

**The Museum of Discovery and Science and the
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Collaboration Committee**

OUTREACH PLAN
for Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration

The purpose of this three-phase Outreach Plan is to implement the public-private partnership between the Task Force and the Museum of Discovery and Science.

Involving the general public in the projects and progress of the Everglades Restoration will be one of the major challenges of the government agencies charged with completing the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Unlike the “bricks and mortar” components of the restoration effort, government agencies face numerous obstacles in providing effective and productive outreach. Because of the \$7.8 billion cost of completing the CERP, the government agencies charged with completing restoration projects are limited in their ability to provide comprehensive campaigns for outreach and public engagement. Agency engineers and scientists involved in the effort are not always effective in relaying the science and technology involved in the restoration in “lay terms.” Studies have shown that the public often does not perceive government agencies as the most credible messengers regarding the impacts and benefits of their programs.

Participants in the restoration effort include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District, local, regional, state and federal agencies and two sovereign Tribes, as well as local, state and national environmental and community organizations. Because so many entities are involved in the restoration effort the challenge is to generate a clear message about the effort through a cohesive and comprehensive outreach campaign.

In response to this challenge, the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force and the Museum of Discovery and Science formalized a partnership in 1999 to create an ongoing dialog about the CERP and to explore ways in which the groups could work together on outreach programming. In addition to the Museum’s annual visitation of more than 500,000, it also has produced and provided effective educational programs for school children, pre-school children, teachers, families and senior citizens, both on and off-site. These educational programs have demonstrated considerable success in providing programs outside Museum walls to urban, minority and underserved communities throughout South Florida.

As a result of 25-years of demonstrated success, the Museum is currently planning renovation of its facility and desires to incorporate current and timely information about the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Recognizing the limited budgets afforded for outreach by government entities, and the Museum’s plans for the future, the Museum/Task Force Collaboration Committee (MCC) has developed a Multi-Year Phased Outreach Plan. This Plan will draw upon the strengths of all members of the partnership and will communicate important ideas and information to the Museum’s annual visitors and its own outreach efforts. Designed as a “living document,” this phased Plan also allows for additions and enhancements as new initiatives and opportunities arise. Three Phases have been identified to date. Phase I contains activities achievable in the short term, within existing budgets and builds the foundation for succeeding Phases. Phase II focuses on the renovation and enhancement of the Museum’s existing *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit. Phase III includes the completion the Florida Environmental Education Center.

PHASE I: 2001-2002

The primary intent of phase I is to update the Museum's existing environmental education efforts and build the foundation for implementing phases II and III of the Outreach Plan. Specifically, we seek to update existing exhibits and programs about the ecology of Florida to include useful and engaging public information about the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem to the more than 500,000 visitors who come to the Museum of Discovery and Science annually. Initial museum-based efforts in Phase I will be low cost and can be initiated immediately. As a demonstration of the Museum's commitment to this partnership, many of the activities outlined in this initial phase are already underway and do not require allocation of additional funding. Three new initiatives developed by the MCC and designed to bring the restoration message to the Museum's visitors, require a total of \$65,370 to be completed. Taken together, these efforts represent a full range of programmatic offerings and will serve as the foundation for key aspects of future partnership activities.

COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED TO DATE

ENHANCING EXISTING EFFORTS

Information Dissemination

- **Project Description:** The Museum Collaboration Committee (MCC) will collect appropriate brochures, posters and other materials developed by Task Force agencies and organizations to disseminate within the Museum and in Museum outreach and educational programming. This effort represents the first step in creating a centrally located resource center for the community about the Everglades and its restoration.
- **Funding Requirements:** This will be completed through in-kind contributions of goods and services to the extent authorized by law. Specifically, Museum and Agency staff will collect and deliver materials to the Museum and the Museum will then coordinate their dissemination to target audiences.

Electronic Outreach

- **Project Description:** An innovative and interactive web page has been added to the Museum's existing website highlighting the Museum's role as an official partner in providing public education about the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and CERP. The page will provide the Museum's virtual visitors valuable information regarding the Everglades Restoration. Periodic updates and exciting interactives will be developed in greater detail as the restoration efforts progress. The web page will contain links to all of the Task Force agency websites, a link to the *Florida Water Story* website and other relevant sites.
- **Funding Requirements:** This will be completed through in-kind contributions of goods and services. To the extent authorized by law, Task Force members can allocate staff time to participate in review and enhancement of the website, creating links to relevant websites, and providing the Museum with copies of existing educational materials. The Museum will then compile the information and post it to the website.

