

*Approved Minutes
Joint Meeting of
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force and
Water Resources Advisory Commission
Hawk's Cay Resort
December 7, 2005*

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. Mike Collins called the meeting to order at 1:45 PM. Mr. Rock Salt announced Ms. Marti Allbright would arrive that evening for the meeting tomorrow. He also announced that she would be leaving Interior at the end of the month.

*Rock Salt for Marti Allbright, Chair, U.S. Department of the Interior
Colleen Castille, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection
Ken Ammon for Carol Wehle, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District
Merlyn Carlson, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Commissioner, Miami Dade County
Brent Fewell for Benjamin Grumbles, Assistant Administrator Office of Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Joette Lorion for Dexter Lehtinen, Special Assistant to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians
Matt McKeown, Principle Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
Jim Murley for Clarence Anthony, Mayor, City of South Bay
Peter Ortner for Timothy Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce
Patty Power for Jim Shore, Seminole Tribe of Florida
Craig Schmauder for J.P. Woodley, U.S. Department of the Army
Michael Collins, Water Resources Advisory Commission*

Combined Structural and Operating Plan (CSOP) Advisory Team Update

Mr. Salt noted that Loly Espino, the Chair, was unavailable to present the update and he recognized several members from the team in attendance. He noted the Chair's letter and recommendations were provided and added that although Alternative 5 had many good qualities it had some areas that fell short of the team's performance expectations. To address these shortfalls he reviewed the issues and recommendations which were unanimously supported by both the voting and non voting members. The recommendations provided specific ideas to address the six remaining issues.

Ms. Joette Lorion noting the Miccosukee Tribe was a non voting member of the CSOP Advisory Team said people had come to realize that the only way to get this project completed is to find some agreement. The group was trying to come to consensus and help the Task Force understand the concerns of the team. She made a motion on behalf of Dexter Lehtinen to reconvene the CSOP Advisory team to review the current modeling results and the tentatively selected plan in order to continue to provide consensus recommendations to the Task Force on CSOP. It was important to keep the stakeholders together and come up with a plan they can build and operate. The Corps has a new model run to address concerns and it would be beneficial for the group to review the model results. She thanked the Corps for recognizing that 3A was too high and for trying to find ways to lower the water. Mr. Salt asked to hold the motion until all comments had been heard. Commissioner Diaz thanked the members of the CSOP team for their great work. Mr. Salt noted the practice had been to accept the team's report and forward it to Mr. Woodley. The report was accepted without objection. Mr. Ken Ammon asked whether the FWS jeopardy opinion would be reversed. Ms. Lorion said the natural systems model water levels were much higher for the sparrow habitat in sub population A than they were striving to maintain.

Public Comment

Ms. Debbie Harrison (World Wildlife Fund/CSOP Member) noted many years ago it was the fishing guides in the Florida Keys who started paying attention to the decline of Florida Bay. It has been recognized that

in order to restore the natural salinity of Florida Bay the freshwater volumes in Taylor Slough and the historic flows need to be re-established. The project of greatest concern was the C-111 Spreader Canal including the stormwater treatment area and the backfilling of the lower C-111. They were pleased when the Governor announced they would accelerate these projects through Acceler8. They were concerned now that the water quality and backfilling components have been separated from the building of the spreader canal. She strongly encouraged the Task Force to do what they could to put the backfilling of the C-111 canal back into the C-111 Spreader Canal project, include the water quality component and move this project forward as quickly as possible. She added that there was an expectation that there would be no urban runoff entering into ENP yet the Corps' MODBRANCH modeling has shown that 5% of that water would be urban runoff.

Ms. Madelin Fortin (CSOP Member) noted the team worked hard for two years and came to consensus on what they wanted to have accomplished. Alternative five fell short of everyone's expectations with up to four months of continuous flooding in Country Walk and Kendall as well as other environmental problems. She asked the Task Force to extend the CSOP Advisory Team so they could continue to work together.

Captain Ed Davidson (Florida Keys Citizens Coalition) noted that the C-111 Canal was never intended to be part of the drainage system and was built for political and economic reasons. He said the C-111 needs to be backfilled or there would continue to be enormous political and agricultural pressure to use it to drain water from the system.

