Ms. Sally Yozell has moved to the State Department and her replacement has not yet been named. He reminded everyone that officials from Monroe County addressed the Task Force at the May meeting and asked for support on some permitting issues. Mr. Causey reported that things have since been moving along splendidly and he expressed gratitude to the Task Force members on behalf of the County officials. He also reported the National Marine Sanctuary Program is taking nominations for new sanctuary sites. They currently manage fourteen National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) and monuments and there is a lot of interest here in Florida. Mr. Blake Guillory welcomed Mr. Bean and those who traveled from out of town. He recognized all of the accomplishments made over the past year as well as of the momentum for going forward. Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy echoed Mr. Guillory's comments regarding the momentum. She said she has had the privilege of working with Mr. Bean for two decades and everyone will find that he is a skilled professional as well as a compassionate person when it comes to conservation. He is an expert on aquatic ecosystem restoration and an expert on endangered species and a great addition to this Task Force. Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone the meeting was being webcast and provided some additional logistical instructions. She recognized Mr. Greg Langowski from Senator Marco Rubio's office, Ms. Gail Coniglio Mayor of Palm Beach as well as Ms. Michelle McGovern from Senator Nelson's office.*

#### *National Research Council of the National Academies (NRC) Fifth Biennial Review and Report to Congress*

*Ms. Stephanie Johnson provided a presentation reminding the members the Biennial Review was Congressionally mandated under WRDA 2000. The NRC has been fulfilling that role since 2004 through five year contracts with the Corps of Engineers with funding support from DOI and the SFWMD. The NRC has produced reports providing: an assessment of the progress in restoring the natural system; discussion of significant accomplishments of the restoration; discussion and evaluation of specific scientific and engineering issues that may impact progress in achieving the natural system restoration goals of the plan; and independent review of monitoring and assessment protocols to be used for evaluation of CERP progress. She reviewed the NRC Everglades studies from 1999 – 2014 beginning with those done by the Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades*

*Ecosystem (CROGEE) and then those done by the Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress (CISRERP). Ms. Johnson provided an in depth review of the Committee's findings and recommendations with regards to:*

- *Restoration progress*
- *Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)*
- *Climate change, Sea level rise and implications for restoration*
- *Invasive species; and*
- *Science and Decision making*

*Mr. Drew Bartlett noted that some of the hurdles identified in the report on the Kissimmee River Restoration (KRR) have been overcome. Mr. Blake Guillory said they have resolved some of the cost crediting issues and on the lower backfill comprised of four parts, two have been completed and two are set to start this summer. For the headwaters piece, storing more water in the upper Kissimmee Chain, the preliminary budget for DEP includes \$20 million to help buy the last remaining parcels of property in the headwaters portion of the project so they can store an additional 100,000 acre feet of water.*

*Ms. Darcy echoed his comments adding they have made significant progress this year on Kissimmee River restoration. She asked about the need to revisit system-wide monitoring. Ms. Johnson said this was also a recommendation in the last report. There were dramatic cuts to RECOVER funds which fill the gaps of the monitoring taking place. It is important to step back and ask what is really needed to inform adaptive management in light of climate change and the slow pace of implementation.*

*Mr. James Erskine said the Miccosukee Tribe finds the reports extremely useful and the information very helpful. Report points out that some of the near term steps are simply steps in the process. In 2010 the NRC did a special focus on water quality and quantity and now that five years have passed in the upcoming process additional focus on water quality may be warranted and perhaps a special look at the water quality outside of the STA inputs in Lake Okeechobee such as those coming in from the western basins or the eastern barrier of the Everglades. It would be helpful to synthesize the data that is out there and some of the TF objectives as well.*

