

DRAFT Minutes
Joint Working Group and Science Coordination Group Meeting
South Florida Water Management District
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
September 16, 2014

Welcome and Introductions

Ernie Marks called the meeting to order at 10:00AM and reminded everyone meeting was being webcast. Members were provided with the agenda (Encl. 1a) and draft minutes (Encl. 1b) from the April 2014 meeting. Members were asked to introduce themselves and provide brief introductory remarks. Dave Rudnick, new SCG member, noted this was his first meeting. COL Greco reported that the System Status Report (SSR) has been finalized and the full report is available online. Nick Aumen reminded everyone of the GEER Conference scheduled for April 21 - 23, 2015. To date they have received 30 submissions for the sessions and they will open up the opportunity for abstract submissions later this month.

In Attendance:	Sep 16	
Working Group (WG) Members		Alternates
Ernie Marks – Chair – FL Dept. of Environmental Protection	√	
Barry Rosen – Vice Chair - United States Geological Survey	√	
Billy Causey – NOAA, FL Keys Nat'l Marine Sanctuary	-	
Chuck Collins – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	√	
COL Alan Dodd - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	-	COL Tom Greco
Rory Feeney - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	-	
Roman Gastesi – Local Government	-	
Veronica Harrell-James – U.S. Attorney's Office	√	
Eric Hughes – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	-	
Bob Krumenaker – NPS, ENP & Dry Tortugas National Parks	-	Bob Johnson
Cherise Maples – Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Russell Morgan - U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, NRCS	√	
Keith Neves - Bureau of Indian Affairs	-	
Fred Noble - FL Dept. of Transportation	-	
Bonnie Ponwith – NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	
W. Ray Scott - FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services	√	
Tom Teets - South Florida Water Management District	√	
Larry Williams – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	-	
Vacant – Office of the Governor of Florida	-	
Vacant – Local Government	-	
Vacant – U.S. Department of Transportation	-	
Shannon Estenoz - Special Advisor	√	
Science Coordination Group (SCG) Members		
Nick Aumen – Chair – United States Geological Survey	√	
Susan Gray – Vice Chair - South Florida Water Management	√	

John Baldwin – Florida Atlantic University	√	
Lisa Beever – Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program	-	
Joan Browder - NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	√	
Amy Casteneda - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	-	
Chris Kelble - NOAA, AOML	-	
Chad Kennedy - FL Dept. of Environmental Protection	√	
Cherise Maples - Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Gil McRae – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Comm.	-	
Bob Progulske – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	
Gina Ralph - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	√	
Bill Reck - U.S. Department of Agriculture – NRCS	-	
Dave Rudnick – Everglades National Park, NPS	√	
Dan Scheidt – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	-	
Amber Whittle Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Comm	√	
Vacant – Local Government	-	
Vacant - U.S. Department of Agriculture, ARS	-	

WG Member Discussion

Shannon Estenoz reminded everyone that at the TF at its May meeting discussed the need to replace Susan Markley who provided a perspective on both Miami Dade County and Biscayne Bay issues. The feedback from the TF was that the WG and SCG would benefit from additional local government representation and asked to be provided with some recommendations. Shannon asked the members to think about local government folks they have been working with who may be good additions to the WG and SCG and submit those names to Chairs. They will come back in October with a slate of names to elevate to the TF.

National Research Council (NRC) Report

Bob Johnson noted he is the DOI liaison with the NRC’s Committee on the Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress (CISRERP). The draft of the fifth biennial report came out in late June and the full document is available on the National Academies’ website at:

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=18809. He provided a Power Point (Encl. 2) reminding everyone of the committee’s charge as required by WRDA 2000. He reviewed the topical areas in the report which included three new chapters on CEPP, climate change and sea level rise. He also reviewed the recommendations with regards to: the restoration plan in context; CEPP; implementation progress; climate change and sea level rise; invasive exotic species and the use of science in decision making. The NRC is currently seeking input on review topics and nominations for the sixth CISRERP Committee that will begin this fall. Bob encouraged the members to read chapter 7 which has the Committee’s guidance on how science and decision-making could work better.

Ernie Marks said it is the committee’s charge to identify those areas where they the WG and SCG need more coordination but he did not want to lose sight of all the positive things that have happened such as CEPP, Restoration Strategies, Kissimmee River, C-111 and MWD incremental testing.

Joan Browder asked about the game plan for CEPP. Ernie Marks said they are waiting for the Chief's Report and hoping it will be included in the next WRDA Bill. He added that Chairman Shuster of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has pledged to get the WRDAs back on a two year schedule. COL Greco added that one of their priorities is to revisit the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) and will rely on the WG and SCG to help move this process forward. Tom Teets agreed that the time has come to look at the IDS now that they have authorized projects and CEPP.

Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework

Allyn Childress provided a Power Point (Encl. 3) reviewing the Task Force direction at the July 2013 meeting. The Strategic Action Framework will not duplicate any of the existing plans on invasive exotic species. The goal is to have a tool available for decision makers so they can make wise investments of their resources. For the framework, they have developed the goals, objectives, strategies, a prioritized list of strategies and a series of case studies that highlight different species. The comprehensive list of actions, cross cut budgeting tool and web based framework are all underway. They have identified 10 objectives, 31 strategies, 103 current projects and 88 needed projects. She reviewed the prioritization process and results and asked the members to review the draft framework. Final draft will be presented at the October meeting. Team will continue its efforts on the cross cut budgeting tool and web based framework and update the members at the October meeting.

Shannon added she has reached out to all the agencies at a high executive level on the crosscut budgeting tool and there is a tremendous amount of support for it. The concept is to create a tool that looks across agencies and be able to see how resources are being allocated to the invasive species problem. The National Invasive Species Council (NISC) will include this framework as an example of a regional effort in their next Strategic Plan. Members were asked to personally review this document as well as the Strategy and Biennial Report since it will be their recommendation to the TF. Ernie Marks said he appreciated all the work by the members and their staffs and emphasized the need to review these documents which are apt to be read by the folks who approve future funding. Bob Progulske thanked Allyn and Carrie for pulling this together and for bringing in other agencies such as Customs and Border Patrol. He underscored the importance of rapid response and reported that the Brown Tree Snake has just been found on the Mariana Islands, possibly from a car shipment from Guam.

Public Comment

Alexandria Larson (FL resident) said felt great sadness because ten invasive species that were supposed to be eradicated by 2006 were put off until 2016. The FPL plant at Turkey Point is killing the American Crocodile by raising the temperature in 168 miles of canals. She is worried because they continue to put things off and they have a power plant that is going to melt down.

John Marshall (ARM Foundation) said it was interesting to look at the generalization of the CERP goals and objectives in the NRC report. He said he was happy to see the CERP goals and objectives incorporated in CEPP and hoped to see more.

Barbara Susco (Lake Worth resident) said she recently attended two conferences with John L. Casey and suggested the group ask him to do a presentation on climate change. Casey was a NASA engineer who

published *The Cold Sun* after he retired. She offered to provide his contact information to anyone who was interested.

Tabitha Cale (Audubon of Florida) noted the last several biennial reviews from the NAS have focused on the need to move more freshwater. The most recent review also focused on the increased pressures on the ecosystem from climate change and invasive species. They need to push forward with restoration efforts and speed up efforts to get these things built and going. Audubon strongly supports science and monitoring and wants to see these projects move forward.

Martha Musgrove said she would focus her comments on the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) or the combined IDS and referred to the large chart presented by Temperince Morgan at another meeting that listed every single project with brief descriptions and costs. The WG and SCG is the group that comes together and decides what the priorities are. It is helpful to have some document otherwise they will be ambushed by the Legislature and the Congress. She asked the WG and SCG to create the combined IDS.

Ernie Marks reminded everyone the COL has stated the IDS is a priority. They are committed to continue educating the Legislators but some things are out of their control. COL Greco reminded the group that the current IDS includes CERP projects, non CERP Projects and foundation projects and it is a way of determining what resources are needed. The Master Implementation Sequencing Plan (MISP) is mandated by the Programmatic Regulations and the IDS was developed in recognition of the other projects out there.

Live Demo of the new website

Shannon Estenoz said her office submitted a request to switch from www.sfrestore.org to a new domain www.EvergladesRestoration.gov. They received approval from OMB who which also directed her office to retire, within one year, the www.sfrestore.org and to work with the Corps to retire the evergladesplan.org websites. They have been working with the Corps and the SFWMD to create a new integrated web presence. The site will be unveiled to the TF in November. They will have a group of beta testers and establish an interagency team to ensure continual improvement of the site. She recognized Jose Cabaleiro who is working on the website. Chuck Collins said this has been long overdue and asked that she bring it to a future Commission meeting. He suggested they involve the schools for beta testing as well as the general public.

Administrative Items

Shannon announced the USDOT approved a \$20 million Tiger Grant for the construction of the Tamiami Trail next steps bridge (2.6 miles). Ernie Marks presented the minutes for approval, motion made and seconded. Minutes were approved as presented.

2014 Task Force Reports

Ernie Marks asked the members to look at the document and members volunteered to look at particular sections of the document. Technical editors will work on the document for the next iteration.

Strategy and Biennial Report – Marsha Bansee provided a presentation (Encl. 4) reviewing the purpose of the Strategy and Biennial Report as well as the System-wide Ecological Indicators. She reminded folks

that the four principal audiences are the Congress, Legislature and the two tribes. She reviewed the improvements made to the report in 2014 which included reducing the narrative, enhancing the invasive sections and improving the indicator sections. Comments are due on September 19th and the final draft will be reviewed at the October meeting. The final document will be presented to the Task Force in November for approval.

System-wide Ecological Indicators – Laura Brandt provided a presentation (Encl. 5) reviewing the ecological indicators section of the Biennial Report. The section is shorter and focuses on the intended audience. She recognized Alice Clark and Ellen Hardy who have helped with the technical information. They have gone with story lines/case studies to better communicate the progress they are making. They will continue to work towards better integration with the System Status Report (SSR). She reviewed the eleven ecological indicators (five of which have been modified because of funding challenges), the hydrologic context, indicators at a glance and the four case studies. She highlighted that the indicators were developed for system-wide purposes and the modifications due to funding are compromising the original purpose.

