

Oct 18 Draft SCG Meeting Summary

Attendance

Susan Markley
Rock Salt
Ken Haddad
Chad Kennedy
Calvin Arnold

Joan Browder
Bob Doren
Greg May
Carrie Beeler
Cherice Maples

Dan Kimball
John Ogden
Deborah Shaffer
Richard Grosso

Whip Around

Lisa Beever informed the group that the SWRRCT is currently updating the team Charter and expanding the membership to include non governmental organizations who have been involved to date.

Susan Markley explained that the county phone system is under development and in the interim there may be challenges in reaching her.

Chad Kennedy noted that he was happy to be attending the SCG meeting.

Greg May gave a summary of the recent Task Force meeting and the tour of the Tamiami Trail. He noted that the next Task Force meeting would be December 5th and 6th, 2007 in Miami.

Rock Salt discuss the Director of USGS visit and noted that the Director was very complimentary of the efforts here in South Florida. He explained that USGS termed South Florida a “living laboratory”.

Dan Kimball said the he was going to discuss the climate change workshop discussion for the Joint meeting with the WG.

Coffee House Session on AM from NCER

John Ogden said that the 2nd National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) was held in April 2007. He informed the group that the major purpose of conference was to share information related to large scale restoration because there is no “cook book” for restoration.

John explained that the conference included an informal format to deal with difficult questions and it provided opportunities to dig into areas where there are no consistent answers. He explained that as part of the conference there were sessions termed, “coffee house sessions”. He noted that the sessions encouraged a lot of dialogue and participation. He said that there will be a write up available on the sessions at a later date.

John described the critique that was passed around the NCER and said the coffee house session was ranked high and there were suggestions on improvements. He informed the

group that the same format would likely be used at GEER. He believed that scientist get frustrated when enough management does not attend these conferences. He explained that there were discussions about using the coffee house approach to better involve management into the discussions. He also noted that there would be key days for managers to attend. John informed the group that the next NCER will be in 2009 on the west coast of the U.S.

Ken noted that getting Management participation has been an issue since GEER started. He observed that little has been offered for decision makers in the past. He suggested that the coffee house session include topics that interest decision makers.

Rock told the group that the challenge was not only to create a package that interested the managers but also choose a topic that the managers could discuss and have added value. He asked to work with the GEER planners to bring something to the conference for managers.

GAO

Rock explained the TF request related to the GAO report on modeling. He told the group that the TF had asked the IMC to brief the SCG and the TF on its recommendations. An excerpt of the GAO report has been provided to the SCG participants. He noted that the Corps and WMD are the leads on the IMC. Joan asked if the SCG has been asked to integrate a response and was told no. Rock explained that they have been asked to receive a briefing. The SCG could provide a report on the briefing to the TF including our thoughts about the briefing. Joan clarified that the IMC is making the recommendation.

Greg explained that if there was a tie in to ecologic benefits we could do the scenarios to see what project is going to give us the most benefit. Rock said that he understood that we can not do restoration without models but reminded the group that they use a lot of resources and it seems like they have taken the process pretty far. He thinks the process is at a point that acknowledgement of the uncertainties can be done and the process should be moved into the direction of Incremental Adaptive Restoration (IAR). He said if there has to be a choice between monitoring and modeling he prefers monitoring. He is willing to hear alternative views, but is skeptical of the modeling cost sink.

Susan Markley explained that as models are scaled up uncertainties get compounded and outcomes don't make much sense. She noted that for that reason models don't help us the way that we would like. She said that there is really no way to quantify ecological benefits, costs and other benefits. She agreed with Rock, that monitoring and assessment are increasingly important to restoration. She also said that monitoring and assessment are both getting increasingly difficult to fund although GAO reports state that we should do more monitoring. She agrees with Greg that it is likely there will not be any regional ecological model. She thought that if we wait for the regional models there would be more sequencing problems.

Calvin Arnold said that it seems like the emphasis is on the interface. Greg explained that the TF has asked the IMC to do this and they did not specify a timeline. Greg explained that there were cases of competing model findings. He noted that they wanted to come up with criteria to eliminate some variables. He noted that from a risk perspective the question is, “how much modeling is required?”

Bob said the hope is to manage the portfolio better for monitoring and modeling. Joan acknowledged that diversity is important for modeling. She said that she did not want the discussion of modeling versus monitoring to continue because she thought they were both needed and in fact they help each other and are essential to each other. Bob noticed they need them to be more precise and better related to what is needed and what to measure.

Everglades Big Book

John Ogden gave an update on the status of the “Everglades Big Book”. He explained that the original was published in 1994. He told the group that a section on the integration of science and policies would likely be in the book. He noted that there would be 3 major sections; 1. what was learned, 2. the competence of adaptive management and 3. strategic issues. He went over some of the key topics that were addressed in the first book. He noted that the concept of extreme events shaping the ecosystem may be covered in the coming book.

John also told the group about a response to QRB that he had put together a team of Everglades Scientists to address. He said that QRB wanted to know which parts of the system are the most important parts, and where to focus resources to get the best restoration response. He said that he was also thinking about using the team for other short turn around questions.

