

*Approved Meeting Minutes  
 Joint Conference Call of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group  
 and Science Coordination Group  
 August 28, 2008*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Ken Ammon welcomed everyone at 2:00 PM and thanked everyone for participating in the call which was scheduled after Hurricane Fay caused the cancellation of the regularly scheduled meeting. In addition to the members, several participants were also on the call for a total of 29 participants.

	<b>Aug 28</b>	<b>Alternate</b>
<b>Working Group Members</b>		
Ken Ammon, Chair – South Florida Water Management District	√	
Dan Kimball, Vice Chair - NPS - ENP & Dry Tortugas	√	
Stu Appelbaum - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	√	
Billy Causey – NOAA, FL Keys Nat'l Marine Sanctuary	-	
Sheri Coven - Department of Community Affairs	-	
Bob Crim - FL Dept. of Transportation	-	
Wayne Daltry – Southwest FL Regional Planning Council	√	
Gene Duncan – Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	√	
Joe Frank – Bureau of Indian Affairs	-	
Roman Gastesi, Local Government	-	
George Hadley – U.S. Dept of Transportation	-	
Veronica Harrell-James - U.S. Attorney's Office	-	
Eric Hughes – Environmental Protection Agency	-	
Greg Knecht - FL Dept of Environmental Protection	√	
Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	
Barry Rosen – United States Geological Survey	-	
W. Ray Scott - FL Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services	-	
Paul Souza – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	-	
Jon Steverson, Office of the Governor of Florida	-	
Craig Tepper – Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Kenneth S. Todd – Palm Beach County Water Resources Manager	-	
Joe Walsh – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	-	
Vacant - Broward County Department of Natural Resource Protection	-	
Ed Wright – U.S. Department of Agriculture	-	
Greg May, Special Advisor	√	
<b>Science Coordination Group Members</b>		
Ken Haddad, Chair – Science Coordination Group	√	
Calvin Arnold, U.S. Department of Agriculture	√	
John Baldwin, Florida Atlantic University	-	
Ronnie Best, United States Geological Survey	-	
Joan Browder, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	
Bob Doren, Department of Interior	√	
Todd Hopkins, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	
Bob Johnson, Everglades National Park	-	
Chad Kennedy, FL Dept of Environmental Protection	√	
Cherise Maples, Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	
Susan Markley, Department of Environmental Resource Management	√	
Bill Reck, U.S. Department of Agriculture	-	
Garth Redfield, South Florida Water Management District	√	
Debra Shafer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	-	
Rock Salt, Department of Interior	√	

Also participating:

Carrie Beeler, Lisa Beever, Dennis Duke, Brian Files, Susan Gray, Lorraine Heisler, Eric Hughes, Chris Knoble, Frank Metzler, Sandy Soto, Tom Teets, Karen Tippet, Joni Warner, Dewey Worth

### **Project Implementation Report Streamlining**

Ken Ammon reminded everyone that the Task Force charged the Working Group to look at streamlining the PIR process and this is a follow-up from the July meeting. A similar presentation will be made at the next WRAC and Governing Board meetings prior to the September Task Force meeting. Eric Bush noted this has been a joint effort between himself, Larry Gerry and Frank Metzler. Greg May explained that they have synthesized the feedback received from the July meeting.

Eric Bush provided a highlight of the actual Power Point presentation and added that any additional input would be included in the presentation to the Task Force. He reminded everyone that the typical PIR process takes three years and eight months to complete. However, the case studies presented at the last meeting indicate that it takes a lot longer for some projects. He reviewed what they have done to date to improve the PIR process and noted there is an ongoing effort to make sure there's a high level of familiarity not only with the Programmatic Regulations (Pro Regs) but with the Guidance Memoranda (GMs) as well. They have also been splitting PIRs into multiple reporting efforts to not only simplify the formulation of the analysis but to get decision documents to Congress faster. They also recognized that they needed more active engagement by senior managers and have increased the frequency and number of senior management level meetings both within the Corps of Engineers and with other agencies. As a result of the Acceler8 program they have developed some new business processes and technical criteria in order to meet their commitments.

Susan Markley noted many of Miami Dade's comments are included in the presentation and her overall comments are positive. Many of her agency's staff are participants on a lot of the PDTs and would agree they have seen improvement. However, she noted Miami Dade's concern with splitting the PIRs into phases. Although it is a more focused scope they are running into difficulties with the Next Added Increment (NAI) analysis or cost benefit analysis. They are concerned with the ability to justify a project when a smaller component depends on some integrated set of things to accomplish the overall project objectives or goals. Miami Dade is also concerned with the savings clause issue and has an interest in water made available or how much water a project is going to need.

