

*Draft Meeting Minutes  
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force  
South Florida Water Management District  
West Palm Beach, Florida  
November 19, 2015*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Michael Bean, Task Force (TF) Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. He thanked Mr. Peter Antonacci and Mr. Jim Moran for hosting the TF. He recognized Mr. Greg Langowski from Senator Marco Rubio's office and Mr. Mitch Hutchcraft, Governing Board member. Mr. Bean reported the Department of the Interior is on track to acquire remaining parcels of Tamiami Trail that will enable moving water south as quickly as possible. He said he was looking forward to the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the C-44 project the following day, important to both the economy and the environment of south Florida. It is one of several upcoming events scheduled for the next several months and he was delighted at the progress that reflects. He looked forward to being back in Florida in January for the Everglades Coalition meeting and encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Drew Bartlett, TF Vice Chair, noted Secretary Steverson was unable to attend the meeting but would attend the ceremony the following day. He noted all that was being done from north of Lake Okeechobee to Restoration Strategies in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). He has seen the progress on Tamiami Trail with the one-mile bridge and it will be an incredible amount of progress with the 2 ½ mile bridge. It is an exciting time and they are seeing a lot of things getting done.

*The following members were in attendance:*

*Michael Bean, Chair, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior*

*Drew Bartlett, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary for Ecosystem Restoration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection*

*Peter Antonacci, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)*

*Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, U.S. Department of the Army*

*James Erskine, Water Resources Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida*

*Jay Geldermann for John Cruden Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice*

*David Hawk for Camille Mittelholtz, Acting Director, Office of Safety, Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of Transportation*

*Heather McTeer Toney for Stan Meiburg, Acting Deputy Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

*Russell Morgan for Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture*

*Patty Power for Jim Shore, General Counsel, Seminole Tribe of Florida*

*Kevin Ruane, Mayor, City of Sanibel*

*Jim Moran, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission*

*Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives*

The TF members were asked to introduce themselves and provide brief remarks. It was noted that Mr. Jay Geldermann would be retiring at the end of the year from the Department of Justice after 35 years of service. Mr. Bean thanked Mr. Geldermann for his service and congratulated him on behalf of the TF. Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy introduced COL Jason Kirk, Commander of the Jacksonville District and Lt. COL Jennifer Reynolds. Mr. Barry Rosen, WG Vice Chair and Mr. Nick Aumen, SCG Chair also provided some opening remarks. Ms. Shannon Estenoz provided some administrative announcements. Mr. Bean asked the members to review the minutes from the May 2015 TF meeting which would be approved later in the day.

Ms. Patty Power reminded everyone the Seminole Tribe came to the TF nearly three years ago urging some attention and action on the western basins. The Tribe was and is still very concerned with the ability of the system to provide adequate and reliable water supply to the Tribe's natural systems on the Big Cypress Reservation. The Tribe was looking for the opportunity to bring more water to the Reservation through the CEPP process and were told that was not possible through CEPP so the TF established a team to explore these issues. The team started meeting on a regular basis in 2013 and worked on a number of issues. The team agreed to a hiatus in recognition of all the work that was ongoing. The Tribe has since completed a groundwater/surfacewater interaction study, continues to complete LIDAR and topo mapping on the Big Cypress Reservation and continues to develop the ecological indicator targets. The Corps in consultation with the Tribe, SFWMD and BIA is researching the documents required to alter the operation schedule for the S-190 structure on the Big Cypress Reservation. The SFWMD continues to operate the S-190 structure to try and prevent over drainage of the reservation which is the original authorized goal of that project. The team identified the data gaps and the question remains on how to fill those gaps. The Seminole Tribe believes they have made progress and recommends the team be reconvened to continue its work.