#### *Approval of the 2014 Strategy and Biennial Report*

*Ms. Estenoz provided a presentation noting the Strategy responds to Congressional direction (House Conference Report 106-479) to outline how the restoration effort will occur and identify resources needed. The Biennial Report is required by WRDA 1996 to report biennially on Task Force activities and progress made towards restoration. The System-wide Ecological Indicators are used to assess the current status of the ecosystem and track how it will respond to the implementation of the suite of restoration projects and system-wide operational changes over time. Document is a work in progress and improvements have been made over the last two reporting cycles. In 2015, her office will be working with the WG and SCG to re-think this document and make it more manageable for the intended audience. Five of the 11 indicators have been modified because of challenges with funding and will have to be re-visited. Ms. Estenoz noted the WG accepted the document in the fall and asked*

*the TF to approve it. Secretary Jewell will transmit the final report to Congress and it will be available as a web based document. A motion was made to approve the document which was seconded. There was no discussion and the report was approved without objection.*

#### ***Corps Program and Project Update***

*Mr. Howie Gonzales reviewed the progress made on the South Florida Ecosystem restoration program to include the foundation projects, first and second generation CERP projects, Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration. The comments that were received for CEPP are under review and they are formulating the appropriate responses. The final Chief's Report is expected in the Jan/Feb 2015 timeframe. Mr. Gonzales also updated the TF on the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) which is the comprehensive sequencing and scheduling of construction projects in the South Florida Ecosystem restoration program. It incorporates both federal and state initiatives and allows implementing agencies to provide guidance to decision-makers for scheduling, staffing and budgeting. It is a living document that is updated to reflect major program changes. The last update was completed four years ago.*

*Ms. Estenoz noted the last time the IDS was revised in 2010 was under the Task Force's Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) exemption and its ability to convene a public process. The question for the Corps and members of the Task Force would be whether to approach it in a similar way. The Task Force could convene a process similar to the enhanced public process for CEPP. Ms. Darcy said it was a good suggestion adding it is a process they used before to put together the IDS. With the passage of WRRDA 2014, the Corps has new projects online and they need to look at the IDS. This was also the recommendation of the National Research Council. It would be beneficial to move on that as soon as they can under the auspices of the TF because of the FACA exemption. Ms. Estenoz said they could initiate the process after the first of the year. Mr. Erskine pointed out the NRC made an urgency statement with regards to the IDS and the Miccosukee Tribe agrees the IDS should be kicked off with some urgency. The WRAC has already identified some of the state activities and prioritized them so that will play into the IDS. He agreed the enhanced stakeholder process that was laid out with CEPP would also be good for moving forward with the IDS.*

#### ***CERP 2015 Report to Congress (RTC)***

*Mr. Howie Gonzales explained the requirement of WRDA 2000 and the Programmatic Regulations for the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Interior to jointly submit the RTC every five years in consultation with EPA, Commerce, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, DEP, SFWMD and other federal, state and local agencies, and the Task Force. This will be the third report and it will look at the accomplishments of the last five years, funds expended and work that is anticipated over the next five-year period. It will also update estimates of the total cost of the Plan as well as individual projects. The RTC will report on construction progress, land acquisition, pilot projects as well as authorizations and coordination on the IDS. From a science and programmatic perspective, the RTC will focus on the NRC biennial report findings as well as their own science and update program costs and report where they are on the 50/50 cost share. Report will show where they stand on Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), construction, authorizations and other efforts as*

*well as look into the future and what is needed in terms of land, science and funding. He reviewed the timeframe and noted consultations will occur with the Task Force and the tribes.*

*Ms. Estenoz noted there was discussion at the WG about briefing this report to key audiences once it is completed. She asked for Task Force guidance or concurrence that they should do this. Mr. Bartlett said it was a good idea adding it is one thing to read a report and another thing to have someone explaining what is in it. Mr. Bean echoed his comment adding that these reports contain a lot of useful information but they are lengthy and it would be helpful to help key audiences understand what is in these reports. Ms. Darcy thanked Mr. Gonzales as well as the Jacksonville staff for all their work.*