Susan asked if there were estuary people on the team responding to QRB. John said yes. John said that the best interpretation is that the southern estuaries were the most important contribution to restoration benefits. Susan said she was glad to hear that information. Chad Kennedy asked if there were representatives from Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee. John said the people who participated were holistic in their thinking.

Incremental Adaptive Restoration (IAR)

John noted that people still don't define IAR in the same way. Rock explained what Committee for Independent Scientific Review of the Everglades Restoration Plan (CISRERP) was and what they do. He referenced the committee's first report. Rock reiterated what the direction was to the Corps. He explained that the direction was not to be so strict in the planning process and to be geared towards the identification of learning and on what needs to be accomplished to take bold steps forward. He said that pilot projects can be used to learn and the learning can be applied to other projects. He believed that this concept gets to the pieces that RECOVER has not dealt with. He stated that when AM is discussed we turn to RECOVER for the list of uncertainties and solutions. He explained that in some cases uncertainties are not related to RECOVER

issues. He said there can be other things like engineering issues, saving clause concerns, or water quality that are not part of RECOVER's responsibilities. He said that he understood that the direction was that the Corps should be less conservative. He noted that the specific objective of learning was expected from projects as part of the PIR/EIS.

John said that IAR is a scaled up version of AM. He told the group that Gordon explained the difference between AM and IAR. He said that an AM deals with key uncertainties and IAR has 2 benefits; learning and restoration (measurable). John noted that more traditional AM has more scientific rigor and answers key questions. It is just not big enough to say that we are doing restoration. John was excited that IAR is being pushed energetically.

Ken thought that because IAR was a bigger and scaled up, it reduces risk. He thought that the Corps concern about infrastructure needing to be changed and this type of change was not usually entertained. He pondered what constitutes defining an IAR project a failure and thought it was best to think about what was learned and steer away from the concept of failure. John said that there are no failures in AM because there is always something learned. John said that the key to success would be to try to identify areas in system in which the uncertainties are so large that the benefits are big enough to outweigh any perceived failure. He noted that we should look at decision-critical uncertainties.

Susan agreed that there are difficulties with the public works agencies and any flexibility related to perceived failure. She thought that avoiding risks that result in undesired consequence that is irreversible is important in deciding IAR opportunities. She believes there are big scale projects that can be done and risk is reversible. She also thought that a comparison between the risks of doing something versus the risk of doing nothing may be helpful in making the decisions. Dan thought that the write-up on IAR that the committee did was really good and he also liked the idea of getting benefits too. He informed the group that the Park worked with the District and Corps on the S12 pilot project. He noted that they pulled a lot of material out to get hydrologic benefits. He explained that they hadn't seen any results because there are no flows due to the dry condition this year. He thought that there was another concern over perception related to IAR and the possibility that a project might stop there. He doesn't believe that to be true.

Greg noted that the current process for analyzing and justifying CERP would provide a challenge for implementing IAR. He explained that there was a need to change from the current system for analyzing and justifying benefits. He thought there would be a need to succinctly write what the uncertainties are. He asked who would identify and write about the uncertainties.

Rock thought that the QRB is a forum for Carol or the Col to get guidance on IAR. He believed that IAR prioritization should be done by Corps. He noted that getting consistent application was important.

Joan said that the BBCW PCT seems to be most forward group in applying IAR. He informed the group that the PCT will be working with the leadership to develop

paperwork for the IAR. John also informed the group that they are rewriting the AM strategy for DECOMP to use it as a test case

Plan to Coordinate Science II (PCS)-Executive Summary

Bob gave an overview of the concerns with the list of needs and gaps. He noted that there were concerns over the size and the cost. He explained the review being done by Jeff Jordan for the prioritization of the needs and gaps. He noted that he expected a preliminary report in the near future.

Greg said that in addition to the independent work being conducted by Jeff Jordan, the members had a couple of issues they wanted to clarify with edits. He referenced the executive summary handout with the edits and noted that John Ogden was the author of most of the changes. He explained that the next step would be to work the edits into the body of the document.

Ken wanted to discuss the climate change issues and wondered if the topic needed to be considered. Dan explained that they are considering a mini workshop to talk about how to get the concept of climate change wrapped into the thinking related to restoration.

Greg commented to the group that the briefing on REMAP would be moved to the joint session if no one objected? There were no objections.

Public Comment

Richard Grosso strongly urged the group to be progressive in the land acquisition needs of the projects. He noted that once the Corps or Engineers completes a PIR, opportunities for land acquisition may be lost because it will likely not be possible through adaptive management processes. He believes that having the correct amount of land acquisition is critically important.

Other

Rock talked about modeling issues that have results contrary to the intuitive. He gave the example of the spreader canal and the results that show a buffer will reduce the amount of water. He explained that he believed that the uncertainties were with respect to built system as much as to the natural systems. Greg pointed out that the CSOP Advisory Group talked about creating a design with flexibility and then monitor. Susan noted that was probably accurate but explained that the issues probably have more to do with pumps. She also noted that assessment through the IAR could prove difficult because changes could be detected through monitoring but the cause could have been due to something out of the norm. Bob wants to add on indicators that the measures of success have to be variable given natural variability. He also stated it would be important to find a way to account for natural variability versus management activities.

Adjourn - 11.48