## **Program and Project Updates**

### *Corps of Engineers*

Mr. Michael Collis provided a presentation updating the members on the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) program. He reported that they have continued to make significant progress on reconstruction of the HHD. A total of 32 culverts (water control structures) need to be replaced or repaired in some way. Three are currently complete, 18 are under contract and contracts for the remaining 11 culverts will go out in FY 16. Construction of the culverts is estimated to be completed in 2022. Construction contract for the Reach 1 Cutoff Wall Gap Closure will be awarded in 2016 with construction to be completed in 2018. Construction contract for the Reach 1 Cutoff Wall Extension will be awarded in 2017 with construction to be completed in 2020. The Dam Safety Modification Study (DSMS) is their effort to identify how they will move forward with the HHD project and identify things that are not currently planned in terms of construction. The draft NEPA document will go out for review in December 2015 and the goal is to have that document completed by the summer of 2016. Any construction that is approved would start in 2019.

Mr. Collis reviewed the FY15 successes for the SFER program to include planning successes with CEPP and Modified Water Deliveries to ENP (MWDs); design successes with Kissimmee River Restoration (KRR), MWDs and C-111 South Dade. Construction contracts were awarded for KRR, MWDs (the final physical component), West Palm Beach Canal and Indian River Lagoon South (IRL-S). For the IRL-S they awarded the C-44 Reservoir contract totaling \$197

million in September 2015. Program goals for FY16 include planning for KRR, Picayune Strand Restoration, MWDs and Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration. Design goals for FY16 include C-111 South Dade, C-43 West Basin Storage, Broward County Water Preserve Area and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1. Construction contract awards planned for FY16 include KRR, C-111 South Dade, IRL-S and Picayune Strand Restoration.

#### *South Florida Water Management District*

Mr. Tom Teets provided a presentation updating the members on the Restoration Strategies program which is an \$880 million program that will treat 57,000 acres. They are in the process of constructing the A-1 flow equalization basin (FEB) a shallow water reservoir that will act as a shock absorber for the STA-3/4 and STA-2, two of their top performing STAs in terms of parts per billion. They are on the verge of completing the A-1 FEB and site inspections are currently underway. The L-8 FEB is an in ground facility on a former rock mine that will hold 45,000 acre feet of water. It will also act as a shock absorber taking water out of this basin and delivering it into STA-1 East and STA-1 West. It is currently 83% complete and they will begin a testing period for the new pump station. STA-1 West Expansion #1 contract for \$79 million was awarded at the November Governing Board meeting. It will be a 4,600 acre expansion and construction is scheduled to start in January 2016. A number of structures and facilities so they are able to operate the system more effectively and move water more efficiently were also reviewed.

For the western basins, they have the C-139 Annex/Sam Jones/Abiaki Prairie restoration project, an area that was previously farmed as a citrus grove that will be returned to its natural state (marsh, oak hammock and isolated wetlands). They are currently working on Phase 1 of that effort. Project is funded through the Lakebelt Mitigation fund. A future FEB for the western flow is planned in this area under Restoration Strategies and that work will begin in 2018 - 2019. They recognized there was work to be done in terms of improving the water quality coming off of the western basins area so with the help of funding from DEP they embarked on a Western Basins Water Resource Evaluation. They have identified and collected existing basin area information as well as identify areas where information is lacking and data gaps exist. The SFWMD and the Seminole Tribe have been flying their LIDAR and they will have new topographic information. They are looking for projects and funding opportunities that will improve the water quality over time.

On the CERP projects, the SFWMD is responsible for building the pump station for the C-44 Reservoir/STA and they are 25% complete. On the C-43 Reservoir (Cell 1) the first contract has been executed for the preloading and demolition with contracts for the pump stations and Civil Works Design for the levees to follow. For the Picayune Strand, the manatee mitigation feature is under construction and expected to finish in 2016. They also have to do the design for the southwestern protection feature and the modelling effort is ongoing. Lakeside Ranch STA Phase 2 contract for \$35 million was awarded in November with construction scheduled to start in December 2015. Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: L31E flowway pilot pump test will be done again this year. When they rehydrate the wetlands over to the east they start to see benefits quickly and this is an effort they want to continue.

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

COL Kirk highlighted the public engagement process that brought them to the point they are at today. He introduced John Campbell from Corporate Communication and noted that as the new District Commander he has two charters, one of which is strategic communication. The good

news is that they are using shovels in Everglades restoration. He said he was proud, honored and humbled to be a part of this team.