#### ***EvergladesRestoration.gov – Live Demo and Launch***

*Ms. Estenoz provided a live demo of the new website which replaces both the sfrestore.org and evergladesplan.org websites. Her office partnered with Florida International University's internship program and students from the G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School IT Magnet Program. They recruited an unbelievable team of students to assist with the new website. She recognized Ms. Mayada Ramirez who teaches Introduction to Information Technology, Foundation of Programming and Multimedia Foundation and Mr. Ron Ferguson, Magnet Lead Teacher. She also recognized the following students: Mr. Rafael Hernandez (12th grade); Mr. David Herrera (11th grade), Ms. Sofia Roca (11th grade); Mr. Abel Rodriguez (12th grade) and Ms. Eileen Garcia. Secretary Darcy and COL Dodd presented the students with certificates of appreciation from the Department of the Army. Mr. Bean and Ms. Estenoz presented the students with certificates of appreciation on behalf of the Task Force. Students also received a one day pass to Everglades National Park. Ms. Estenoz thanked the SFWMD for taking the students on a tour of the control room. Mr. Bean said that for those who work on environmental issues for the next generation it is rewarding to see them here.*

#### ***Public Comment***

*Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) encouraged the CEPP process to continue and for the state and federal governments to work through disagreements reminding them is this everyone's Everglades. Encouraged that water continue to move south to reduce damage to the estuaries and asked for progress to be made on MWDs and the C-111 Spreader Canal.*

*Ms. Martha Musgrove (Florida Wildlife Federation) said that climate change in south Florida is a serious issue and Florida is ground zero. The Corps of Engineers has developed a unified projection for the rise of sea level up to 9 inches in 2060. The projects in the IDS have much longer construction build times. If they are going to get the benefits of the resiliency of salt intrusion they need to get the flow south. Said it would be marvelous if the Corps could come to the Everglades Coalition Conference in January 2015 with a Chief's Report. They need to avoid these long permitting disputes and the gridlocks that occur.*

*Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) said she was glad to be able to talk about all the progress made over the last few years. With every step of progress they find new challenges and they really do*

*need to cross the finish line on CEPP. She is happy they are going to go back to the IDS in an open workshop process.*

*Ms. Cara Capp (National Parks Conservation Association) said it was a pleasure to meet Chairman Bean adding that his expertise on invasive species will be put to good use. They are excited to celebrate the success in the Kissimmee and with the Picayune Strand Ribbon Cutting ceremony. They are hoping to also be able to continue celebrating with the CEPP Chief's Report at the Everglades Coalition 30<sup>th</sup> annual conference.*

*Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (Everglades Foundation) agreed these reporting sessions help them focus on how much has been accomplished. The public participation model used in CEPP was successful because there were no preconceived notions or plans and everyone from the public felt their input was considered. As they move forward on the IDS she hoped they advance projects based on their ecological benefits when making their prioritization decisions. She hoped their first priority is getting the Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) signed in the months ahead.*

*Ms. Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center) seconded the comments made earlier regarding the progress being made. The Everglades Law Center strongly supports moving the IDS through the public process which allows stakeholders to become educated and provide meaningful input. She agreed they should identify and move forward with projects that provide the greatest ecological lift.*

*Ms. Sara de Flesco (Clean Water Action) said that as a grass roots organization with nearly one million members, it is extremely important that Clean Water Action get the opportunity to have a voice in the IDS process and they support the opportunity for a public workshop. She agreed CEPP worked well and would like to see a similar method used for the IDS. They support the projects with the greatest ecological benefits be prioritized as highlighted in the NAS' report. She thanked the Corps for the opportunity to comment on CEPP and asked that the Chief's Report be completed in December.*

*Mr. Ron Bergeron (FWC) thanked the Task Force for all of its hard work and also thanked the SFWMD, Corps, Interior and DEP. Some of the opinions he has go back when he first entered the Everglades 68 years ago at the age of 3. He was fortunate enough to have a grandfather that was a game warden. He urged them to prioritize those projects that will stop the most irreversible damage first so they could succeed. It is his opinion that Contract 8 is extremely important. He lives in the Everglades and the impacts from the quantity of water north of the trail and the lack of water to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay is extremely devastating. He urged them to keep the Everglades alive while they complete the largest restoration effort in the history of the world.*

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

*Motion made and seconded, the May 2014 minutes were approved without discussion.*