Everglades Depth Estimation Network (EDEN)

Nick Aumen explained EDEN is a USGS product that takes ground elevations and applies a surface water model to estimate water depths anywhere in the Everglades. A person conducting research who needs information for a specific location can get real time estimates of the depth of water, even if there is no surface gauge nearby. Data is used by a lot of people other than those involved in RECOVER. It was developed a decade ago through cooperative funding between USGS and RECOVER. The five year agreement is about to come up between USGS and the Corps and discussions are ongoing on whether they will move forward with the same level of funding, more or less funding or whether they will use different tools. The network in south Florida has several hundred gauges that are part of a nation-wide network.

Susan Gray added that the EDEN tool is something RECOVER has been funding for quite some time. There are two components: the gauge network funded through different mechanisms which are not very expensive; and the tool itself. The expense has been in creating the tool, the surface water maps, analyzing the data and responding to requests. The EDEN tool has increased as it has become more complex and they didn't realize how much was being underwritten by USGS. They are looking at a 50% cost increase and they did get agreement from the Corps to extend the contract for EDEN through Sep 2015. They have a year to look at what they want to do with this tool or whether there are other tools to fill the gap. Patty Gorman reported the RECOVER Executive Committee met the prior week and gathered information. They will be trying to move quickly to make a decision for the future.

Rolf Olsen from the Arthur R. Marshall Refuge said they have two of the gauges that are scheduled to be removed and are concerned with losing both gauges in particular the one on the north end, an area where a lot of the wading birds are foraging. Gina Ralph underscored the importance of the EDEN network which they use for a lot of their assessments including MWDs. If EDEN is cut it will have far reaching implications and she was not sure there are other tools that are adequate to replace it. She hoped that some of the agencies could come together if RECOVER does not fund it.

Ernie Marks suggested they put some sort of recommendation or path forward to the Task Force identifying these themes as well as the real world issues that the Corps and the Refuge are dealing with and see how best to address that at the leadership level. Shannon said the question is whether they have a good process in place to engage leadership on the question of science and monitoring and suggested they have offline conversations within their own agencies. Ernie added they could get an overarching approach the TF could endorse and give direction back to the WG and SCG. Gina Ralph suggested they identify all of the monitoring needs, priorities and agencies responsible throughout the ecosystem to ensure they are all getting what they need out of the monitoring program.

Bob Progulske noted a couple of the gauges taken offline are critical to the analysis of the southern population of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Important to understand what is good government and in the best interest for the public good. Chuck Collins asked if there was any new technology so that measurements could be taken differently. Susan Gray said they are testing remote sensing equipment and unmanned vehicles. Barry Rosen added they do keep up with the latest technology and the stations are digitally linked. However, the stations still have to be maintained. Shannon said they have been asking the RECOVER and MAP folks to continuously look for efficiencies. However, the leadership engagement piece is missing. She asked the WG and SCG members to brief their leadership about suggested they discuss how to tee this up for the TF. Ernie Marks added it needs to be a holistic effort and all of the agencies need to discuss this issue. All too often what they see is that it ends up as part of a cost share between the SFWMD and the Corps.

Public Comment

Steve Davis (Everglades Foundation) said CEPP uses the latest tools and most advanced understanding of the ecosystem from a scientific standpoint and will bring region-wide benefits. It is the only plan that has benefits all the way down to Florida Bay. He questioned the likelihood of getting authorization of CEPP in two years. Given the significance of this project he asked that they come up with a contingency to get components implemented sooner rather than later. They need to move that water back into the system and protect the habitat and also do their best to reduce and slow down the impacts they are going to be experiencing with sea level rise along the coast.

Drew Martin (Sierra Club) agreed there needs to be a way to start some of these projects in CEPP and prevent the loss of the Everglades. He is particularly concerned with the estuaries which are not doing well. He also expressed concern with a five acre plot in Palm Beach County bordering Loxahatchee NWR. Landowners bordering parks have no responsibility to take care of their own properties that are full of invasive species and he asked this issue be addressed. Nick Aumen said there used to be a county ordinance a decade or so ago that envisioned going back to all lands and removing the most aggressive invasive species but that was later rescinded.

Shannon Estenoz said the MWDs implementation test is now moving quickly and goes to the point of removing the impediment for when CEPP is online. Tamiami Trail next steps also moving quickly. There is a need to protect the ecosystem before they can restore it. The biggest threat to peat loss is this drying out process and they need to keep peat wet for the sake of protecting it. The Strategic Action Framework is identifying pathways that invasive species are moving into the natural system.

Next Steps and Closing Comments

Ernie Marks thanked everyone for attending. Meeting adjourned at 1:35PM.

Enclosures:

1. Administrative Items
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Meeting minutes
2. National Research Council (NRC) Report presentation
3. Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework presentation
4. Strategy and Biennial Report presentation
5. System-wide Ecological Indicators presentation