Ms. Kim Taplin provided a presentation reminding the members the purpose of the IDS is to develop a realistic schedule and sequencing plan for achieving restoration benefits as soon as possible consistent with state and federal authorizations and funding. The IDS is required as part of the CERP Programmatic Regulations (ProRegs). The TF directed the Working Group (WG) in December 2014 to sponsor public workshops to engage stakeholders in developing the IDS. That effort was kicked off in January 2015 and the WG hosted four workshops that were well attended. She reviewed the key assumptions and constraints they used to guide them. She reviewed the starting point worksheet from January 2015 noting the non CERP foundation projects are labeled in blue. These projects are important to CERP because they have some physical or statutory dependency that require these projects be completed before they do certain components of CERP. During the public workshops attendees were engaged in the sequencing of projects with some working in groups and others independently. The sequencing plans were organized into four themes: complete existing projects and plan ahead; Greater Everglades storage; focus on storage; and spatial extent, estuaries, restore flow south.

Theme 5 is the current draft of the IDS and it maximizes holistic benefits to the regional system as early as possible; ensures additional projects will be ready to continue progress on restoration; and provides consistency with project dependencies and constraints. Feedback received from the stakeholders on Theme 5 is that it shows good synergy of projects, shows steady increase of benefits to the system and that they need to continue to engage the public to generate support for continued implementation of restoration projects. Next steps include getting feedback from the TF and to begin using the IDS to guide their planning, design, construction sequencing and budget planning in the future.

Mr. James Erskine said the Miccosukee Tribe is encouraged that the L-28 western basins modification project is on the IDS for a planning start in the near future. To meet the goals of the ecosystem restoration it is going to be very important to address all aspects of the ecosystem. The Tribe has maintained that Restoration Strategies are the most important projects in Everglades restoration. To hear they are ahead of schedule and on or under budget is very encouraging and will allow them to take the next steps to address the quantity, timing and distribution that is needed. Benefits for WCA 3 can be there in the near term rather than in the longer term.

Ms. Estenoz noted that Commissioner Diaz called that morning noting he wouldn't be unable to join them but wanted them to be aware that the Miami Dade County Commission passed a resolution urging the TF to prioritize both the completion of Phase 1 and the initiation of planning for Phase 2 of both the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) and C-111 Spreader Canal projects. A copy of the resolution was provided to the members. Also, a letter was received the prior day from FWC to the Chairman of the TF congratulating the TF and staff from the SFWMD and the Corps on their efforts to engage stakeholders on the development of the IDS. A copy was also provided to the members.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Cara Capp (NPCA) expressed appreciation to Ms. Taplin and the Corps on the great stakeholder interaction throughout the IDS process. NPCA is excited that construction is almost done for BBCW Phase 1 but disappointed that planning efforts for the BBCW Phase 2 are so far

out. DEP has included in its budget request almost \$6 million to acquire the lands necessary to finish that project. She urged them to remember that if they want to achieve comprehensive benefits they need to move forward with Phase 2 as well. In the stakeholders themes 1, 2, 3 and 4, EAA storage planning was a high priority and NPCA would love to see more storage planning earlier in the IDS. The opportunity to move expeditiously depends on funding and NPCA is committed to working with the state and federal partners to make sure they get the dollars they need.

Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) said they support the IDS planning effort and noted Ms. Taplin has done a great job. Their major concern is that they are not moving fast enough on MWDs and they are seeing problems with Florida Bay. They are disappointed the state of Florida has not been willing to utilize Amendment 1 funds to purchase land that would provide more holistic storage. Now that they are seeing improvements in water quality they need to see more water flowing south. They are also concerned with development pressure on the ecosystem and potential fracking in the Broward County area that could cause contamination. If they cannot get water into the park and Florida Bay then they are not solving the problems they are here to solve.

Ms. Karen McLoughlin (BBRRCT Vice Chair) provided members with copies of a letter the Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team sent in August with regards to the IDS process. It expressed their strong support for Phases 1 and 2 of the BBCW project. It is a critical project for the region that will help reverse years of damage caused by point source discharges to the bay in absence of natural freshwater flows during the dry season. This project will also help in increasing resiliency to sea level rise, helping to limit saltwater intrusion and protect drinking water supplies. The BBRRCT recommends the prioritization of land acquisition and construction necessary to complete Phase 1 and the initiation of planning for Phase 2 earlier in the IDS schedule.

