

*Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Tallahassee, Florida
April 1, 2003*

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Klee called meeting to order at 2:03 PM. She noted there was a good turnout notwithstanding that this is probably the hardest city in Florida to get to. She added that the agenda has several important issues. One of the priority issues that she hopes to address during the course of this year is improving the coordination of agency science programs. She testified before the House Interior Appropriations Sub Committee last week and it raised a number of important questions about the job the Task Force is doing to coordinate the science related to Everglades restoration. GAO has noted that the Task Force has a statutory responsibility to ensure coordination of the science related to ecosystem restoration. There is an opportunity and an obligation to do a better job. DOI is starting to do that with its own science programs but has a ways to go as well. Ms. Klee introduced Ms. Susan Iott and Mr. Chet Janik from the GAO who has offered to walk through the recommendations and issues raised in the GAO report. She welcomed the Task Force member's insights and suggestions as the agencies responsible for doing the science. She hoped that a Strategy would be put together for implementing some or all of the recommendations from the GAO as well as recommendations from the members.

Ann Klee, Chair, U.S. Department of the Interior

Ernie Barnett for David Struhs, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection

Henry Dean, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District

Jose Diaz, Commissioner, Miami Dade County

Andrew Emrich, U.S. Department of Justice

Mack Gray, Deputy Undersecretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Benjamin Grumbles for G. Tracy Mehan, Assistant Administrator U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Tim Keeney for Sloan Rappoport, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Commerce

Dexter Lehtinen, Special Assistant, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians

Jim Murley for Clarence Anthony, Mayor, City of South Bay

Jim Shore, Chairman, Seminole Tribe of Florida

Rick Smith for Denver Stutler, Executive Office of the Governor

Earl Stockdale for Les Brownlee, Under Secretary of the Army and Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Works

Deborah Wolfe for Linda Lawson, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Transportation

Michael Collins, Chair, Water Resources Advisory Commission, Task Force Advisory Body

Rock Salt, Executive Director

During the Task Force "whiparound", Mr. Shore agreed Tallahassee is a hard place to get in and out of. Commissioner Diaz asked for an update and timeframe on the 8.5 square mile area. He also asked for Miami Dade to be included on the CSOP Advisory Committee. He noted he was glad to see the interim targets for flood protection were taking place. He also asked for the status of the General Management Plan for ENP. Mr. Henry Dean publicly thanked and commended Congressman Mario Diaz Balart and his staff for their Town Hall Meeting and their efforts in pulling together the homeowners in the 8.5 square mile area and Corps and WMD staff. They had a productive discussion on where the levy would be placed and what options are available as well as explain relocation procedures. Mr. Mike Collins reported that the final "B list" consumptive use rules would be taken up at the next Governing Board meeting. He also reported that the WRAC has some procedural questions and concerns on what the interactions are in terms of science coordination. Mr. Earl Stockdale said Mr. Brownlee was sorry he was not able to attend this meeting. His energy and attention is focused on matters in Iraq. Mr. Stockdale provided an update on four matters: the draft ROD for alternative 6-D of the 8.5 square mile area plan has been completed and coordinated with DOJ. The draft ROD will be forwarded to Mr. Brownlee for his signature. The Army's intent is to file it with the court in advance of the April 7th hearing. The Army will be asking the court to vacate its decision and allow it to proceed with implementation of alternative 6-D and the Modified Water Deliveries project. He was pleased to announce that John Paul Woodley, President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, had his confirmation hearing that morning and that the Army is

hoping for speedy confirmation. Third, the Army is completing its edits to the Programmatic Regulations with the intent to brief Mr. Brownlee on the draft final rule then forward it to OMB for clearance. Finally, the Army is working on the proposed contract with the National Academy of Sciences to convene the Independent Science Review Panel, which was discussed at the last Task Force meeting. He hoped to have the draft contract and scope of work within the next month.

Mr. Jim Murley was sitting in for Mayor Clarence Anthony, who sends his regards. Mr. Murley announced that four Universities will be putting together a conference entitled “Everglades and Communities” focusing on environmental ethics and he encouraged attendance. Mr. Tim Keeney who was sitting in for Mr. Sloan Rappoport stated that at the last Task Force meeting he noted his concern that \$900,000 that would be used for monitoring and coastal studies was being dropped from the Senate Appropriations Bill. Commerce was able to get that money back, although they were cut considerably in other areas. This money will be used for monitoring coral seagrass and living marine resources including lobsters and fish in Florida Bay and the Florida Keys areas. Six automated coastal monitoring stations will be used. He noted he is also the Department’s representative on the Coral Reef Task Force that unanimously passed a resolution in February 2003. The Resolution was introduced by the state of Florida, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and NOAA primarily because of concerns over the deteriorating water quality and the effects on the upland areas and on the coral reefs. Mr. Keeney read the resolution, which specifically mentions the CERP. Ms. Klee noted this would tie in nicely with the conversation scheduled for the following day. Mr. Dexter Lehtinen urged everyone to pay careful attention to the Florida Legislature especially the proposal entitled “Everglades Forever Act amendments” (Encl. 3). These amendments have the effect of repealing the Everglades Forever Act deadlines of 2006 for water quality standards. He urged the Task Force members to examine whatever the Legislature does and look for the effect of the water quality standard. The pre 2006 projects will be reduced in that they only have to be done “where practicable”. The deadlines will be extended from 2006 to having no deadlines at all. There is an implication that there is stakeholder agreement for this action, but he was unaware of any agreement. There is also language that you do not have to comply if funding is not available. The proposed bill will have the effect of re-hydrating the Everglades with dirty water. It also provides loopholes to enforcement for the District. The Tribe is also interested in the CSOP procedures on the agenda the following day, in particular that the parties are holding everything confidential and information is not being provided to non-parties. Mr. Rick Smith for Denver Stutler stated that the state of Florida supports 10 parts per billion water quality standard for the Everglades Protection Area. Mr. Ernie Barnett for David Struhs said Mr. Struhs would try to attend the meeting, but may not be able to make it.