Corps Presentation

Dennis Duke provided a presentation reviewing the CSOP alternatives and modeling results. He noted that CSOP was the combined operating plan for the Modified Water Deliveries and C-111 projects. He noted these projects were authorized by two different authorities. He reviewed the project components and the alternative formulation process. Two basic alternatives, Alternative 1 for the East bookend and Alternative 2 for the West bookend, were developed and then Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 were developed. He reviewed the performance of all the alternatives and explained that Alternative 5 refinements included improving performance in WCA 3A, C-111 buffer area and dealing with potential flooding in the boundary areas due to the increased flow. The Corps believes that Alternative 5R addresses and meets all the criteria and performance measures developed through the Project Delivery Team. There were some questions about the 8.5 SMA where with Alternative 5R it will be wetter up to the levy and maintain drier conditions within the 8.5 SMA.

Mr. Salt asked Mr. Slack to address the question related to the impact CSOP will have on the FWS Jeopardy Opinion regarding the sparrow. Mr. Jay Slack stated that a reasonable and prudent alternative to the jeopardy opinion, IOP, was developed. That action was developed and will not cause jeopardy to that species. Although they cannot predetermine the outcome of the biological opinion, anything equal to or better for that species should imply that there shouldn't be a jeopardy situation.

Ms. Lorion stated that MWD was the reasonable and prudent alternative but it was removed when the biological opinion was amended. She was concerned that the sparrow was being used as a constraint on CSOP when the constraint was supposed to go away when these projects were done. The natural systems model water levels for restoration are much higher. Mr. Slack replied that the natural systems model was a tool that needed to be used with scientific analysis and good judgment. Conditions on the ground need to be evaluated. The jeopardy opinion will go away when actions are taken that removes the jeopardy. Ms. Lorion noted the tribe was concerned that sub population A has not flourished under the gate closings and they would like to see some sort of position from the FWS.

Mr. Ken Ammon asked whether they anticipate impacts to other species such as snail kites and whether the FWS was moving more to a multi-species management approach for the entire system. Mr. Slack said that other species were affected and that FWS has a responsibility to look at the ecosystem as a whole and was concerned about high water levels. Ms. Lorion added that under the IOP operations the snail kite has declined by 50% because of high water levels. Peter Ortnier said he would like the Task Force to be aware that models were just models and that other techniques, such as comparisons with historical vegetation, needed to be used when they believe the model was not sufficient. Mr. Collins said there was little excuse

for the amount of money spent on science and research if they were going to continue to rely on models that were just a tool. Mr. Slack stated that snail kites were a wide ranging, opportunistic species that could move around and adapt in the Everglades. The closures of the S-12 resulted in no extra water in 3A. If there were small amounts of water or changes in WCA 3A for several years it would not cause massive declines in the species. It would be a scientific flaw to link those two things together. Mr. Gene Duncan said there was no question that there was a linkage between closing those gates and the decline of the snail kite and that FWS predicted it and issued an incidental take statement.

Ms. Lorion made a motion for the Task Force to reconvene the CSOP team to review the current modeling results and the tentatively selected plan in order to continue to provide consensus recommendation to the Task Force on the CSOP. Commissioner Diaz seconded the motion. The Task Force adopted the motion unanimously.

Lake Okeechobee Update

Ms. Susan Gray provided an overview of the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan intended to be an aggressive action plan to help restore the ecological health of Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. The primary benefits are to improve water quality, expand water storage, enhance lake health and facilitate land acquisition. A series of projects are incorporated into the plan. She said the legislature has provided significant funding support through the efforts of the Governor and others and reviewed the fast track projects which are located north of the lake. She noted the Corps of Engineers will be revising the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule. DEP has committed to speeding up the establishment of TMDLs. FDACs will be looking at revising the Mandatory Fertilizer BMP rules. They will also work with local governments and municipalities to help develop and set phosphorus standards for urban use. The SFWMD will be revising the Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) criteria to better address the water quality impacts due to new development and land use changes. They were looking at opportunities to move and store excess water on public and private lands. DCA will look at a program to facilitate the acquisition of lands for public works. St. Lucie County wants to work with them to end the practice of depositing domestic wastewater residuals on the land by developing alternatives. Continued implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program and the CERP Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project are important. This initiative was launched in October 2005 and they will go to the Governing Board in January 2006 to lay out additional details on the program and everyone is welcome to participate.

