

## Southwest Florida Regional Restoration Coordination Team --- DRAFT Charter

**BACKGROUND:** The Southwest Florida Region is considered to be the western edge of the Everglades ecosystem. The region includes significant estuarine resources (e.g. Caloosahatchee River, Charlotte Harbor, Estero Bay, Naples Bay, Rookery Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands) and upland and wetland forested habitats including pine flatwoods, scrub oak, and cypress sloughs. Located in one of the nation's fastest developing areas, the region's natural resources have been degraded by intensive land uses. Efforts to restore altered coastal and upland sites have recently been initiated at the local, state, and federal level.

In July 1997, the Working Group established a Southwest Florida/Big Cypress Project Coordination Team. The primary objective of the team was to develop and maintain an integrated project coordination plan for the Southwest Florida/Big Cypress Basin and provision of project information for the annual Integrated Financial Plan. This work has been completed, however, continued efforts regarding restoration coordination are still needed.

In March 2001, the Working Group, in conjunction with Florida Gulf Coast University and the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, hosted a regional forum to review restoration and science coordination within the region. This forum was attended by over 100 researchers, resource managers, local officials and private interests. Key recommendations from the forum included establishing an ongoing restoration coordination team, promoting information and education sharing, implementing the region science plan, and the need for a cost-shared regional science coordinator. This charter establishes the ongoing restoration coordination team envisioned at the forum.

**PURPOSE:** The Southwest Florida Regional Restoration Coordination Team (RRCT) will integrate, coordinate, and evaluate the region's environmental restoration activities, and make recommendations to the Working Group as appropriate. Additionally, the team will promote public outreach and involvement. The team will serve as the principle advisory body to the Working Group on Southwest Florida.

### MEMBERS:

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Florida Gulf Coast University	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	U.S. FWS National Wildlife Refuges
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	National Park Service - Big Cypress
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Southwest Regional Planning Council
Seminole Tribe of Florida	Charlotte Harbor NEP
South Florida Water Management District	Allyn Childress (OED)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Rafaela Monchek (OED)

Additional non-governmental members may be added in accordance with Working Group policy.

### GUIDANCE:

1. The team will serve in an advisory role, and not as a direct granting or operational agency.
2. The team will not supplant agency authority or have any regulatory authority.
3. The team should focus on Southwest Florida, which extends north from Everglades National Park up to the South Florida Water Management District's Charlotte Harbor Watershed boundary, including the Caloosahatchee Watershed. In the southern part of the region, east from the Gulf of Mexico to the L-4 and L-28 canal systems and Lostman's Slough. The northern east-west boundary will also follow the Charlotte Harbor Watershed's boundaries.
4. The RRCT will act as the coordinating body that identifies, evaluates, and prioritizes restoration needs within the region, when available based on information provided and recommendations from local basin coordination groups (eg. Big Cypress, Charlotte Harbor, etc.) The basin groups will identify local restoration needs, help with the design of restoration plans or help evaluate the effectiveness of proposed plans, and integrate and prioritize all the restoration efforts identified locally. These groups will encourage and assist with the design, assessment, and utilization of local restoration monitoring efforts, including their linkage to the larger restoration process, and possibly affecting the priorities and directions of the larger efforts. The RRCT will provide means for information sharing and cooperation among the basin groups.
5. The RRCT will inform the Working Group of the progress and challenges in the major restoration projects including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the Multi-Species Recovery Plan, as well as inform the Working Group of smaller restoration efforts outside the scope and purview of these larger efforts, but deemed important regionally within the region. The team will help refine future restoration directions, priorities, and funding requirements for the region. The team will also coordinate with RECOVER to ensure its restoration monitoring practices are integrated with the local restoration activities.
5. The team will encourage and support public education and engagement, and coordinate outreach efforts on environmental management, restoration science, and restoration coordination efforts in the southwest region.
6. The team will encourage information sharing on restoration issues.
7. The team should schedule its first meeting within 30 days and develop a meeting schedule as needed. Following the initial team meeting, the team leadership should coordinate with the Working Group chair or the OED to arrange a briefing at an appropriate Working Group meeting.
8. The team reports will be normally included in the Working Group's regularly scheduled meetings.
9. The team will coordinate with entities involved in coordinating scientific/research efforts, including that of the Working Group's Science Coordination Team and the Big Cypress Regional Science Coordination Group.

**DELIVERABLES :**

The team will produce the following interim and final deliverables for review and approval of the Working Group:

1. The team will analyze and develop suggestions related to ecological conceptual models for use in the region.
2. The team will prepare a priority needs reports, including restoration and scientific research needs.
3. The team will prepare annual progress reports of restoration efforts in the region to the Working Group.

**ADMINISTRATIVE FEATURES:**

1. All team meetings will be open to the public and time will be included in the agenda for public comment. Meetings will be advertised in accordance with the Public Affairs Procedures developed by the Working Group.
2. The Public Affairs representative for the team will be responsible for providing public notice of meetings, facilitating public comment, and providing a brief meeting summary for each meeting that is suitable for publication on the Task Force Web Site.
3. The OED will provide staff support, as needed, to assist the team.