Ms. Joan Bausch (Conservation Chair Martin County Chapter of Native Plants Society) noted her group is extremely concerned with the natural lands. The Indian River Lagoon (IRL) South included 90,000 acres of natural lands to help protect local basin runoff. They need the C-23, C-24 and C-25 to protect the St. Lucie River and ultimately the lagoon. She said it was her hope the SFWMD will look at buying the lands needed to store the water for the IRL South.

Mr. Mark Perry (Florida Oceanographic Society) complimented the Corps and Ms. Taplin for her efforts in pulling the IDS process together. During the stakeholder input they also suggested looking holistically at storage both north and south of the lake and move it up so they are not waiting another 5 -7 years to complete the planning process. It would be smarter to combine the planning similar to what was done with CEPP. He also urged the federal government to take advantage of the Governor's commitment.

Ms. Laura Reynolds (Tropical Audubon) reported the request to move the urban development boundary in Dade County was denied. The Miami Dade County Commissioners recognize how important Everglades restoration is as well as the importance of the BBCW and the C-111 projects. They have met with all the Commissioners and there is lots of support for helping with planning dollars for Phase 2 and stepping up as a partner. She urged the TF on behalf of the Biscayne Bay Coalition and Tropical Audubon to prioritize the completion of Phase 1.

#### **Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) 2014 Project De-authorizations**

Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy noted there are many other provisions in WRRDA 2014 that impact the

Corps of Engineers. Section 6001 requires the Secretary of the Army to develop a list of projects to de-authorize. She reviewed the four criteria Congress gave them in order to evaluate whether a project should be on the de-authorization list. A total of 147 projects from around the country are on the list to be de-authorized with 11 of those in the state of Florida and 5 in south Florida. The list was submitted to Congress and published in the Federal Register for public comment. Public comment ends in January and she has 180 days to do a final de-authorization list. If the Congress takes no action on the final de-authorization report then all the projects on the list will automatically be de-authorized. If a joint resolution of the Congress is passed disapproving the list then the projects on the list will not be de-authorized. She was required to notify the Governors of the states that had projects on the list and she has notified Governor Scott. Projects in south Florida are the Lake Belt Ground Reservation Technology, North New River Improvements, Raise and Bridge East portion of Tamiami Trail and Fill Miami Canal within Water Conservation Area 3, Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Storage and Treatment Area and Wastewater Reuse Technology. The estimated cost of the 147 projects combined total \$14.3 billion. The list is available on the federal register website [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov)

### **CERP 2015 Report to Congress (RTC)**

Mr. Michael Collis noted this report is an update on CERP implementation required by WRDA 2000 and the ProRegs. It is jointly submitted by the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior and this will be the third report that is submitted. Consultation is currently ongoing with EPA, Commerce, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Tribe, FDEP, SFWMD and other federal, state and local agencies and this TF. The report reviews accomplishments, land acquisition, science program, financial program, the TF, public participation and stakeholder engagement, independent scientific review as well as what will be done over the next five years. Additional restoration science programs as they relate to invasive and exotic species and climate change are also reviewed in the report. During the reporting period (2010 – 2015) over \$1.2 billion in combined federal and state funding was provided to support CERP. The SFWMD is ahead of the Corps in spending (53% to 47%) and the CERP cost estimate is \$17.168 billion. The agency letters of support are expected in December 2015 and the final report will be delivered to Congress in January 2016. Final report will be available on [www.Evergladesrestoration.gov](http://www.Evergladesrestoration.gov)

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Tabitha Cale (Audubon Florida) said they have made a lot of progress in the last five years but they need to make sure that once they construct these projects they are also working towards operating them in a way that develops maximum ecological benefits. It's really exciting to see they are moving forward with the incremental testing of MWDs. The update on Florida Bay conditions will show they still have work to do. They need to make sure these projects can operate and deliver water where it needs to go. This summer they saw some upsetting conditions in Florida Bay but they have some things coming online that will help address those conditions. It is her hope that they can get good information from those incremental tests, operate the C-111 Spreader Canal for its authorized project purpose and move forward with the PPAs for all four projects authorized in the last WRRDA as soon as possible.