#### *Chairman Colley Billie, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida*

*Chairman Colley Billie thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to speak on issues that are extremely important to the Miccosukee Tribe way of life and to Everglades restoration as a whole. He welcomed Mr. Bean as the new chairman of the Task Force and said he looked forward to working*

*with him. He grew up on the Miccosukee Reservation and lived there most of his life and used to fish by the S-12 structures. Unfortunately today he wouldn't think of drinking that water or fish or swim there. The water is so polluted that the Everglades is not the same as when he was little. The Miccosukee tribe is not opposed to the restoration effort in fact they support the effort. They have the most to lose if the effort is not carried through. Their biggest concern is that the Miccosukee Tribe has to be part of the solution. They can build structures but if they do not clean up the water, the Everglades cannot be restored. Water quality has to be in the forefront of the projects. The Corps is working to update its IDS and he asked that they all seriously consider supporting a project to address the L-28 canal system and that it be at the top of this list. The L-28 Interceptor is bringing polluted water into the Everglades and that has not been addressed yet and he asked that it be put at the top of the list. He asked that the L-28 be made part of the overall Everglades restoration and that the Miccosukee Tribe be part of the solution. As part of the Tribe's outreach they hosted a Congressional Everglades Caucus meeting in April 2014 and his Water Resources Director provided the Task Force with a briefing in May 2014. The Tribe wants to work together on developing a solution and invites everyone to work with them to find a way to fully restore the Everglades.*

*Mr. Bean said the Tribe's desire to be part of the solution is widely shared around the table. They will continue to work with him and others to try and hammer out a solution that works for everyone.*

#### *Western Everglades Basins Interagency Coordination*

*Mr. Bean introduced the coordinated presentation that would be provided by the DEP, SFWMD, EPA, USDA and the Corps.*

*Mr. Drew Bartlett said everyone agrees that to restore the Everglades they need to look at every bit of it and they all agree they need to do something to address water quality in the western basins. DEP is very supportive and did ask to fund the data collection and study to understand what needs to happen in the L-28 basin. DEP supports working with both tribes to address the water quality in the L-28 basin. The governor will ask the Legislature and then they will have to wait for the appropriation.*

*Mr. Tom Teets said the SFWMD also recognizes the need to improve the water quality from the L-28 and reviewed a number of efforts underway: Sam Jones/Abiaki Prairie Wetland; C-139 basin; Everglades Regulatory Program - C-139 Basin; and Restoration Strategies - Western Flowpath. They are also conducting the Western Basins Water Resources evaluation with the initial focus on the northern reach and working with landowners in the area to identify projects to improve water quality before the water flows south into the Big Cypress Reservation for the Seminole Tribe of Indians as well as into the Miccosukee Tribe's Reservation. In addition they will be doing an evaluation of the water quality benefits on the C-139 Annex area and working with other agencies to on the data gaps, topographic information and water quality models in the area. He noted it would be a fairly ambitious effort they will be embarking on in the future.*

*Ms. McTeer-Toney stated EPA believes the Tribe has legitimate water quality concerns and Administrator Gina McCarthy has expressed that one of the focuses for this Administration is to work closely with tribal governments. EPA committed to the Tribe to work with the state and federal*

*partners to identify and implement opportunities to restore water quality and EPA has been actively engaged in that process over the past year. EPA is working with FDEP because in order for non-point source funds to be used for restoration projects, the state's non-point source management plan must identify the basin as a priority. The next step is to work with the state to develop a nine element watershed plan which is a necessary element before EPA's non-point source funds can actually be used. EPA is hopeful the state will be successful in funding the study of pollution sources in the basin north of the Tribe and this assessment will be extremely valuable in identifying where restoration funds can be most effectively spent. EPA has been working with NRCS to combine resources in the Joint National Water Quality Initiative to fund projects that will restore water quality to the Tribe. They will continue to have these conversations regularly with the partners to develop a plan to ultimately address the Tribe's water quality concerns. EPA understands this has been historic and ongoing and it is their desire to work with all the partners to see measurable, accountable results.*