GAO Report

Ms. Klee introduced Mr. Chet Janik and Ms. Susan Iott who would provide an overview of the report. Mr. Janik noted the General Accounting Office is within the Legislative Branch of Government and their work is requested or mandated by Congress. The first GAO report was issued in 1999 on the need for a Strategic Plan and Conflict Resolution process. It also identified three areas (land acquisition, water quality and science) that needed to be addressed. Subsequently they have issued reports in all three areas with the last report on science coordination issued on March 26. His intent is to provide an overview of their findings and recommendations on this report.

Ms. Iott noted the House Interior and Related Agencies Sub Committee of the House Appropriations Committee asked GAO to look at the three objectives:

- Determine the federal and state funding for scientific activities related to restoration
- Identify gaps that remain in scientific information
- Determine how well scientific activities are being coordinated for the restoration

Ms. Iott reviewed the GAO’s findings. To date \$576 million has been spent by eight federal agencies and one state agency (SFWMD) to conduct scientific research, monitoring and assessment in support of the restoration of the south Florida ecosystem. Agencies have made progress in developing information and the adaptive management tools that are necessary for restoration, but significant gaps remain in the scientific information and adaptive management tools that are needed. Ten projects were reviewed and three types of gaps were identified. First, system-wide information gaps were found with regards to

invasive species and contaminants. Second, gaps remain on certain projects such as Biscayne Bay Salinity and flow data, which would benefit the entire CERP. Finally, gaps in the tools (models, indicators and monitoring plans) needed for adaptive management were identified. GAO noted the need for models in certain areas such as Biscayne Bay, Florida Bay and system-wide vegetation and the need for indicators and monitoring in addition to what RECOVER has done. There are other areas where indicators and monitoring plans may also be needed.

The report notes that there are multiple agencies conducting science and multiple groups coordinating it but only the Science Coordination Team (SCT) has responsibility for all three goals of the Strategic Plan and works closely with the Task Force. GAO focused on the SCT and looked at its charter to see its responsibilities. The Working Group established the SCT to coordinate science activities but did not give the SCT key timeframes or products, just general responsibilities and planning associated with the strategic plan. In addition to planning activities, the SCT conducts synthesis activities but no key products are required to get the Task Force, Working Group or SCT to move forward on the issues that need to be addressed. The GAO cited the limited resources for the SCT, with the co-chairs assigned part time and the volunteer members and are limited to what they can get done.

Other restoration initiatives such as the Cal Fed Project, San Joaquin and Chesapeake have staff, an advisory committee and either a Chief Scientist or Director of Science. GAO concluded there is no one agency that conducts science for the restoration and because there are many agencies conducting science, coordination is necessary. The Task Force recognized the need for science coordination and created the SCT. However, the SCT is limited and has been unable to do as much as it should or could do. GAO recommends science planning by focusing on key documents (science and monitoring plans as well as progress reports) that should be produced. Management input should be provided for science planning and the DOI Science Plan could be a useful example. Some process work is needed to reach agreement on those priority topics that need to be addressed. Some independent, credible, transparent process such as an advisory board needs to exist to help come up with the topics the SCT needs to address. Finally, there should be an assessment of what resources are needed by the SCT.

Mr. Stockdale noted that in the WRDA establishing the Task Force in 1996, Congress envisioned that the Task Force would have the responsibility to coordinate scientific and other research. He appreciated the GAO looking into this matter and evaluating the progress that has been made. He noted that when he looked at the three areas GAO was asked to investigate, topic one seemed self explanatory - GAO was asked to look at what science is ongoing, what research is being done and what money has been spent. He also understood topic three - to assess the process used to coordinate scientific research activities. He noted, however, that he was unclear with topic two and the focus on gaps in scientific information. He did not view the Task Force as doing or managing science, but as a group that is assessing what various people are doing and recommending policies for consistent application of research efforts. He questioned whether gaps in research is a focus of the Task Force and how GAO envisions this being "swept up" in the function of coordination science research activities.