Ken Ammon said the assurance's piece has changed through time and they have tried to streamline them and make them simpler to understand, however, there is still work to be done to make sure they are the simpler while still protecting everybody's interest. He added that nobody wants to harm anyone from a water supply or flood control perspective or take away water supply that existed as of December 2000.

Susan Markley replied she understands the reason for having an ad hoc Assurances Team but said she was not aware there was one and was trying to understand how it feeds back

into the actual PIR development. Eric Bush noted the team is a standing team that has been tasked with the complex analysis related to any water resources planning effort. He did not want anyone to get the wrong impression that they've got this team off on the side and the same people who are involved with writing the GMs are involved with actually applying the GMs providing a feedback loop reporting back to the GM Development Team.

Eric Bush reviewed the slide entitled *Top Five Things We Can Do Now To Improve the PIR Process* which included comments received from the Working Group. He then reviewed the slide entitled *Plan Evaluation and Justification* noting it contains language straight out of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, a Congressional requirement which says that projects are justified by the environmental benefits derived by the South Florida ecosystem and no further economic justification for the activities are required if it's determined to be cost effective. The bottom line is if they can describe the beneficial environmental effects of a project and demonstrate cost effectiveness, then the project is justified under the requirements of WRDA 2000. He noted the GMs take it further and they do plan selection in CERP based on an analytical process called system formulation. It is intended to be a much more regional evaluation of the entire ecosystem and that is what GM 2 requires them to do. Ken Ammon added another problem with system formulation is that they are working on the first few projects of the 69 total projects with the remaining yet to be identified. It is extremely conceptual and yet it creates a tremendous amount of work to analyze the modeling for projects that are conceptual at this time. Eric Bush acknowledged the difficulty they are having in including those other conceptual projects adding Ken make's a good point.

Eric Bush moved on to the Next Added Increment (NAI) analysis which is an explicit requirement of the Pro Regs. He explained they only compare the effects of the selected plan together to other authorized projects. While the underlying concept is common sense it is extremely difficult if not impossible to actually do. The justification requirement is very important to CERP project implementation. Ken Ammon noted that he finds difficulty with the way they have been quantifying habitat units and costs. They can justify a lot more projects on a small scale if they had a way to estimate habitat units that are a combination of quantitative and qualitative that would be accepted by headquarters. Stu Appelbaum noted there are a couple issues here with what basis to formulate projects and they have to what the basis for formulation is.

Eric Bush added that they have learned that it is extremely difficult to model the Next Added Increment (NAI) analysis. He reviewed a slide which shows the state of New Jersey superimposed over South Florida which illustrates their analytical challenge. They are dealing with a 16,000 square mile area in south Florida that's over twice the size of the state of New Jersey. He reminded everyone of the discussion at the last Working Group meeting about formulating alternative plans simply by optimizing individual projects and doing some cost effectiveness analysis in order to complete the selection and justification. There is a possibility that this may lead to some different answers. Ken Ammon clarified that they would still use a tool that could estimate the effects across the South Florida ecosystem for the individual projects. He added that the only complicating

factor is that when they talk about modifying system wide operational plans they need something similar to the NAI to make that decision. Eric Bush noted this was not discussed at the last meeting but justification is really in the eye of the beholder and it depends in large part on having good environmental benefits methodology. Greg May said there are a couple of issues here and one of them is how complicated it is to achieve. One of the questions the Task Force needs to consider is this high amount of effort worth the return in terms of the actual analysis it produces. He suggested having a problem solving approach that says they want to use the simplest tools possible to get what they need to get in order to properly analyze and justify these projects.

Eric Bush moved on to modeling and noted the tendency to want to use complex models that take a lot of data. They are hard to set up and then it is hard to come to agreement on the operational rules especially with respect to future conditions. They have some new national policies requiring model certification and that's going to add to the burden in developing PIRs. There's a need to balance the appropriate amount of modeling and work to be completed for a PIR with the urgent need to complete that decision document and get it to Congress for authorization and funding. So the recommendation is for innovation and a more simplified approach while using the best available tools instead of developing new complex tools. They are also going to need to simplify the GMs to reduce the modeling burden. He also discussed the need to train project managers at the Corps as well as the lead representatives from other agencies to rapidly identify issues that need elevation. They need to get the guidance out timely and empower teams to resolve those issues. They need to focus on cross training and building functional relationships.