*Mr. Morgan added USDA's NRCS has also been working to address the water quality issue. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is their flagship program that provides financial assistance to farmers and landowners to address water quality issues on their land. They are working with EPA on the National Water Quality Initiative but that could take up to two years to approve. As a State Conservationist in Florida, he can look at EQIP to address water quality issues affecting tribal lands.*

*Mr. Howie Gonzales said the Corps has been involved in this inter-agency coordination focusing primarily on the Corps capabilities and opportunities on the L-28 issue. The Corps has a full list of capabilities from a Section 203 Tribal Partnership Program, Planning Assistance to States Program, as well as a continuing authorities program and the IDS process. He anticipates a team from Jacksonville will be meeting with the Tribe's staff to look at the authorization history and the evolution of what has occurred in that basin. The idea is to identify a problem and start brainstorming potential solutions.*

*Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation Natural Areas and Adjacent portions of the Big Cypress Ms. Patty Power noted it was nearly two years ago that the Seminole Tribe came to the Task Force and presented concerns about hydrological issues in the area surrounding the Big Cypress Reservation in the western basin. Concerns were raised during the CEPP process and they were told there wasn't enough time to evaluate the option of bringing some water to Big Cypress through that process because a lot is not known and they do not have the history and the monitoring data. In response the Task Force had a group of people work together on this issue. Eight meetings have been held and the Tribe has been repeatedly impressed by the talent and hard work that has come from the agencies involved in this effort. They have been able to share all of the existing data and know what the baseline is as well as identify the gaps. The next step is trying to fill those gaps. From the Tribe's point of view they believe this effort has improved the federal and state understanding of the conditions under which the Tribe manages its water resources. The Tribe appreciates that they have established a better understanding of the state, federal and tribal data and ability to collect more data and what kind of modelling may be needed to make changes. They have established good working relationships among all the agencies to get this work done. The Tribe feels strongly that a large benefit is the*

*mutual understanding of the historic data representing both surface water and groundwater levels and flows through the western basins especially as it affects Big Cypress. The Tribe believes the situation is now ripe for everyone involved to find opportunities to fill the gaps in the data and improve their chances to model better solutions.*

*Ms. Estenoz added that at the direction of the Task Force, her office has these meetings and the agencies have been tremendously nimble as well. As topics have changed agencies have rotated expertise. Opening the dialogue alone was very valuable and they have done a lot with a lot still to be done. They have given out homework assignments and they need time to get the work done.*

*Ms. Power noted the Tribe recommends that they keep the group open to continue to work together and there is enough work ongoing that the results are needed before they can have another meeting. They are awaiting the SFWMD's analysis, project development and implementation of their projects in the C-139 Basin. Getting the results of that work will be helpful in filling the gaps. The Corps is leading a project with the Tribe on the operation of the S-190 structure on the Big Cypress Reservation which for the Tribe is the 'plug in the bathtub' and its where all the water gets let out. The Tribe has instituted a groundwater to surface water data collection project and those results need to be analyzed. This will help interpret a 'what's next type of project'. Recommendation is to keep the group together and hold until they have the information to work on.*

*Ms. Estenoz added that the two previous agenda items are related in that they are in the same part of the system and there has been some cross communication. The group will meet on an ad hoc, as needed basis.*

#### ***Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework***

*Ms. Estenoz reminded the members of the WG recommendations: to develop a Comprehensive Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework that includes a cross cut budgeting tool; for OERI to hold a high-level partnership workshop to discuss the Strategic Action Framework; and to provide coordination support for federal invasive species efforts. It was understood they need a strategic approach on invasive species to help decision makers understand the connections between the goals, strategies and tactically how they support those strategies. As the National Research Council pointed out they are tremendously organized at the implementation level but that also needs to occur at the decision making and policy level. Everything they are currently doing must continue but a strategic approach is needed to enhance all of their collective efforts. She reviewed four items to the Task Force:*