Ms. Iott responded that GAO agrees both the Task Force and the SCT through its authority are to coordinate and not manage. GAO envisions that everyone is responsible for his piece and these pieces will be brought to the table. The gaps are those areas that are not being addressed, like contaminants and invasive species that are being handled individually. The SCT may or may not be conducting the work or they can be seeking an agency to take on that work. Mr. Janik noted that page 47 of the report includes the agency comments and GAO's response to those comments. Ms. Klee said that she did not think the agency comments were answered and the concerns were not adequately addressed. Ms. Klee said that in the body of the report, GAO would have scientists setting priorities without the decision makers and the land managers. Ms. Iott clarified that GAO made the recommendation that managers be involved. Ms. Klee said there is a fundamental difference between having them be involved and having them drive the process. The prioritization process needs to be driven by the land managers and the decision makers not the scientists. Ms. Klee added that nowhere in the report does it say that land managers are driving the decisions and that science is there to support what is being done. She agreed that if there are data gaps they needed to be filled. Mr. Stockdale added that the report indicates the SCT is supposed to support the Task Force and

implies it will be driven by tasks from managers. He said this issue was confusing to him as he read the report.

Ms. Iott said the background section of the report states that the decisions will be made by the agencies and the need for management input is noted on page 41. Ms. Iott pointed to flow as an example of something managers were not aware of. Ms. Klee disagreed that managers were not aware of the importance of flow. Ms. Iott clarified they were not aware of what is needed to continue the research. Ms. Klee said the managers would not be able to identify specific research needs but they would be able to tell you what their issues and questions related to flow are and they should be driving the process. Science is needed to make the decisions and it is an iterative process. Ms. Iott said GAO used the Department of Interior Planning Process that is in place as an example of management input. Ms. Klee said the process going through now does not mesh with what is stated in the report. Ms. Klee read from page 10 of the background section of the report “scientists participating in restoration are expected to identify and determine what information is needed to fill gaps...” and noted it does not talk about management driving the needs and science ensuring the needs are met.

Ms. Klee said that it was not appropriate for prioritizing to be done by the SCT. Ms. Iott clarified that the SCT with the help of the Working Group and the Task Force would determine what issues or information development would be done. There has to be more communication between the Task Force and SCT. Ms. Klee agreed there needs to be more communication between the two groups but saw the SCT in a synthesizing rather than prioritizing role, setting aside the charter which needs to be reviewed. Ms. Iott said scientists need the ability to provide input on issues that are discovered throughout this fifty-year process.

Mr. Stockdale said this is a very good report with good information and recommendations and he saw the SCT in a supporting and synthesizing role, helping key people make decisions. He added that it was essential to keep people focused and generate things that are needed to ensure resources are productively spent. Ms. Klee recognized that it was an iterative process but “at the end of the day” it is the decision makers who need to make the decisions. Resources need to be focused where they are most needed. Mr. Collins noted that the document contains a lot of language about the scientists making determinations, decisions and prioritizing. He pointed to the C-111 and the comments from the scientists that there has not been any research on contaminants or pesticides. He noted that the National Marine Fisheries conducted research for many years and the Dade Soil Water Conservation District has monitoring that has taken place in the Frog Pond. He noted the hydrodynamic model of Florida Bay where \$3 million dollars was spent, but it is not going to work because the central portion of the bay is not tidal. He agrees with Ms. Klee that someone needs to decide how this science gets integrated.

Mr. Rick Smith asked if Interior was the only agency able to review the draft and whether the SFWMD was given a chance to review it. He also asked how the projects were selected for evaluation, noting that the Florida Keys Carrying Capacity Study is not representative of the problems facing local government land use decision-making that supports ecosystem restoration. Mr. Salt replied that GAO provided his office with a copy of the report in January and he provided copies to members of the Task Force including the SFWMD. GAO asked Interior for a response, and all comments received from Task Force members were incorporated. Mr. Collins acknowledged that the District was interviewed. Mr. Janik said they spent a lot of time here in south Florida and conducted exit conferences. Mr. Smith added that this report gives the impression to the country that enough is not being done down here. He agreed process improvements are needed. Ms. Iott explained GAO chose 10 projects based on when they would be completed, geographically diverse, over \$100 million, and projects that would support each of the Task Force’s three goals.

Ms Klee asked for clarification on how Cal Fed and the Chesapeake Programs use science advisors or chief scientist. Ms. Iott said they offer alternative structures. The Chief Scientist for the Cal Fed project is in charge of a small staff with money coming in from a tax or bond issue and they plan science projects. They send out RFPs and grant money for areas they have identified as gaps. The person, who is a USGS employee, is in charge of two science boards, one to review projects and one to look broadly at scientific issues. Chesapeake Bay Project has multiple staff from different agencies. They have a Director and a

number of committees formed for various topics. They have a Policy and an Implementation Committee. Ms. Klee noted “we do that in a number of different contexts” and said it was different from the idea of developing an overarching science plan. She noted that an interagency modeling effort is underway, but cautioned that modeling is a tool and that she believed the report focused too much on one tool at the expense of all of the other ways of addressing the information needs. Ms. Klee noted her concern with trying to duplicate the effort undertaken for the Strategic Plan in developing a Science Plan. If the recommendation is to undertake something of that scope and magnitude, an enormous amount of time and resources would be needed. She questioned how realistic it would be to think of this as another strategic planning effort. Mr. Janik said their major focus is on setting priorities of what you want to accomplish and whom the goals would be accomplished with along with the linkages. Ms. Klee noted the many science groups (RECOVER, CROGEE, MERIT, Invasive Animals, and an Independent Science Review that needs to be established) too many groups coordinating science. Ms. Iott asked who would pull it all together to make sure everything is covered. Ms. Klee said it made sense to streamline the number of groups that are coordinating science. CERP is the driver of what is being done down here. Ms. Klee said GAO is making this a bureaucratic and labor and resource intensive effort. Mr. Janik said the SCT was set up to coordinate science and they are the only group with responsibility in all three goals. Ms. Klee said that the SCT is not correctly configured since it does not include all the managers, the Superintendent of the Park, Refuge Managers and the key state decision-makers need to help drive the process.

