

South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

DRAFT ASR ISSUE TEAM CHARTER

First Reading – May 24, 2001

BACKGROUND:

In September 1998, the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force's Working Group (i.e., Working Group) formed the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Issue Team. The Team was tasked to assess issues and uncertainties surrounding the large-scale ASR implementation outlined in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), and develop an action plan to address those issues. The CERP proposes to use over 300 ASR wells to store 1.7 billion gallons per day of excess wet-period surface water to be returned and used during dry periods. In July 1999, the Issue Team produced a report, "Aquifer Storage and Recovery Issue Team Assessment and Comprehensive Strategy". The report included a plan recommending projects and/or actions, with associated costs, to evaluate the feasibility of ASR as proposed in the Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Review Study (The Restudy). The report also listed the following seven issues specific to implementation of ASR:

- 1 Characterization of the quality of prospective source waters, spatial and temporal variability
- 2 Characterization of Regional hydrogeology of the Upper Floridan Aquifer: Hydraulic Properties and water quality
- 3 Analysis of critical pressure for rock fracturing.
- 4 Analysis of Site and Regional changes in head and patterns of flow
- 5 Analysis of water quality changes during movement and storage in the aquifer
- 6 Aquifer storage and recovery potential effects on mercury bioaccumulation for ecosystem restoration projects.
- 7 Relationship between ASR storage interval properties and recovery rates and recharge volume

The report concluded that ASR is applicable in south Florida, but more information is needed in the following areas:

1. Information needed to validate regional-scale application
2. Source water suitability assuming minimal pretreatment
3. Hydraulic response to large-scale recharge and recovery
4. Assessment of recovered water for environmental compatibility
5. Demonstration of large-scale ASR wells closely clustered to obtain operational data.

Upon completion of the Issue Team Report many issues still remain. On October 19, 2000, the Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem (CROGEE) held an ASR workshop in Miami, Florida. The purpose of the workshop was to review and provide comments

on preliminary drafts of the project management plans (PMPs) for the CERP ASR Pilot Projects and the proposed CERP ASR Regional Study. The CROGEE produced a report in early 2001, "Aquifer Storage and Recovery in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The CROGEE generally concluded that an improved understanding in three areas of uncertainty are needed: regional science, water quality, and local feasibility. Addressing these areas would require studies that go beyond the scope of the proposed CERP ASR Pilot Projects, for which funding was previously identified, but could be considered in the proposed CERP ASR Regional study.

To date, ASR has moved to the forefront of controversy. An ASR Bill allowing ASR to move forward was initially embraced by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Governor's Office, and a majority of both Florida House and Senate legislators. Specifically, the bill would have allowed an exemption for the total coliform bacteria drinking water standard prior to ASR recharge, assuming the applicant could demonstrate die-off of these microorganisms within the aquifer under a risk-based approach. Environmentalists claiming such legislation would allow water pumped into the ground to be exempt from federal drinking water standards attacked the ASR Bill. Although unfounded, the political attack on ASR all but removed any chance for the legislation to pass this session.

After the Issue Team completed their ASR report, the Working Group voted to keep the Issue Team intact. Initially, the Working Group requested that the Issue Team review the CROGEE Report on ASR, identify outstanding issues and report to the Working Group how such issues were being addressed either through the CERP ASR Pilot Projects or ASR Regional Study. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have jointly prepared comments and responses to the CROGEE report, and have submitted them to the Issue Team for their information.

From all indications, ASR will remain controversial until the majority of testing, designing and operations of the CERP ASR Pilot Projects and ASR Regional Study have been completed. As this process continues, there is a need for the Issue Team to establish a long-term commitment to review the actions of the CERP ASR Project Delivery Teams, maintain the science-based focus essential to properly evaluate ASR and keep the Working Group informed of its progress.

PURPOSE:

The ASR Issue Team, established by the Working Group, shall periodically review and monitor the progress and the direction of the CERP ASR Project Delivery Teams for the pilot projects and the regional study regarding the resolution of issues presented in the Issue Team and CROGEE reports, or additional issues that may arise during implementation of ASR.

MEMBERS:

Richard Harvey/Environmental Protection Agency – West Palm Beach (chairperson)
Shawn Komlos/Environmental Protection Agency – West Palm Beach (alternate)
Jan Rogers/Environmental Protection Agency – West Palm Beach
Jose Calas/Florida Department of Environmental Protection – West Palm Beach
Richard Deurling/Florida Department of Environmental Protection -- Tallahassee
Jon Arthur/Florida Geological Survey – Tallahassee
Fred Rapach/Palm Beach County Water Utilities Dept.
Robert Renken/U.S. Geological Survey - Miami
Linda Friar/South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Christopher Brown/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville
Michael Fies/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville (alternate)
Peter Kwiatkowski/South Florida Water Management District – West Palm Beach
Don Ellison/South Florida Water Management District – West Palm Beach
Robert Verrastro/South Florida Water Management District–West Palm Beach (alternate)

GUIDANCE and DELIVERABLES:

- a. The Issue Team shall regularly brief the Working Group on the status of the resolution of these issues. Initially, these briefings should be at least quarterly.
- b. As new information is made available, the Issue Team shall prepare letters of review to the Working Group on the status of such information and its impact to the resolution of issues regarding CERP ASR.
- c. The Issue Team should provide input to the Office of the Executive Director in developing the CERP ASR performance criteria and updates as required as part of the Task Force strategy document.
- d. The WG ASR Issue team will provide a forum; consistent within established CERP protocol, to facilitate achieving consensus on issues regarding ASR.