### **Florida Bay Conditions Update**

#### *Background*

Mr. Bob Johnson provided a presentation reviewing the Florida Bay system, the largest seagrass meadow in the world and a nursery ground for many of the most important

recreational and commercial fish in Florida. He reminded everyone that what happens in the upstream system impacts the downstream system to include the seagrass meadows, Florida Bay and the Florida Keys. He reviewed the flows across Tamiami Trail into Shark River Slough. On average ENP and Shark River Slough received about 2 million acre feet per year. Current flow is less than 25% of what they normally get across Tamiami Trail and they went through virtually seven months with no flow. The bump in September gave them the ability to do the Increment zero of the MWDs test and the bump in October gave them enough water to do the Increment 1 test. They are currently passing 600 csf in Shark River Slough and 300 of that is going to NE Shark River Slough because of the test. It would not be going there if not for the start of this test.

The western part of Florida Bay has water coming in from the west coast bringing in nutrients and that's why there is very lush seagrass beds on the western side of the bay. To show how rainfall and flow benefit Florida Bay, he reviewed salinity maps before and after Katrina in 2005. He reviewed a graphic showing generalized seagrass distribution with water depth and salinity regimes. The seagrass die-offs occur first in the upstream end and expand from there into the main part of the bay. There are approximately 500 species of vertebrates and invertebrates in this system. It is an incredibly biologically important system that drives much of the marine system elsewhere in the southern part of the state. He reviewed a diagram to show how rainfall and salinity have worked together to cause the problems they now have. He also reviewed the distribution of seagrass die-off in Florida Bay as of November 2015 as well as showing before and after pictures.

#### *Long Term Fixes*

Lt. COL Reynolds noted this is not a new problem and they had a Florida Bay crisis in the late 80s. It was one of the things that helped precipitate them moving forward on Everglades restoration because people realized that Florida Bay is tied to the greater Everglades system. It is important they look at long term as well as short term fixes. Many of these projects are not going to come completely online for another 5 or 6 years. She reviewed the current system and where the water is currently flowing. They are already moving a lot more water to the east with Increment 1 of the MWDs project. Increment 2 of MWDs, construction of C-111 and Tamiami Trail Next Steps will continue to move more water to the east and put more water in NE Shark River Slough which will benefit ENP and Florida Bay. Under CEPP they continue that progress and move additional water to the east.

#### *Short Term Fixes*

Mr. Jeff Kivett reviewed some short term fixes to increase flows to Florida Bay. Option 1 will lower canal water levels below column 2 stages in L-31N and C-111 north of S-177 to allow deliveries of water from WCA 3A to Taylor Slough. Taylor Slough is a most direct route to provide immediate benefits. Seepage is a big issue and a challenge in getting water to Taylor Slough. This is a zero cost change other than a little more field cost to operate the pumps. It is an immediate fix since it just requires changing the setting of the equipment they already have. Option 2 would remove a portion of high cell weir and use existing structure, it would require some construction and modification to structures. It has lower costs around \$10,000 - \$20,000. Option 3 would connect the high head cell of C-111 Project S-200 PS to the L-31W canal just north of the S-175 structure to push water to the headwaters of Taylor Slough. Costs are in the hundred thousand dollar range. Option 4, the "Engineers Gone Wild Option" would build a cut off wall around S-332D to cut off the large amount of seepage that flows back to the canal. This

is the most costly option about \$10 million. The cut-off wall would remain forever and provide forever benefits. This is a short term solution that can take advantage of an existing contract and offer long term benefits. These are all solutions that could be implemented over the next few months to provide real benefits to Florida Bay.