Mr. Collins said they continue to evaluate other alternatives that might take some pressure off of the system. Mr. Patrick Hayes said that for the first time he heard that for the review of the ERP they will look at the volume changes as they transfer from agriculture to development. Ms. Gray said that point has generated much excitement and interest. Mr. Hayes encouraged the solicitation of the WRAC and looked forward to providing input. Jody Thomas said it was critical to realize the increased applications for development permits in the upper basin and to look at those applications in a cumulative way to understand the impacts they will have on the ability to provide flood protection, water storage and environmental benefits. She urged everyone to think about that ahead of time.

Mr. Jim Murley provided a document *Economic Development Consensus Tri Cities* (Encl. 3) on behalf of Mayor Anthony related to the communities adjacent to Lake Okeechobee. Mayor Anthony would join everyone in applauding this initiative of the Governor and everyone involved. This will be great for all the communities in south Florida, however, adjacent to Lake Okeechobee are communities such as South Bay, Pahokee and Belle Glade that don't get the attention that the newer cities get. These communities have been "ground zero" for a lot of economic, social and environmental disasters. They were a major area for the AIDS epidemic when it was ravaging much of the country. It was hit dramatically by Hurricane Wilma where 80% of the housing units were damaged. These cities are pursuing this plan as part of the larger Palm Beach County Economic Development effort and they are pleased with the intergovernmental cooperation to help with the water treatment plant. He closed by saying that it would be a lost opportunity if they can't find innovative land use and economic ways to help these communities.

Public Comment

Mark Perry (Florida Oceanographic Institute) reported the coastal estuaries have been hammered since June. Lowering the lake will provide better storage in the lake and achieve reduction of these discharges. It is the Corps responsibility and they are going through a new EIS. It is great that the Governor came down and brought attention to it in October but they need faster action from the state. He is concerned with the alternate storage and disposal of excess surface water. Disposal of surface water especially in Underground Injection Control Wells (UIC) is not a good idea and they need to find alternate storage not disposal.

Restoration Update

Mr. Duke provided an update on the current program in south Florida. A total of \$60 million was received for Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) with \$25 million through DOI and \$35 million through the Corps. This represents the most funding received in any one year for this project. A contract has been awarded for the construction of Alternative 6D for the 8.5 SMA. Land acquisition in the 85 SMA has been completed except for tracts in condemnation and in public ownership. The GRR/SEIS for the Tamiami Trail report was revised for public safety considerations and to meet current FDOT requirements, to capture increased construction costs and to remove the escrow agreement language. The selected plan consists of a 2 mile bridge on the west and a 1 mile bridge on the east. The advantages include: reconnecting two of the four deep sloughs, a direct connection to the deep eastern slough complex, avoiding the Miccosukee tribal homeland and a wood stork rookery. The record of decision should be made in January 2006 and the contract should be awarded in December 2006. The Kissimmee River Restoration is in the construction phase and the first backfill contract has been completed. The next contract for backfilling 1.5 miles will be awarded in January 2006. The completion date for this project has been brought back to 2010.

For the C&SF Project, the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51)/STA 1 East construction has been completed and the project has been transferred to the SFWMD for operations. The contract for the PSTA field test has been awarded and the design of the L-40 work is being refined to reduce the impact footprint. The South Dade County (C-111) is moving forward and the plans and specs for the buffer area are being completed. Once the land swap is completed a contract for the S331 command and control building will be awarded. The L31 west canal and portions of the aero jet canal will be backfilled to reduce the flow leaking back to the southeast. The C-111 Spreader Canal project, which is part of CERP, will enlarge the pump station from 50 csf to 500 csf.

The first contract to repair seepage of the Herbert Hoover Dike was awarded for \$17 million. The contract covers the first 4.6 miles of the lower southeast corner of the dike. The ASR pilot project design is underway and the contract for installation of the pumps will be awarded in January 2006. The results of the geotechnical testing fell short of expectations and the SFWMD will be pursuing installation of the pumps at the Hillsboro site. The ASR contingency plan has been initiated and the team has been assembled. They will seek to optimize the CERP reservoirs around the lake and the regulation schedule.

Although developing a process for the identification of water needed for environment in Guidance Memoranda 4 has been a challenge, it is nearly complete. The Interim Goals and Targets agreements have been drafted and will be presented to the Governing Board in January and to the Task Force in February. A special report on exotics has been drafted and is undergoing internal review.