Mr. Dexter Lehtinen asked what the value of scientific coordination was. He said it was to prevent doing research not relevant or doing it two or three times over. If coordination means doing the right research is it self-evident. He was not sure why people outside the knowledge of a particular project were being brought in asked whether the problem was a failure in coordination rather than hiring smarter people.

Ms. Iott said the system-wide effects of implementing a project need to be understood. Coordination allows for identification of those things that aren’t being done. Mr. Earl Stockdale asked whether they thought the SCT Charter was valid. Ms. Iott said yes. Mr. Stockdale then said that there is not a “nice match” in language when looking at the Task Force’s statutory responsibility and what the GAO is recommending, and questioned whether the SCT Charter fits with that responsibility. Mr. Janik said they took a long hard look at the Charter and found it to be appropriate to accomplish what needs to be accomplished and added that the Working Group approved it and could rewrite it. Mr. Andrew Emrich said the SCT was taken as given but he asked whether there was more than one option since the Task Force has a statutory responsibility to coordinate science. He said that a series of assumptions are drawn that are not supported by the data. For example, the last full paragraph on page 4 states that the “Task Force is responsible for coordinating scientific activities” but has not yet established an effective means of doing so and is limiting the extent that decisions are based on sound science. Mr. Emrich said it was not clear to him that because there was a problem with the role of the SCT that sound science was not taking place.

Mr. Emrich said that it is possible that the SCT does not have a clear charter or maybe they are not the body to do those tasks in the first place. He did not see these types of questions raised. The assumptions need to be challenged before the conclusions are drawn. Ms. Iott said the Task Force has been asked to coordinate policies, programs and other activities and the SCT was created to coordinate science. GAO proceeded along the lines that the charter was clear. GAO did identify those key functions in the charter. Mr. Janik said that although they were concentrating on the SCT, they did look at other groups and their responsibilities. Ms. Klee replied that she fundamentally disagreed with GAO’s premise of how they approached this project. It should not have been done based on what the SCT had in its charter. She said it was absolutely true that the Task Force did not tell the SCT what to do. She promised that they would tell the SCT what to do in the coming months.

Mr. Mack Gray said he was not hearing consensus on the role of research and what it is supposed to provide. Research can add to the body of knowledge and it can answer the specific questions that a project manager has to have answered in order to carry out a particular project. He said he was not hearing that they are doing a good job at that. Task Force needs to ask itself what the role of science in this activity is as well as the structure needed to carry out this activity. Mr. Tim Keeney said NOAA is interested in the relationship between the coordination of the science and the restoration goals and asked about the ability to predict outcomes for various restoration efforts and the need for integrated monitoring to gather data as

well as the need for integrated modeling and partnerships and coordination between agencies. Ms. Iott replied that in terms of predicting outcomes, the report identified the need for monitoring and the necessary tools to support adaptive management. GAO believes the SCT could be a part of that because of the need to look across all of the agencies conducting monitoring with all the different tools. They would not be doing the work, but would be coordinating and the SCT could serve a key role.

Mr. Lehtinen said hard science is research that contributes to the body of science. He said there are real gaps in science and the idea that better science is needed is right. He was not sure that coordination teams would do that. He noted that GAO points to a number of places where better coordination is needed, a lot of it may be “non scientific in the core sense but factual management information systems necessary for adaptive management” and it rests on realism. Mr. Lehtinen suggested that to develop better information retrieval and feedback systems, “we need someone out of business school, not a scientist”. Lumping them together is dangerous because they have a tendency to upgrade things by calling it science. Management coordination among agencies is the toughest part in the Everglades. Ms. Iott agreed that this includes a large management component, but they have said that this will be done based on the ecosystem.

Ms. Iott added that the Science Subgroup put together a good effort in identifying the ecosystem needs. The scientists here are able to identify those things that need to be understood for the ecosystem and the interaction with management, back to the point that it is a “two-way street”. Ms. Klee said the Department of Interior is developing a Science Plan that will coordinate and prioritize its science needs. These science needs are cross cutting and relate to various efforts such as CERP. The Science Plan will identify the key decisions, what is known, unknown laying out a strategy. She said that if they go through that effort and agencies go through similar efforts, then it seemed to her that all that was needed was a discussion among key representatives to make sure the range of issues are being covered. She asked whether she was missing something. Ms. Iott said that she agreed that would be the science coordination. Ms. Klee said this would not be a separate group of scientists, independent of agency processes, developing their own science wish list. Priorities would be driven by the agencies and not an outside entity telling each of the agencies what they should be doing. Ms. Iott said that it depends on what question they are focusing on. Ms. Klee said the important part is that the science needs are prioritized and coordinated. She said she wanted to focus on the function of this new group and the need to have people focused on the synthesis of information.