Mr. Moran noted that at certain times they have to close the S-12s and asked whether this problem would be helped if they didn't have to close the S-12s. Mr. Kivett noted there are four S-12s but only two (12A and 12B) get closed. They are at a higher point and the closures have no impact on Florida Bay. Mr. Johnson added the S-12 flows go to the west and are far enough from the water management system that they are not affected by the groundwater gradient so the bulk of that water flows out to the estuaries and very little water that comes down the coastline ends up in Florida Bay. In the original design of the project, the Corps put the S-12s in Northeast Shark Slough, they knew where the low areas were and they knew where the water was supposed to go. The location of the S-12s was changed based on a request from south Dade agriculture. The water through the S-12s really doesn't benefit Florida Bay.

Mr. Erskine asked whether the \$10 million figure for Option 4 was a ballpark number. Mr. Kivett said it is a relatively good number. Mr. Erskine noted the economic impact to Florida Bay could greatly exceed \$10 million. Mr. Kivett clarified it is a rain driven condition they are in today and they could still be in a similar condition even if the walls were in. Ms. Estenoz said it is important to note they have two issues: water availability and conveyance. They are anticipating an El Niño year and the question is whether they will have the capacity to move the water if it becomes available. She asked whether they anticipated that it would leak 70% and whether that leaking is contributing to their south Dade flood problems. Mr. Kivett said they knew there was seepage but the engineering and research over the last 10 years show the seepage is higher than expected. Lt COL Reynolds added that part of the problem is that the projects were not constructed in the order they had originally intended. They are having seepage because they are operating them out of order from their original design. The C-111 Spreader Canal project and the C-111 South Dade project components help mitigate that seepage. Mr. Johnson added there are five pump stations in this part of the system. The S-332D was the first one built and it does not have a lined canal and pipeline. They recognized this problem when it was built and all the future pump stations either have pipes going out a half mile or a lined canal. This pump station was built in a way that was not optimum and needs to be retrofit so that it provides the same efficiency as the others. Mr. Aumen reminded everyone that Florida Bay is a highly changed system because of their activities and is receiving far less water than it did historically. The question is still out whether this lack of rainfall in the natural system would have caused a problem.

Mr. Bartlett asked if the short term options were complementary. Mr. Kivett said they are complementary. Mr. Johnson pointed out they have 10 feet of elevation of water in WCA 3A, NESRS is 6.9 and Taylor Slough is 3.6 so there is a gradient in this direction. They are right at the cusp of the regulation schedule in WCA 3A so even in this incredibly dry year WCA 3A has water. The first few options are modest and the water is there and they will not have a problem moving the water. Mr. Antonacci asked how much each of the options would cost and who would they hurt if they were implemented tomorrow. Mr. Kivett replied Option 1 would be a zero cost and there is a potential risk to the agricultural areas if they don't lower the stages. If it is lowered too much then there is a risk to the park. COL Reynolds added there are two additional complicating factors. They have started Increment 1 for MWDs and that has an operational

component they need to follow in order to collect the data that allows them to continue with that project. There is a risk that if they do this they wouldn't be able to operate in the manner that Increment 1 has them operating. They also have a constraint with how they operate the system because of the sparrow and there are things they have to do in order to comply with those court orders. Mr. Antonacci asked if there was a timeframe for working that out. Lt. COL Reynolds said it depended on those at the leadership level.

Mr. Kivett stated the cost for Option 2 will be about \$10,000 - \$20,000 to remove part of the weir, the gate is already there so it is a matter of opening it. From a risk profile, when they put water in Taylor Slough in the past there has been a change in flora and fauna that has caused some concern. The water quality from a state perspective is below the levels they need to be but that would be a risk the park would want to evaluate. LT COL Reynolds said all of the options would require them moving water south through the system when right now their regulation schedules don't have them doing that. If they lower the canals by the same amount of water that is being pumped in, effectively leaving the canals at the same stage then that wouldn't require a deviation to the schedule and that has been discussed. An additional complication with Options 2, 3 and 4 is that the Corps is not allowed to do additional work on projects that aren't currently authorized. There is some authority they would have to work out and this is not something that has not been overcome in other areas on other projects. Mr. Kivett noted the costs for Option 3 would be more since they are actually digging a channel about \$100,000 and the challenges are the same mentioned by Lt. Col Reynolds.