Acceler8 Update

Mr. Ammon reported that in excess of 550,000 acre feet of storage would be provided in the next five years through Acceler8. For planning and engineering, the SFWMD will not go beyond 30% of the preliminary design for any project until the tentatively selected plan is codified through the PIR process. The district has received bids for STA 2, STA 5, STA 6, C-43 and C-44 Test Cells. Major accomplishments to date include the establishment of the team and relocation of an offsite office. They have implemented project control and program management processes which enables them to track schedules and costs on a day-to-day basis. They worked with DEP and the Corps to initiate design criteria to ensure integrity of the levy design. They have implemented document and QA/QC controls and implemented an outreach program.

Mr. John Adornato asked whether the C-43 and C-44 reservoir schedules would be impacted now that the waters of the U.S. issue had been resolved. Mr. Ammon said he did not believe they were resolved but the schedules should not be impacted. Ms. Lorion asked whether they received their bonding yet. Mr. Ammon stated at this point the funding source was exclusively ad valorem taxes and they were working with their bond council. Private money would also be a funding source once they get into the major construction components. He anticipated over \$1 billion in private financing. Ms. Jamie Furgang asked whether there was any new information on the STA component for the Lakes by the Bay project. Mr. Ammon did not have any new information but would look into it. Mr. Collins stated they would receive an additional \$25 million for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands from the legislature.

Mr. Adornato asked for clarification of what was included in the Acceler8 portion of the C-111 Spreader Canal. Mr. Ammon said it was a smaller STA pump station. The alignment of the canal he referred to was expected to hydrate both to the north and south. If they put too much water in, it will overflow and impact flood protection for those lands they have not yet acquired. In order to get some re-hydration and restoration of the impacted wetlands they will only bring in enough water that affects the lands they have already purchased. Mr. Adornato said they needed to backfill the C-111 canal in order to stop harmful releases that affect Florida Bay. Mr. Ammon explained they needed to wait until all the land was acquired before they could backfill the C-111 canal. Mr. Salt reminded everyone that this project was already authorized in WRDA 2000 and they would see the whole plan in the PIR. He added that these were all good questions that for now needed to be fed into the process.

Public Comment

Mr. Kenneth Morley (Islamorada resident) said he was fascinated at the progress that had been made over the last two years. However, he was concerned that the focus was shifting from the Everglades and hoped this group would continue to do what it does and encouraged them to keep their eyes on the ball.

Mr. Ralph Boragine (Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman's Assoc.) urged the group to begin the work on the C-111 as quickly as possible. He said that when this was done, the fisherman would feel confident that Florida Bay would be restored.

Kathleen Patton (Tourism Industry and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary SAC) asked the group to stay true to the mission of the Everglades Forever Act. On October 11th, the FKNMS SAC passed a resolution which she provided. She encouraged the group to continue working to restore Florida Bay to its historic health.

Land Acquisition Task Team

Ms. Theresa Woody reviewed the current draft of the Land Acquisition Strategy noting that it contains two new appendices. One appendix was for potential funding sources in support of the restoration and the other appendix was for tools available to identify strategic acquisitions.

Mr. Gene Duncan said the table in Appendix D indicates that zero acres remain to be acquired for Southern Gold Gates Estates; however, the tribe still owns 800 acres. He asked whether this represented a policy shift from the condemnation proceedings or whether it had been decided that they don't need to own the land to restore it. The tribe was not opposed to restoring the land but was opposed to the state condemning the land. Ms. Castille explained that the judge said the state could take the land and it was just a matter of price. Mr. Duncan said there were still issues to be resolved. Mr. Salt said they needed to figure out what was factually accurate. Ms. Lorion said the tribe could not support the document and would vote no to the Strategy since they felt it was improper for the state to condemn tribal property. She added that one of the innovative tools and strategies should be on how to work with Native Americans so they could continue to use the land for natural purposes. Ms. Lorion thanked the Army who supported the tribe. Mr. Salt asked if there were any objections to accepting the report. The Land Acquisition Strategy was accepted with the understanding the Miccosukee Tribe was opposed and the information in question would be researched and made factually correct.

Ms. Woody provided a status report on the Natural Lands Report to Congress. She reviewed the process for prioritizing the natural attributes of the analyzed land and how the projects were selected. Next steps

include the continuation of map refinements and text edits. She anticipated that the first draft would be available in January 2006. Ms. Jody Thomas said Congress was interested in what natural lands were left and what programs were available to acquire the lands. A process needed to be developed to protect these lands. She encouraged the federal, state and local agencies to acquire priority lands.