Mr. Stockdale said that the more they probe and explore the more he comes to the conclusion that the problem is with the charter for the SCT. It was unclear to him what the group was supposed to do and how the charter fits with the needs that exist today. He suggested the Task Force should explore whether this charter should be revised. Mr. Collins said he did not think it was appropriate for the SCT to do anything other than to advise, implementation suggests carrying out policies.

Mr. Keeney said it was important to recognize the hard work and dedication if many of the members of the SCT. Ms. Klee said it was not her intent to criticize the SCT and noted the fundamental criticism of the GAO, a legitimate one, is that the Task Force has not taken full advantage of the SCT or given them clear guidance. **Follow-up: Ms. Klee asked for the SCT to come in and tell the Task Force what they have been doing. She said it would be a good year if the Task Force did nothing else but decide how to do a better job to coordinate science. She hoped to continue these discussions. She urged the members to go back and talk to their managers and find out what would be more helpful to them.**

Updates

Avian Ecology Workshop – Mr. Jay Slack reported the workshop was held in March and the participation was very good with a good science discussion on all the species and hydrology in the ecosystem. Gaps and good information were brought to light, as well as good discussions on how scientists might further their endeavors. This was the first of two workshops and the independent panel will take the information from this workshop and provide a synthesis for review. The group hopes to have the next workshop in conjunction with the next Task Force meeting. He noted that the comments have been overwhelmingly good. Ms. Klee said the degree of the success is attributable to the hard work of a lot of folks and agencies. She hoped that if this proves to be useful it could be used in other contexts with other endangered species. Mr. Collins asked for clarification on what the synthesis document would contain. Mr. Slack explained that the report would provide a synthesis of the information that was presented. The

next step would be an interface between the scientists, synthesized science and the management questions. Ms. Klee saw the product as an identification of what is known, unknown as well as some recommendations on how to fill the data gaps. She suggested that the question of how it applies to management decisions is a discussion the Task Force would have with them afterwards. The next step for the workshop is for the panel to present their synthesized report to the Task Force and allow it to engage the panel with regard to management issues.

General Management Plan (GMP) for Everglades National Park – Ms. Maureen Finnerty briefed the Task Force on the process to revise the GMP, a process undertaken every 20 – 25 years. The GMP is a planning document that sets the strategic goals and objectives for the future management of the park. The Park has been engaged in public scoping meetings over the last few months for the purpose of identifying issues, concerns and areas of interest. To date, over 1,000 comments have been received. She reviewed some of the comments received to date and noted that public input will continue throughout the entire process. She emphasized that broad based participation will provide a better document.

SCT Report on Flows – Mr. Rock Salt provided, for information, the SCT Synthesis Report on the role of Flows in the Everglades. He explained that when the Restudy was being analyzed, models were such that it was easier to measure for hydropatterns (depth) than it was for flows and much of the effort in terms of evaluation restoration was driven by hydropatterns. Many scientists have commented that the role of flow wasn't adequately understood in the restoration. The document was commissioned several years ago and this report is the result. Mr. Collins said a scientist at the District did much of the work this paper was based on. He said he read the peer review of this document and noted his concern with some of the recommendations in the document. He noted that this is within the context of CERP and Modified Water Deliveries and not an alternative. Mr. Salt agreed and said he always understood this to be an attempt to deal with a part of the restoration that was unable to be modeled. Mr. Collins said there are suggestions and questions raised as to the ability to recreate ridge and slough habitat areas. **Follow-up: Ms. Klee suggested they schedule a follow-up discussion with the SCT on this report at a future Task Force meeting.**

Working Group Teams – Rock Salt noted that a summary of the teams created by the Working Group was being provided in response to Mr. Emrich's request at the last meeting. Mr. Emrich said this was helpful.

Joint Session with Working Group on 2003 Priorities

Mr. Rick Smith presented the Working Group's recommended top priorities and reviewed the process used to arrive at the list. Issues from its Charter were assumed to be ongoing. Priorities were: identify those roadblock issues or barriers to restoration; water quality (expedite implementation of Modified Water Deliveries, C-111 and CSOP); provide more opportunities for more meaningful stakeholder involvement; and track implementation of CERP. Ms. Klee noted that science coordination did not make the top five.

Mr. Barnett said he has always thought the Working Group has been underutilized. He said that the most unproductive thing the Working Group could do was to create a Water Quality Issue Team. The Working Group Charter says they are to assist the Task Force in its duty to assist agencies in their responsibility to promote water quality improvements. He noted that as the lead water quality agency in the state, his agency has its hands full did not see the value added to add yet another layer. DEP believes that water quality is not one of the issues that the Task Force can provide value added. He closed by saying that the Working Group needs guidance to bring forth issues to the Task Force for resolution. Ms. Klee said the Task Force asked for this at the last meeting. The Task Force needs to drive the priorities and it is helpful to see what the Working Group sees as its priorities.