CERP is a program and to implement it, they have sequence the individual projects and the recommendation is for sequencing implementation based on logic and dependencies and cash flow and other things. That should be established by the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) and that is the key tool for implementing CERP. That should get them out of the business of having to justify each individual project. They also need to consider identifying related projects and combining them if it's going to be easier to characterize their beneficial effects and harmful impacts so that they are not looking at the program in a piecemeal fashion. An example of that is considering combining elements of the de-compartmentalization project and seepage management. They will also need to address costs and justification issues and they are going to have to do that with the higher level leaders at the Corps, Governor's office and Interior. They will have fewer projects going on at the same time and they will be able to better focus their resources on the priorities. Eric Bush noted he will modify this briefing for the September Task Force meeting.

Greg May asked if they need to tee this up in terms of recommendations that they can do now without any changes in policy versus the things they need the policymakers to weigh in on. Stu Appelbaum said there are probably three sets of categories: stuff they can do themselves at their level; stuff that requires policy level changes but is outside the pro regs; and stuff that absolutely requires changes to the Pro Regs in order to implement. He suggested having another slide or two at the end of the presentation that summarizes

the recommendations by those three categories. Eric Bush reviewed next steps which include briefing the WRAC and Governing Board.

### **Public Comment**

None

### **Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS)**

Stu Appelbaum reviewed the discussion held at the July Working Group meeting. He noted the third slide shows what they have done since the last meeting. The Broward County Water Preserve Area which has three basic components was broken up separately along the lines of what they had done with other projects particularly Indian River Lagoon (IRL). He noted they did the same for Picayune Strand and that way it is not an all or nothing deal in terms of the IDS. It allows you to pick and choose and move components around. Based on the recommendations of the Working Group, they moved DECOMP and Seepage Management forward. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) project was updated to reflect the current schedule. He noted that on the system operating manual, when they get done with a collection of certain components, they will be able to operate the system to take advantage of those components. They worked to move projects back and forth to try to stay close to the \$200 million federal funding assumption. They cut off the IDS beyond 2020 since it is too speculative and the remaining project sequencing beyond 2020 is to be determined. He noted the inclusion of a slide in the presentation acknowledging the U.S. Sugar acquisition that is on its own timeline. We did look at projects such as the EAA Reservoir which will be affected by whatever turns out or doesn't turn out with regard to the acquisition. There was some discussion at the July meeting on the C-43 Reservoir and C-44 Reservoir and as of right now they are assuming no impact. He stressed that this will be updated periodically as events warrant.

Stu Appelbaum reviewed the draft schedule noting they are only talking about federal funding. It is fairly close to what was presented in July with the few changes that he highlighted earlier. The projects still have the green, blue, yellow and white to indicate their origin, for example the green represents foundation projects and the blue were projects at various stages of commitment meaning they were either authorized or are soon to be. He noted they used the same methodology and terminology that they used back in July with the dots and the bar line to indicate the construction period. He noted there is a slide highlighting the amounts that would be required for the program. He reminded everyone that all the projects are still there and nothing has been lost. The projects that are sequenced beyond 2020 are to be determined.

Ken Ammon noted there may be impacts due to the River of Grass acquisition to other projects besides the A1 Reservoir depending on whether or not that acquisition is successful. He said he did not want to presuppose yet on the construction schedule for some of these projects if that's possible. The C-111, EAA Reservoir and C-44 Reservoir all probably need to have TBD on them as far as the timelines. He expected to know something in maybe 45 days. He said he would hate to either raise or lower expectations at this point in this schedule for certain projects that they have committed to do. It's a

matter of schedule shifts and until they get clarity on their budget situation he would rather not imply that some of these projects are going to be delayed or are going to be on time. So a TBD would be appropriate for now and that could be revised as soon as they have a contract, if they get a contract. He asked that from the C-111 canal, EAA Reservoir, C-44 Reservoir and even the Northern Everglades Plan and the Long Term Plan should have a TBD. He also included Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands. Stu Appelbaum noted this may free up funding.