Mr. Moran reminded everyone that they at the SFWMD and the Corps have flood control responsibility to the folks east of the canal and they are at great risk of losing their crops if they fail them. Anything they can do to expedite this process and mitigate the impact would be greatly appreciated.

### **Implementing the Strategic Action Framework: Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR)**

Ms. Estenoz provided a presentation reminding everyone that a Strategic Action Framework for invasive exotic species has been developed. Their organizing principle is the invasion curve that tells them the longer they take to respond to an invasion the bigger the costs and damages and the smaller the chances of eradication. They spend most of their time and money on long term management. They realize they have to do it all (prevention, eradication, containment, resource protection and long term management) but they need to do more near the bottom of the curve. They have identified gaps they are actively working to fill with their partners. She highlighted several EDRR success stories from 2008 with *Lumnitzera Racemosa*, a non-native mangrove species detected at Fairchild Tropical Garden and the *Sacred Ibis*, native to African wetland regions which escaped captivity following Hurricane Andrew in 1992. She highlighted an EDRR failure in 2008 with the *Argentine Black and White Tegu*, a large lizard that is a threat to many native species in the Everglades, including threatened and endangered crocodilian, turtle and bird species. From the beginning, the response required to achieve eradication of the *Tegu* overwhelmed the EDRR capacity. In 2014, approximately 500 Tegus were trapped and in 2015, 635 were trapped. It is unknown if the increase in trapping is because the population is rising or if it's because they have gotten better at trapping. Management objectives were finally developed in 2015 for the Miami Dade population of this species and to achieve a partial eradication, exclusion and containment of the Tegu for the Miami Dade population alone could cost as much as \$1.1 million a year for a decade or more.

She reviewed the building blocks of an effective EDRR system that include effective monitoring and detection, a lead agency to coordinate the EDRR system, adequate resources for coordination, response and monitoring and a broad coalition of participants in the system. She reviewed the building blocks that can be put into place now using existing resources as well as those that require a higher level of engagement. A workshop was held to develop a screening tool where they can get to a “go” or “no go” answer in a matter of days. They want the tool to apply the precautionary principle where uncertainty leads to a “go” decision. Next steps include reaching out to the members at the management and policy level for help on doing this EDRR better.

### **Everglades Restoration Communication Team Update and Six Month Outlook**

Ms. Estenoz reviewed the opportunities they will have to celebrate progress over the next six months that included the C-44 Groundbreaking, C-111 South Dade Contract 8 Groundbreaking and the Tamiami Trail 2.6 mile bridge next steps celebration on Earth Day 2016.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion made and seconded and the May 2015 minutes were approved without objection.

### **General Public Comment**

Ms. Cara Capp (NPCA) on the de-authorization list, NPCA will provide formal written comments in the upcoming days, they hate to see any project de-authorized when its ecosystem benefits can't be clearly identified elsewhere. They have questions on the North New River and Lakebelt and would like to further understand where those ecosystem benefits will come from so that they are not lost. To say the environmental community is concerned about Florida Bay would be a tremendous understatement. In fact the last algal bloom 20 years ago was the impetus for a lot of the movement in the environmental community that they still work on today. She submitted a resolution on behalf of the 58 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition with their concerns about Florida Bay and the next steps they see as necessary. The Ocean Reef Community Association (ORCA) also asked her to share a letter about their concerns with Florida Bay. She was excited to hear about some of the short term solutions and asked who would make the decisions on the short term alternatives and where the money would come from. She reminded them that the real solution is in the long term with those projects they've had planned for many years that need to come online. She also provided programs for the Everglades Coalition Conference scheduled for January 2016 for those who were interested in attending.

Ms. Martha Musgrove (Florida Wildlife Federation) called their attention to exotic plants taking over the Loxahatchee NWR. This refuge was at one time the headwaters of the Loxahatchee River, a wild and scenic river, the refuge is now without a river. They've had an invasion of both *Melaleuca* and *Lygodium* and it is out of control. This Refuge sits largely on state owned land under lease to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The federal government is responsible for controlling exotic plants and they need \$5 million per year for five years for this Refuge to contain *Melaleuca* and attack *Lygodium*. She asked the members that as they go back to their agencies to make sure there is additional funding for FWS on exotic species in the next President's Budget. Florida Wildlife Federation in partnership with others hopes to move legislation to improve their controls of invasive plants.