Mr. Smith noted that Ms. Kathy Copeland had presented a proposal to streamline the Working Group. Her idea would restructure the Working Group into Committees that would meet with the Task Force. The idea had been discussed by the Working Group, but not flushed out. Ms. Klee asked what the Working Group would be working on if no action was taken at this meeting. Mr. Smith said they would continue to work on those items as outlined in the Working Group 2003 Workplan that flows from the Charter such as

invasive species, ASR, CERP implementation, MSRP. He noted the Kissimmee is a perfect example of five years worth of work to get the information together to even start the Kissimmee restoration. Mr. Salt said the Working Group would carry out the instructions contained in its charter and its work will continue. He added that there is a sense among the members that they want to be working on things important to this Task Force. Mr. Collins suggested the Task Force work more closely with the Working Group, even in a physical sense, co-locate meetings. More interaction between both groups is needed. Maureen Finnerty said the time has come to revisit the Working Group's role and revisit its charter. She said the group is underutilized and the meetings are filled with too many updates. Mr. Billy Causey agreed the group has evolved to the point to make more efficient use of the group's time. Ms. Klee asked whether the Working Group should be the entity to coordinate science, since both the scientists and managers are at the table.

Mr. Thaddeus Hamilton said there is an opportunity to look at the whole system such as non point source pollution and get the public involved in the process and a part of the solution. Mr. Dean said that it appears the Task Force hasn't given sufficient direction to both the Working Group and SCT and it has an obligation and responsibility to give clear guidance to both groups. Mr. Dean also said that the SCT Charter is not flawed, just outdated and suggested looking at how it is integrated with RECOVER for example. **Follow-up: Ms. Klee tasked each member to think about those three things they want the Working Group and Science Coordination Team to be working on over the next few years.**

Commissioner Diaz suggested adding an additional day to the July meeting for the purpose of hashing it out and setting up priorities for both groups. Ms. Klee asked Mr. Salt for him and his staff to get some proposals or concepts out to folks in advance of the meeting so that the time could be tailored. Mr. Smith noted that Ms. Copeland's point is that there are many decision-making bodies working on parts of what the Working Group is doing. If the Working Group cannot add value and fill the gaps then they are wasting their time. Mr. Emrich said he was not sure the issues would be sufficiently distilled by the next meeting. Ms. Klee said it is a valid point. She noted that she just sat through the hearing with the Interior Appropriation's Sub Committee and she did not believe the Task Force was going to have a choice. The Task Force needs to act or it will be forced to act.

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM.

*Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Tallahassee, Florida
April 2, 2003*

Welcome and Administrative Announcements

Ms. Klee called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM. Minutes from February meeting were presented and adopted. Mr. Ron Marlow was sitting in for Mr. Mack Gray.

Coastal Issues

Ms. Brenda Chalifour shared a framework for the issues that would be discussed today. She described the coastal issues as the outer rim of the ecosystem and includes the coral reefs, beaches and shores. The Eastward Ho initiative focused on redeveloping the coastal ridge, but development is now moving eastward toward the coast. She noted that the individual Task Force members each have a role and responsibility for something in this area. It is really an ecosystem issue, if not, then this group should be called Everglades Restoration. Broward County illustrates some of the issues such as marine resources and submerged lands. "Out of sight, out of mind". The shoreline is inundated with communication cables and pipelines, sand is being brought from the north to the south and even those projects intended to do good things, such as the dredge and fill, need a 404 permit, taking sand from one area to another. She urged the agencies to do it right or don't do it at all.

Mr. Dan Clark showed the "Cry of the Water" video depicting corals that are several hundred years old. He noted his concern with the proposed dredge and fill projects, and suggested determining if there are better ways. He said he did not want to see reefs destroyed and noted that there are no monitoring or management programs for the reefs in Broward County. Ms. Chalifour concluded by reading an article from Coastal Living Magazine.

Mr. Tim Keeney provided a Power Point presentation (Encl. 2) addressing the coastal component of the restoration effort. He said he believed "our success" would be judged by both "our work" on the inland areas and the ability to restore coastal areas, which has been severely damaged over the last 50 years. He reviewed NOAA's Strategic Plan and noted the agency's number one goal is to protect, restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources. He reviewed NOAA's Trusteeships and Responsibilities, which include conservation and management of fish and indicator species (i.e., pink shrimp etc). He said that CERP would radically change the upstream inputs to coastal areas and NOAA is committed to doing what it can for the overall restoration effort. Getting the water right is essential and his agency cannot do this alone and will need the assistance of other agencies. He noted that the "black water" tide event of 2002 was not a result of recent land based flows but a natural phenomenon. Mr. Keeney said that as restoration proceeds, NOAA is committed to working with its partners in addressing those issues i.e., water quality, marine resources, critical habitats, and public misconceptions. He closed by suggesting three areas where additional work is needed, including better monitoring and modeling efforts, as well as including marine species and their habitats as CERP goals.

