June 25, 2013

FROM: The Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team

TO: The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group

SUBJECT: Central Everglades Planning Project and Biscayne Bay

The Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team (BBRRCT) would like to express its concerns about model predictions that show reductions in freshwater flow to Biscayne Bay associated with the tentatively selected plan of the Central Everglades Planning Process (CEPP). As a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Biscayne Bay requires additional freshwater for restoration and attempts have been made not only to protect the water currently flowing to Biscayne Bay but also to find new water for restoration. Any reduction in Biscayne Bay's freshwater inflow could result in adverse impacts to the ecosystem that consists of a national park and two state aquatic preserves. We would like to recognize the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board for its recent approval of a Water Reservation to support the goals and features of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Project and its approval to use newly available internal funds to jump start BBCW-related work. However, the Team remains concerned about Biscayne Bay's freshwater needs within the context of CEPP.

The following recommendations are offered to the Working Group as CEPP planning moves forward.

- Given the model-projected reductions to flows to Biscayne Bay due to CEPP, we support inclusion of Biscayne Bay in the CEPP Adaptive Management Plan. Within that plan, flow, water quality, and salinity should be continuously monitored, the data evaluated on a seasonal basis, and adaptive management actions taken as necessary to protect Biscayne Bay.
- CEPP and other water management planning processes should improve, or at a minimum maintain, existing quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of freshwater flow to all of Biscayne Bay.
- A mechanism for scientists and others most familiar with Biscayne Bay's natural systems to communicate with managers should be provided as CEPP moves forward.

The BBRRCT Charter states that the Team will serve as the principal advisory body to the Working Group on issues relating to Biscayne Bay. A key component of that advisory role is to review elements of Everglades planning projects as they relate to Biscayne Bay.

We hope the Working Group will find these recommendations helpful. We would like to thank you for your interest in Biscayne Bay, your continued investment in Biscayne Bay, and your support of our Team.

Respectfully yours,

Pamela Sweeney, Acting Chair