Mr. Dan Clark (Cry of the Water) stated that more and more agricultural water was being diverted to the Hillsboro Canal and the corals were being smothered and killed. He encouraged the Task Force to include the STAs for the Hillsboro Canal on their priority list. He displayed a bottle of sand containing nutrients that he took from the reefs adding this would be a real problem.

Ms. Stephanie Clark (Cry of the Water) stated there were three groups working independently of each other on water quality and marine issues. She suggested that the member agencies should appoint a liaison to work with the three groups enabling them to share information that comes out of the various studies they were conducting. Local dredge and fill project were burying the reefs in Broward County. Pollution and permitting were leading to the destruction of the reefs in Broward County.

Mr. Patrick Hayes announced that for the second year in a row, the Florida Parks system received the gold medal for the finest parks in the U.S.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 PM.

*Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Hawk's Cay Resort
December 8, 2005*

Opening Remarks and Administrative Items

Ms. Marti Allbright called the meeting to order and announced that Mr. Andrew Emrich, the Department of Justice representative, had left government service. A new representative would be appointed and in the interim Mr. Matt McKeown would represent Justice. She also recognized two new members; Mr. Merlyn Carlson, USDA, and Carol Wehle, SFWMD. The May 2006 minutes were approved without objection.

Task Force Member Whiparound

Mr. Craig Schmauder stated that Mr. Woodley was unable to attend due to Louisiana issues. The Army was pleased with the funding levels in the Energy Bill and they hoped to sustain funding for MWD and Tamiami Trail in 2007. He said that Mr. Woodley's highest priority was to proceed with funding and testing of ASR. He announced that the Acceler8 white paper had been briefed to the Assistant Secretary and they continued to work it internally.

Mr. Merlyn Carlson announced USAD has been part of a conservation effort serving 100,000 partners in the nation totaling approximately \$3.3 billion in projects. They were working with the five water management districts in Florida and implementing new and innovative programs.

Ms. Patty Power stated Mr. Shore was unable to attend and she thanked Ms. Allbright for her leadership.

Ms. Allbright said it had been an honor to serve on the Task Force. She said that sometimes the members get caught up on the issues on which they disagree and they forget to celebrate the successes. She said the \$60 million for MWD in 2006 would fund the completion of the 8.5 SMA portion of the project. The Corps and Interior were working closely to get this done on time and on budget. She was pleased that the real estate acquisition had been completed on time and she appreciated the assistance and the fine work of the Corps. DOI was working with the Corps to address the comments provided on the Tamiami Trail. The culverts under the trail have been cleaned and the S-12 structures will be cleaned. If all goes well the MWD would be completed by 2009. The FWS was drafting a rule to upgrade the status of the American crocodile from endangered to threatened due to habitat improvements. She thanked Ms. Castille for her leadership in guiding the development of the management agreement for the Dry Tortugas Research Natural Area and noted that Secretary Norton looked forward to signing the agreement. She concluded by saying that Everglades restoration has a long way to go and encouraged the members to continue to work together.

Ms. Castille reported that DEP has once again recommended \$100 million for land acquisition. The \$60 million for MWD and associated projects was extremely important. She presented Ms. Allbright with an autographed book by Clyde Butcher.

Mr. Collins reported that the WRAC had been meeting once a month and working on issues related to Lake Okeechobee. Their technical advisory group of scientists delivered a resolution to the Governing Board requesting that the Corps review options for maintaining the lake at a lower level on a permanent basis. The WRAC reviewed the options and they were incorporated into the Governor's Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan.

Ms. Lorion on behalf of Mr. Lehtinen wished Ms. Allbright well. She reported the hearing with the Special Master would continue in January as well as a hearing on back pumping into Lake Okeechobee. The tribe filed a lawsuit against DOI and FWS over the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow biological opinion which has caused a 50% decline in the Snail Kite population. Water levels in the Everglades were very high both before and after Hurricane Wilma. The Corps was prepared to close the S-12 gates but the tribe requested they be kept open. She said this Task Force needed to look at this issue which has not helped Sparrow sub

population A. Ms. Allbright said they all understood and shared the tribe's concerns. She said this highlighted the importance of getting the water right and should be a priority for 2006.