Ms. Tabitha Cale (Audubon Florida) said that Audubon agrees with a lot of the comments made by Ms. Capp on de-authorization. They are comfortable with projects being on the de-

authorization list when they are incorporated into other projects. Audubon Florida has been monitoring spoon bill populations and nesting for 75 years so they have this long term perspective on what's happening in Florida Bay and how incredibly rich of a resource it can be. She was excited to see some of the potential solutions presented and urged them to move forward in an effective way with the projects they are getting in the ground and constructed such as MWDs and the C-111 South Dade projects. On the C-111 SC project, lands identified may be impacted and additional monitoring and modeling may have to be done before a PPA could be signed. She hoped that information would be captured as part of the south Dade investigation workshop the SFWMD is working on. Glad to see that in the Report to Congress, climate change and sea level rise would be mentioned. Getting freshwater flows back into Florida Bay and moving freshwater through the Everglades ecosystem is one of the best tools they have to deal with the impacts of sea level rise and climate change. She also announced she was the newly appointed Vice Chair to the City of Miami Sea Level Rise Committee.

Mr. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) said he appreciated the options on Florida Bay and said he got the impression that the higher the cost the more water that would be provided. It is worth doing and \$10 million is a bargain considering the future of ENP, Florida Bay, the fishing community and tourism. He knows there is a lack of rainfall but he believes ENP is dehydrated because of Tamiami Trail. He recommended they move forward with all four of these options if they don't conflict with each other. On invasive species, a small amount of money would make a big difference and that along with the projects can restore this ecosystem.

Ms. Laura Reynolds (Tropical Audubon Society) noted Bob Johnson, before another group, said they would have to double the amount of water they send to ENP every ten years in order to keep up with subsidence and sea level rise. She asked how they would do that without the promised water from the Lakebelt project. She noted her concern with getting the needed benefits for Biscayne Bay and Taylor Slough. Crocodiles are no longer in the cooling canal system, they have left because the canals are uninhabitable due to high salinities. On Florida Bay, she asked where the options would be vetted and said she would be interested in seeing the pros and cons.

### **Assignments, Next Steps and Closing Comments**

Ms. Estenoz said they would reconvene the western Everglades team at the request of the Seminole Tribe; continue conversations on the Florida Bay options as well as work on those questions that need to be answered at the TF and staff level.

Mr. Bean thanked everyone for attending and thanked the staff for organizing these meetings. Mr. Moran added that their job is the restoration of the Everglades and if the exotic issues aren't solved then they need to ask themselves if they can restore the Everglades. On the Refuge, if the issue of exotics aren't addressed immediately then the Board will have to take some sort of affirmative action to protect their interest in that matter.

Meeting adjourned.

Enclosures:

1. Administrative Items
  - a. Agenda
  - b. May 2015 draft meeting minutes
2. Task Force Roster

3. Program and Project Updates
  - a. Corps of Engineers presentation
  - b. South Florida Water Management District presentation
4. Integrated Delivery Schedule
  - a. Power Point presentation
  - b. Miami Dade County Commissioners Resolution
  - c. FWC letter to Task Force on IDS
  - d. BBRRCT letter on IDS
5. Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) 2014, Section 6001
  - a. Project Deauthorization process
6. CERP 2015 Report to Congress
  - a. Power point presentation
  - b. Report to Congress
7. Implementing the Strategic Action Framework: Early Detection and Rapid Response
  - a. Power Point presentation
8. Florida Bay Conditions Update
  - a. Florida Bay Background presentation
  - b. Long Term Fixes presentation
  - c. Short Term Fixes presentation
  - d. Everglades Coalition Resolution
  - e. Ocean Reef Community Association letter
9. Everglades Restoration Communication Team Update
10. C-44 Reservoir Groundbreaking Ceremony
  - a. Fact Sheet