School-based Education

- **Project Description:** The *Florida Water Story* is an educational initiative designed to help engage the global community in learning more about issues and topics relevant to formal education and the South Florida environment. With a formal middle school curriculum unit as the anchor, the partners are compiling unique information on environmental careers and are developing a suite of complementary activities for their website. Intended for use by students, parents and the public at

large, these activities are designed to engage the widest audience possible in learning more about the places, people and issues that impact our everyday lives. By participating in this effort, the Task Force will be able to reach into classrooms and homes throughout Florida (and beyond) and significantly enhance this existing Museum-based project.

- Funding Requirements: This will be completed through in-kind contributions of goods and services to the extent authorized by law. Task force members can allocate staff time to participate in environmental career interviews, creating links via relevant websites, and providing the Museum with copies of existing educational materials. The Museum will then process the information and make it available via the website and environmental education reference library.

Museum-based Education

- Project Description: In order to bring the Everglades restoration issues to life, the Museum and the MCC are exploring the creation of a series of Gallery Talks to be presented by Museum staff or volunteers on the exhibit floor or as educational outreaches. As a first step towards this goal, the South Florida Water Management District will provide the Museum with a “permanent loan” of an Enviroscape Model. Designed to focus on Everglades restoration-related topics while linking to existing exhibitry, these table talk presentations will increase visitor awareness and encourage a personal connection to the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit and the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem.
- Funding Requirements: This will be completed through in-kind contributions of goods and services to the extent authorized by law. Agencies can contribute by donating materials outright or through the permanent loan of the materials and by allowing their staff to serve as experts in the script development stage. The Museum would contribute by donating staff time to develop the script, training staff and volunteers to present the talks and then by allocating volunteer or staff time to present the talks.

CREATING NEW EFFORTS

Retrofit Displays & Exhibits

- Project Description: Museum staff will draw upon the graphics and copy of the existing South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineer display exhibits to develop “low budget” exhibit materials that will enhance the current *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit. These new exhibit materials may include one primary exhibit about the restoration, and a display where existing materials will be disseminated -- or it may involve small, multiple, freestanding exhibits that include a brochure rack. These initial displays will incorporate interesting messages about the Everglades Restoration into the Museum’s existing exhibits within the next year. The key to the success of Phase I restoration exhibits will be determined by how quickly and cost effectively they can be made available to Museum visitors, while still meeting existing exhibit design and content objectives. While they will complement the Museum’s existing exhibits, the new additions will not be permanent exhibits. They will not offer the interactive activities or the engaging visuals the Museum typically provides in permanent exhibits.
- Funding requirements: A minimal starter budget of approximately \$25,000 will be needed for the creation of this Museum-quality Retrofit of Displays & Exhibits. A considerable amount of time and money can be saved by having agency and Museum staff work together to retrofit the designs, photography, graphics and copy of existing agency exhibits and displays into Museum exhibits and materials. In order to complete this project within existing FY 2001 budgets, allocations of small amounts of funding from several agencies will be solicited.

Outdoor Exhibitory

- Project Description: The Museum of Discovery and Science is currently planning to renovate its 11,000 square foot outdoor exhibit area that is linked to the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit. The improvement project presents a significant opportunity to introduce visitors to the importance of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and its restoration. The initiative includes: providing interpretive staff, increasing native botanical collections, creating an introduction area and interpretation (signage and print material), installing an accessible ramp and pathways, and creating outdoor enclosures to house wildlife currently not on display.
- Funding Requirements: This project has a total budget of \$70,237. To date the Museum has raised a total of \$44,867 to achieve project goals (\$ 24,867: State of Florida Department of Forestry, \$15,000: Broward Beautiful, \$5,000: Broward County Department of Planning and Environmental Protection). The Museum and the MCC are looking for other funding opportunities to raise the remaining \$25,370 needed to complete the project.

South Florida Restoration Science Forum

- Project Description: The Working Group's Science Coordination Team has, as one of its major priorities, organizing and holding a biennial South Florida Restoration Science Forum. The Forum's main purpose is to enhance the interaction between science and environmental restoration decision making in South Florida. The audience for the Forum ranges from elected officials, to natural resource managers in agencies and tribes, to non-governmental organizations and the general public. As such, the Forum can be an effective component of the MCC Outreach Plan, particularly with respect to the role of science in restoration. Under this Plan, the Museum would be contracted to make the science-based presentations from both Forums accessible to, and understandable by, the general public.
- Funding Requirements: A minimal starter budget of \$15,000 is needed to create a 2D poster-style exhibit in the IMAX Gallery (approx. 75 running feet of exhibit space) with text and images based on content and themes based on the 1999 Science Forum as posted on the SOFIA website. This estimate is based on the Museum's offering in-kind services in contracting of a project curator, supervision of design work, critique of label content and exhibit installation. Representatives of the SCT to offer in-kind services in the critique of label content and the procurement of images and pertinent background information.