Mr. Richard Bonner said he was glad to be representing the Corps on these coastal activities. Federal projects require a team effort from other agencies. He clarified that the Corps is not the lead on the two projects identified by Ms. Chalifour. Mr. Bonner said the authorized federal beach re-nourishment projects are developed with a NEPA process. He noted that the projects provide storm protection benefits as well as environmental restoration benefits. Mr. Keeney asked for an update on beach re-nourishment projects at a future meeting and Mr. Bonner said the County or the state would be the best entity. Mr. Collins said that it did not make sense to "truck a bunch of rocks" - on a living coral reef. Mr. Jim Murley said this is the essence of Goal 3 and a balanced solution is needed and is another example of how the Task Force could work together. Mr. Bonner said - comp sand management Alabama, etc... look at it on an ecosystem-wide effort. Ms. Klee agreed this "goes to the heart of Goal 3". Mr. Keeney said they needed to make sure that CERP implementation would not impede restoration. Mr. Collins said there would be a long-term economic interest served by protecting the coastal coral reef.

Mr. John Hall said that the Corps, a regulatory program, has no proponency for any application received. He referred to section 10 and section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. NEPA documents are prepared and technical issues including sea turtles, federally listed species, near shore hard bottoms, sediment compatibility and site locations are considered by the Corps. Mitigation of sea grasses and coral reefs can be considered but are often not technically viable. He remarked the Corps is now noticing that with the state's school funding initiative, money available for beach renourishment may be in jeopardy for the future. Local governments are trying to get permits from the Corps in order to stay in the funding queues. Ms. Klee asked how the Corps prepared its Environmental Assessments for these projects. Mr. Stockdale said it was more than just mechanically going through a process and that it is important for everyone to understand that in each of these projects, the Corps takes a hard look at the environmental costs and effects.

Mr. Hall explained the purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to determine whether to do an EIS. Corps is working with the state on projects they have in their 10-year plan to see if they can sort through the impacts. Corps looks at the NEPA process as a disclosure process on the consequences. Ms Klee asked whether they are using it to make better decisions. Mr. Hall said yes and added that they are trying to tailor what they do to make sure every issue raised is dealt with. **Follow-up: Mr. Keeney thanked the Corps for their efforts and the state for moving forward on land based pollution. He suggested this Task Force receive regular updates on this item. He also asked for a status report from the state and others at a future Task Force meeting.**

Mr. Thaddeus Hamilton provided a Power Point Presentation (Encl. 3) with showing the effects of wind and water erosion on Dania Beach before and after seagrasses were planted. He noted that without the vegetation, there would be no beach. He cited John Lloyd State Park as another good example of the use of vegetation. He showed pictures of Ft. Lauderdale Beach after storms with sand covering the streets. It has since been re-vegetated and the problem was reduced. BMPs have been developed on how to stabilize beaches and speed up the re-vegetation process. He emphasized the need to educate the public and move forward. Educational signs have been posted in Hollywood urging the public not to damage the sea oats. He stated that Pompano Beach has the best re-vegetated beach in Broward County, which has cut down on city costs in maintaining the beach.

Mr. Hamilton introduced Mr. Russell Setti representing Mr. Henry Graham of the Broward Soil and Conservation District. He urged the Corps to consider sea oats as a construction method. He presented a Coastal Ecosystem Restoration Report and emphasized that the techniques NRCS prescribes have been used successfully for over 15 years. He also spoke about the Coastal Zone Management Program for the state of Florida. That program should assist in planning for beach management by requiring all Corps permits to require vegetation to stabilize the beach because short of using cement, the shoreline will not be successfully stabilized. He referred to a FEMA report that says the purpose for beach re-nourishment is to stop storm surges, not promote tourism. He referred to a Soil Conservation Service (SCS) document defining the technical zones of the beach to understand how to use BMPs to stabilize sand. He also showed a brochure from the 1940s from the Conference on beach preservation warning that beaches could become an endangered species. He talked about the widening of Highway A1A and how it was not constructed in accordance with the permit granted to the city of Ft. Lauderdale, and he questioned why this was allowed to happen.

Mr. Ben Grumbles said he appreciated the Task Force putting coastal issues on the agenda. He also appreciated the mention of the U.S. Caribbean Task Force, something they are working closely with NOAA and others. Although he missed the priorities discussion, EPA appreciates the inclusion of the water quality component. He said it was important to continue to emphasize the water quality related issues connection as all of these efforts move forward.

Mr. Rick Smith announced the Broward beach renourishment issue was going to the Governor and Cabinet on May 13th. He introduced DEP staff, who provided a brief update on the status of the state's permit. DEP reported that its review found minimal impact to hard bottom resources. DEP asked for additional requirements on Broward County to protect the off shore resource and require mitigation for impacts. Mr. Collins asked about the amount of analysis done on wholesale coral growth on imported rock on this scale and the timeframe of coral re-generation. DEP has said that these projects don't impact coral reefs,

although there are some corals in the area that will be impacted, it is not the reef. Ms. Klee asked about indirect impacts on the coral reef, such as sedimentation, and whether the mitigation requirement would change. The staff replied that this indirect impact has prompted the mitigation requirements.

Public Comment

Ms. Jody Thomas (The Nature Conservancy) thanked the group for discussing coastal issues. She said she knows the importance of this issue, having worked with the Keys Sanctuary and urged the group to continue their discussions.

Ms. Brenda Chalifour read the conclusion in the report from the Pew's Oceans Committee. Land use reform essential aquatic ecosystems will be damaged irreversibly in the next 25 years. She requested the Task Force include the coastal issues on the July agenda.