- *Draft Strategic Action Framework – describes how invasive exotic species affect the South Florida Ecosystem: The Everglades, the regional economy and Native American culture. It explains pathways and why Florida is at particular risk. It lays out a vision and key principles and delineates four strategic goals based on the invasion curve. It provides objectives, strategies and case studies for each goal area. Document was developed with the help of invasive exotic species experts and describes the problem and outlines solution pathways. This document will guide their*

*collective work in the future to pursue their common goals. Final version will be a web based document. It was presented for Task Force approval.*

- *Draft Preliminary Action Assessment - intended for the next phase of this effort as a starting place for the development of an implementation plan. Document prioritizes the top 11 strategies they have identified and includes a preliminary list of current and needed actions under each priority strategy. It is a living piece of the Framework, expected to evolve and change. It was presented for Task Force feedback.*
- *Cross Cut Budget - under development and will start with federal and state FY2014 data and use the same geographic boundary as the Task Force. Information is being provided by the agencies and completion is anticipated in February 2015. They hope to use it as a planning tool in the future. It was presented for Task Force feedback.*
- *Web portal can be accessed at [www.evergladesrestoration.gov](http://www.evergladesrestoration.gov)*

*Ms. Estenoz reviewed next steps which include her office providing executive leadership briefings, finalizing the cross cut budgeting tool and convening an executive level leadership group, under the auspices of the TF, to discuss implementation of the Framework.*

*Mr. Billy Causey added the Sanctuary Program has been developing a lionfish management strategy for the southeast Region and offered to have it linked to this effort. Allyn Childress noted that lionfish is one of the case studies and they will update that section to reflect that work. Mr. Bartlett said the topic of invasive exotic species is critical for the Everglades and recommended Mr. Nick Wiley advise them as they go forward on this issue. Mr. Wiley noted his agency has been involved in the great work that Ms. Estenoz and her team have done. His agency is ready to be fully engaged and welcomed the opportunity to have a more active role with this Task Force. Mr. Bean suggested they work together over the coming months to figure out how that should be structured.*

*Mr. Moran said there are two big issues that need to be addressed. One is water quality and the other is invasive species. They are well down the road of achieving the water quality goals thanks to the State of Florida, the SFWMD and the tax payers of Florida who have spent close to \$3 billion over the past 10-15 years. They have Restoration Strategies in place which should achieve all of their water quality goals so the water quality issue is achievable. When it comes to invasive species, it is not so easy. He commended Ms. Estenoz and her group noting the gargantuan effort they have done. It is the high altitude, long term solution. Similar to the Lygodium in the Refuge they need on the ground solutions now and they can't wait for Congress to provide money years from now.*

*Mr. Bean noted they have heard from a number of sources including the NRC that, with their resources, there may be a possibility to do a better job of addressing invasive exotics if they get an earlier start particular with prevention and early detection response - once they get into what has been described as the red zone it is costly and the chances of success are slim. They need to look for those most efficient investments to solve this problem as best they can. The request is for the TF to accept the Framework and endorse the recommended next steps. There was no further discussion and the TF accepted the Framework document. Ms. Estenoz thanked Mr. Rory Feeney, Ms. Cynthia Guerra and others who helped with this effort. Mr. Rory Feeney acknowledged the importance of the*

*Framework document which gives clarity to an important issue. It affects the Tribe in many ways including recreationally and culturally. The more invasion they have of exotic species the more impacts they have to cultural resources. An example of this is the loss of the Swamp Bay and Red Bay trees which are being impacted by the Ambrosia Beetle.*

#### **Membership of the WG and SCG**

*Ms. Estenoz noted this is a follow-up issue from the May TF meeting after Ms. Susan Markley retired. At that time it was noted they may not have enough local representation on the WG and SCG. The TF directed the WG and SCG come back with some additional nominations. Mayor Ruane will be appointing a WG and SCG member so they will have the voice from the West Coast. Commissioner Diaz will be appointing Mr. Lee Hefty to the WG who will also serve as his alternate on the TF. She asked for TF concurrence to appoint the following: Ms. Deb Drum (Martin County), Mr. Rob Robbins (Palm Beach County) and Mr. Brian Carlstrom (Superintendent, Biscayne National Park) to the WG. Mr. Bean asked if there was any discussion, there was none. A motion was made to approve the appointments which was seconded. All the members voted in favor with none opposed. Mr. Nick Wiley added Mr. Ernie Marks would continue to engage and support the Task Force.*