"Fun" Childrens' Educational Piece

- Project Description: Agency and Museum staff will collaborate to develop a novel educational piece that involves a restoration relevant educational activity. Suggestions received to date include an alligator or gar cutout "hat face", an aquifer model cutout, or new and old Everglades puzzle. The educational piece will be distributed at the Museum and during other appropriate Museum programs and outreach activities, as well as by all Collaboration Committee Member agencies during their outreach activities.
- Funding Requirements: Grant funds will be solicited to finance the printing of the "Fun" educational piece. Agency and Museum staff will develop and design the piece as the in-kind service match. Grant applications or proposals will be developed by the MCC and submitted by the Museum. Potential funding sources include: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Environmental Education Grant Awards Program, the South Florida Water Management District's Environmental Education Grants Program, The Munson Foundation, and other grant programs as appropriate.

PHASE II: 2002-2003

The primary intent of phase II is to update, renovate and enhance the Museum's existing 9,000 square foot *Florida EcoScapes (EcoScapes)* exhibition. This immersion-style exhibit currently features hundreds of living and replicated plants and animals in 10 Florida ecosystems. Exhibit themes include the water story, the natural history of Florida's flora and fauna, the interrelationship of all living things in ecosystems and the human influences and impacts on the state's natural environment. However, the *EcoScapes* exhibition was completed in 1992, and it is necessary to update the living exhibits and displays to include new scientific discoveries as well as information about Everglades restoration. The CERP calls for a series of ecological and water system improvements that will be implemented and constructed over the next 20 years. Museum staff projects that annual attendance will increase as a result of these efforts. Current visitation figures (500,000 visitors per year) suggest that the Museum has the potential to communicate information about the Everglades restoration to more than 10 million visitors during the life of the project. Total estimated costs of this phase of the Plan are \$930,000.

COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED TO DATE

Creation of an Orientation Entryway

- Project Description: Creation of a defined "starting point" at the entryway of the *EcoScapes* exhibit that will orient the visitor to the exhibit ahead and introduce the key concept of Everglades restoration.
- Estimated Costs: \$80,000

Addition of Interactive Exhibits

- Project Description: The addition of interactive exhibit components and environmental information will help connect the Everglades to global issues and will also make the Everglades restoration more relevant to Florida residents (and others) visiting the Museum. Enhanced interpretation, "real time" science information and interactive exhibits will also be necessary to capture visitor interest and involvement in the context of the exhibition.
- Estimated Costs: \$250,000

Enhanced Interpretation of Existing Exhibits

- Project Description: The existing information within the exhibit needs to be updated to include new scientific discoveries as well as information about Everglades restoration; cosmetic changes including refurbishment of replicated materials (trees, plants, rockwork, etc.) and lighting improvements to modernize the exhibition are also included in this component.
- Estimated Costs: \$600,000

FUNDING STRATEGY

The Museum will seek funding for this Phase from the following entities for fiscal year 2002-2003: the Task Force agencies, the National Science Foundation Grants Program, the US Environmental Protection Agency Education Grants Program, The South Florida Water Management District's Environmental Education Grants Program, The Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation, A.D. Henderson Foundation and other grant programs as appropriate.

PHASE III: Beyond 2003

The intent of phase III is to complete the Florida Environmental Education Center. An extension of the Museum of Discovery and Science, this center will draw upon the Museum's living exhibits, displays and interactive mediums and create a whole new dimension of environmental education programs and resources that are currently unavailable to Florida teachers, students, conservationists, scientists, and the general public. The Florida Environmental Education Center will play a pivotal role in involving the general public in the projects and progress of the Everglades Restoration. As a result, the Task Force, through its representatives on the MCC, should take an active role in the planning, design and development of the Florida Environmental Education Center.

COMPONENTS

The proposed Center will be an extension of the enhanced Museum facility. Current conceptual models of the center outline five key components. New **Educational Spaces** that will include a multi-media lecture/assembly auditorium as well as classroom and laboratory spaces. A **Resource Center** that will have at the core of its collection a reference library focused on environmental education in general and Florida in particular. **Interpretive Exhibits** that are unique in content but thematically linked to the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit. An enhanced outdoor greenspace, or **Outdoor Exhibitory**, that will provide interpreted outdoor environments representative of the greater Everglades ecosystem as well as a Science Yard that will provide housing for educational wildlife. In addition to the physical components, the Center will allow for greatly enhanced **Program offerings** to help inform the public about the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and current efforts to restore and sustain it.

FUNDING STRATEGY

The design and construction of the Florida Environmental Education Center is estimated to cost \$10.4 million dollars. A sizable portion of this amount has already been secured through a \$4.4 million Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) matching grant from the State of Florida. Additional funding for this project will be solicited from a variety of public and private sources including the Congress, Task Force agencies, State agencies, private foundations, corporations and individuals.