Ken Ammon said that it will affect funding only in the interim of 45 days and this can be called semi-finalized because this is going to be changed a few times as funding becomes available and said he thought it is accurate based on the current situation. They should know by October 15 at the latest. Greg May asked Ken how the middle bullet on the River of Grass acquisition slide should read. Ken Ammon said that 'impacts for projects in the initial IDS will be determined or to be determined'. He asked whether the expectation is to go to the Task Force for their blessing on this in September with the caveat that there's going to be potentially some changes on the TBDs based on the River of Grass land acquisition. Stu Appelbaum agreed he will be happy to do that adding that they need to lock into something and the TBDs certainly could change some time in the fall. Ken Ammon said that it is just truth in lending.

Ken Ammon asked about the construction timelines for Picayune Strand adding that they were shooting for the Corps to start their construction effort at the end of the year. Stu Appelbaum clarified the money they got budgeted in FY 09 in the President's Budget and the work they're doing with reservations would get them construction beginning in 2009. He added that by taking out the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands from the federal cash flow is going to reduce those numbers on the top which means that they could conceivably move other projects forward. That could be a potential effect which could allow for a project to get moved forward. Ken Ammon said he did not want to 'go there right now' until they know whether this proposed contract will be either accepted or rejected. Ken Ammon suggested not doing anything other than making the BBCW TBD and then they would go back to the Task Force in December with the full picture. Greg May asked to make sure that they intend to keep the funding and everything fixed the way it is except for the TBDs.

Stu Appelbaum reminded everyone of the discussion on science at the July meeting and the plan that emerged to have a group get together and have a workshop effort to get scientific input. That will be a continuing process that is beyond where they are going to be in September and new information will be incorporated as it becomes available. The second thing not shown on the slide is the expectation that the next National Academy of Sciences report will be out by the end of September and that may require re-looking or rethinking some of the things they've laid out.

Greg May said this issue was discussed at the July Working Group and Science Coordination Group meeting. Everyone agreed that it would be good to get a broader community of scientists together to refine and improve the linkage between science and the IDS. At the GEER Conference, one of the big themes this year was this sense of

continuing decline and even accelerating decline in some areas. It would be very helpful for policy makers if they had a better understanding of specifically what areas of the Everglades are declining and maybe in danger of irreversible decline. At the September Science Workshop they will have the SCG convene a broad community of scientists to look at the entire south Florida ecosystem and discuss methods or ways of determining what the ecological hot spots are. They would then identify the ecological hot spots using a system wide approach and then that information would be available for policy makers to add to the dependencies, the funding and the other consideration that takes place when considering project sequencing. Ken Haddad has agreed to facilitate the meeting and they will put something in writing and get it out to everybody. He added that given the discussion they had about the River of Grass and the TBDs, they could come up a more accurate title rather than finalized IDS. Brian Files suggested using the word 'initial'.

### **Public Comment**

None

Greg May noted they completed the two assigned tasks. Both presentations will be finalized by the following Tuesday and sent to the Task Force as part of their read ahead packets. He thanked the Corps and everyone else from the Water Management District as well as the other agencies that helped put these presentations together. He reported that they have received feedback on the second drafts of the Plan for Coordinating Science (PCS) and the Strategy and Biennial Report. The only outstanding issue is feedback from the Miccosukee Tribe. Gene Duncan said he thought the Tribe would update the 2006 comments as appropriate for 2008.

Greg May thanked everyone for all of their cooperation and hard work. The Assessment Report of the System wide Indicators is nearly completed and he thanked the scientists who did an outstanding job. He said it represents a tremendous step forward in terms of system wide synthesis which is one of the things that has been noted by the NRC, GAO and others in the past. They will take the spotlight reports out of that document and include it in the Biennial Report for assessing the system wide indications.

Greg May announced that Ken Ammon has asked to step down as Chair of the Working Group. He noted the tremendous amount of responsibilities Ken has at the Water Management District and recognized all the time he has contributed as Chair of the Working Group. Dan Kimball will serve as the Acting Chair until the Task Force appoints a new Chair and Vice Chair. He thanked Ken Ammon for his intergovernmental leadership for the Working Group, Science Coordination Group and Task Force. Ken Ammon said he is going to pass his gavel to the younger generation adding that it's been a pleasure to chair this group describing it as a unique experience. He said he hoped he was fair at least in allowing everyone to give their opinions and help formulate policy for the future of the South Florida ecosystem and thanked everyone for making that successful.

**Public Comment**

None

Conference call adjourned at 3:42 PM.

Enclosures:

1. Agenda
2. PIR Presentation
3. IDS Presentation