Mr. Russell Setti read from a February 10, 2003 Resolution from the south Florida Ecosystem Restoration Council, Inc. supporting the use of sea oates as a cost effective manner to reduce the effects of storm surge as well as protect the reefs.

Mr. Murley invited the members to attend Florida Oceans Day in Tallahassee the following day.

Tenth Anniversary Celebration – Ms. Klee said the purpose of the tenth anniversary celebration would be to discuss lessons learned over the past ten years and bring in folks who have been involved in the effort to present their perspectives. She asked the members give some thought to the strawman proposal included in the booklets, noting this would be an opportunity to use a Task Force meeting to be creative and think outside the box. Mr. Salt was tasked to commence the planning and find a facility. Ms. Klee asked if there was concern or objection to the concept, there were none, she also asked those interested to work with Mr. Salt.

Legislative Update – Mr. Rick Smith provided the 2003 State update (Encl. 5). He noted that EFA Amendments are currently being considered and Mr. Lehtinen's concerns that the state would violate the terms of the Settlement Agreement. Mr. Smith said he did not agree and added that the Governor is committed to 10 ppb. Mr. Collins added the real benefit for the Governing Board is that the Legislature is proposing to continue the 1/10 of a mil to fund the Everglades Construction Project (ECP) and proposing to use that as the funding source for the Everglades stormwater project. The proposal is also to use the water storage facilities to clean up the water and help them to meet water quality obligations. Mr. Collins said he believed they were both solid plans. The Legislation was not the Water Management District's but was sent to the Legislature along with comments that dealt with the funding issue plus the issue of whether the standard should be pipe or marsh standard. Mr. Collins said the bill captures the plan the District developed and the language added by the Governing Board. Ms. Klee said she appreciated Mr. Smith providing the update, however, she noted that concerns have been raised by a lot of folks about what it will do to the phosphorus standard and compliance schedule. Mr. Collins said EPA still has the ability to approve or disapprove it. Ms. Klee said this could be a big issue, but is premature at this time.

Coordinated Budget Request – Mr. Salt noted duty of the Task Force to develop recommendations for coordinated budget requests for funds that are proposed to be expended by agencies and entities represented on the Task Force and provided the recommendations of the Working Group. The Working Group identified three items to highlight as agencies begin their 2005 budget requests. First, the Working Group noted that if there is no new start construction money, the ASR pilot projects would be delayed. Second, funding for several programs to control invasive exotic plant species are in question including funds for operation and management of the Quarantine Facility. Finally, monitoring and research in support of Corps critical projects is not in place as it is for CERP projects. Mr. Smith said the state's aquatic weed control program was cut for this year, let alone their 2005 projected numbers. These priorities reflect the priorities of the Working Group on possible budget issues. Mr. Salt noted the intent is to communicate to senior policy officials on possible budget issues. Ms. Klee noted her concern if the Working Group is recommending specific budget requests for 2005. She added it would not be appropriate or helpful. Mr. Salt said the Working Group was not trying to do that but rather highlight priority areas.

CSOP Draft Team Charter – Mr. Salt presented the draft charter, as approved by the Working Group. The Advisory Team would be focusing on the CSOP and is intended to provide broader public participation and input. The Working Group would forward recommendations to the Task Force. Mr. Collins said the WRAC wanted the ability to provide comments and noted his concern with FACA issues. Ms. Klee said FACA would not be a problem since it would be under the auspices of the Task Force, but would have the lawyers look at this. Mr. Salt said it was his intent to assemble a slate of members and provide it to the Task Force. **Follow-up: Ms. Klee asked for this to be brought back to the Task Force for approval.**

Public Comment

Mr. Patrick Hayes said reservations are being done away with outside of the SFWMD. Inside the District, there is a connection drawn to the ability to reserve water to meet the “minimum flows and levels (MFL)” requirements in State law. He added that MFL is not a restoration flow of water. Reservations are critically necessary and asked the group to take a closer look at what is happening on that issue. Mr. Smith said this issue is very controversial and may not make it out of the Legislature.

Follow-up: Ms. Klee suggested Rock Salt, Rick Smith and Maureen Finnerty work on options for an additional meeting and schedule discussions with the Working Group and SCT on how they could be used more effectively. She asked that this be included as a major item on the July Task Force agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 11:58 AM.

Enclosures:

1. Briefing Booklet
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Draft Meeting Minutes, February 2003
 - c. GAO Report on Science (GAO-03-345)
 - d. WRDA 96
 - e. Working Group Charter
 - f. SCT Charter
 - g. Caribbean Water Quality Resolution
 - h. Recommended Priorities for 2003
 - i. Coordinated Budget Request
 - j. Avian Ecology Workshop
 - k. SCT Report on Flows
 - l. Working Group Sub-Teams and Advisory Bodies
 - m. 10th Anniversary Celebration
 - n. Draft CSOP Team Charter
 - o. Land Acquisition Strategy
 - p. Exotic Species Conference
 - q. Task Force Roster
 - r. Working Group Roster
2. NOAA Coastal Component Power Point Presentation
3. USDA-NRCS Coastal Power Point Presentation
4. Florida Oceans Day flier
5. State of Florida 2003 Legislative Session Update