#### **Public Comment**

*Ms. Cara Capp (NPCA) on the issue of the operational testing plan for MWDs and C-111 South Dade projects, NPCA and others have been following the PDT process and are excited about the progress. A lot of the data from the first two years is showing beneficial results. NPCA is concerned that some of the inclusions could back track on some of the progress by proposing releases from the S-197 and by lowering water levels at the S-18C. They are supportive of testing the S-356 pump moving forward and hope the testing will always be done to the benefit of the ecosystem. NPCA looks forward to working with the agencies through the PDT process. NPCA along with several allies recently submitted a letter to this effect to the Corps and the SFWMD and they look forward to continuing to work on this issue.*

*Ms. Tabitha Cale (Audubon of Florida) said that Audubon is supportive of the efforts to find a solution to the water quality issues related to the L-28 canal. They also strongly support the Strategic Action Framework and are pleased this effort will make invasive species management more efficient. Additional resources need to be allocated to manage these established species and to prevent the spread of newly introduced species. They are glad to see the incremental testing moving forward and they don't want to see benefits reduced. More water has been flowing into Taylor Slough, salinity levels have improved and they have measured increases in submerged aquatic vegetation in NE Florida Bay. They do not want to see the benefits of this project reduced in any way.*

*Dawn Shirreffs (Everglades Foundation) stated that if they proposed a project with certain conditions and they are changing the conditions with which they said they would operate that project, they are no longer able to use the science on adaptive management. As they are dealing with the first increment of combined operations, if actual risks are identified and that hasn't happened yet, then they need to figure out the solution that is appropriate to address those risks. She closed by saying that flowing water out of S-197 that in effect takes water out of Taylor Slough sends them backwards.*

### ***Assignments, Next Steps and Closing Comments***

***Ms. Estenoz reviewed next steps: Strategy and Biennial Report, approved by the Task Force, will be transmitted to the Congress by the Secretary of the Interior; they will work with the Corps, SFWMD and partner agencies to start the public workshops at the end of January; CERP Report to Congress will require a lot of cooperation and work from our staffs to put the report together and once the report is done they will bring it to the Task Force; additional ideas for the website will be brought to the Task Force in the Spring; meetings with various agencies are occurring on the Western Everglades issues and her office will help facilitate any inter-agency meetings should the need arise; on the Big Cypress Seminole issues they have agreed to keep the group together and meet on an ad hoc, as needed basis; on invasive species, the cross cut budget will be done by February and they will offer leadership briefings right away and once those are done they will convene a leadership meeting on implementation strategies. She asked the members to stay in contact with her office as they formulate the next agenda. It would be timely to do a MWDs Ops plan update at the next TF meeting.***

***Mr. Bean thanked Ms. Estenoz and the Task Force staff for organizing an efficient meeting and he thanked the members for the very collegial and constructive manner in which they discussed the issues.***

***Meeting adjourned at 2:52 PM.***

### ***Handouts and Presentations:***

- 1. Administrative Items***
  - a. Agenda***
  - b. Draft minutes, May 2014 meeting***
- 2. Introductions***
  - a. Task Force Roster***
  - b. Michael Bean bio***
  - c. Kevin Ruane bio***
- 3. National Research Council Fifth Biennial Review***
  - a. Power Point presentation***
  - b. Report in Brief***
- 4. 2014 Strategy and Biennial Report***
  - a. Power Point presentation***
  - b. Draft Report***
- 5. Corps Program and Project Update presentation***
- 6. CERP 2015 Report to Congress presentation***
- 7. Western Everglades Basin presentation***
- 8. Invasive Species***
  - a. Power Point Presentation***
  - b. Draft Strategic Action Framework***
  - c. Preliminary Action Assessment***