Mr. Tim Keeney underscored the importance of the backfill and spreader elements of the C-111 project which needed to be completed as soon as possible for the health of Florida Bay and the Keys. He noted the discussion connecting harmful algal blooms with water management practices and explained that blooms were a naturally occurring event. He announced that the Florida Bay and Adjacent Marine Systems Interagency science program would conduct its science conference the following week.

Mr. Ken Ammon provided an overview of the components included in the Lake Okeechobee plan which includes: fast track projects north of the lake to intercept and clean water, reanalyzing the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule, consideration of forward pumping and reviewing the regulatory components. He announced that construction would start on several projects that were part of the Acceler8 program. He asked the federal partners to continue their efforts to secure funding for CERP. He concluded by announcing that the District was moving ahead with \$1.5 billion in private financing to fund the Acceler8 program.

Director's Update

Mr. May reviewed the background and responsibilities of the Task Force to provide a context for the discussion of Task Force priorities. He noted that Task Force strategy documents the coordination of 212 projects spanning 46 years reported by the members. He reiterated how the system-wide coordination role of the Task Force complements the implementation of the various projects by the members. He reviewed the status of the priorities for 2005. Mr. Dennis Duke reviewed the items scheduled for consultation in 2006. Ms. Allbright opened discussion on priorities for 2006. Ms. Lorion said it was important for the Task Force to know when things were not moving in the right direction and they should track what was going on in the Everglades. As an example, water quality and water quantity, were things that impact restoration goals and should be tracked. Ms. Allbright suggested having a more expanded update and time on the agenda to discuss those items and noted the importance of reaching agreement on the Interim Goals. Mr. May added that the Science Coordination Group was developing system-wide indicators for Task Force review. Ms. Castille said that although it was important to debate the issues they needed to complete the agreement. She said that every day that goes by and they debate these issues another species declines. Mr. Collins said the question is whether they are using the valid science to make the management decisions. Ms. Castille suggested that once they were briefed on issues they should schedule a follow-on meeting within a month to six weeks to deal with disagreements. Ms. Castille and Ms. Allbright asked that the Interim Goals Agreement be presented for consultation at the February Task Force meeting or that an overview of the challenges be presented. Ms. Allbright noted they had four regularly scheduled meetings for 2006 and suggested they count on an additional meeting/workshop to have consultation and deal with sticky issues.

Mr. Patrick Hayes highlighted the review of Environmental Resource Permits and the need for the Task Force to add this to their future criteria.

Stephanie Clark said that STAs had not been mentioned and they were needed to clean the agricultural water going out onto the reefs.

Five Year Report

Mr. Duke provided an executive summary of the report on the CERP. He reviewed the background and accomplishments from 2000 – 2005. He noted the report was required by WRDA 2000 and was a joint report by the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with federal, state and local agencies as well as the tribes. The report must include the accomplishments of the initial five years, the cost of that work, the expected costs to implement the plan (updated project costs). He noted that the cost of the plan has been increasing on average \$300 million per year due to inflation. He said that determination letters were needed from the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of the Army and the Administrator of EPA concerning the benefits to the natural system and the human environment. The report had been submitted to Corps headquarters for review. Next steps included getting the determination letters and briefing OMB.

Mr. Ammon asked whether the report accounted for what had been spent on land acquisition. Mr. Duke explained the ledger system tracking the federal and state contributions. Mr. May asked how crediting affected how the contributions were reported. Mr. Duke said that the state was credited once a PCA was signed. Ms. Lorion stated Congress had been concerned over the delays in MWD which was a foundation project that would not be completed until 2009. The tribe was concerned over a number of things including the change in the state and federal partnership brought about by Acceler8 as well as water quality. She read from a Corps employee memo noting that it cautioned that the report should not be overly optimistic. She noted the Kissimmee River was restored without Interim Goals and they needed to start implementing projects. Although they were involved in the process the tribe does not support the report in its present form yet the tribe is listed in the report. Ms. Power added that the Seminole tribe was concerned over the land costs. Ms. Allbright noted this was not a Task Force document but was required presented for consultation with the Task Force. Mr. Duke and Mr. Schmauder would take these comments back to the Army for consideration. Mr. Schmauder said Congress was expecting a balanced report and whether it was optimistic or not he assured the group that it would be truthful. He said the report would be transmitted within 30 – 45 days. Ms. Lorion said that some of the MWD components were constructed before 1999 and suggested that should be noted in the report.

Public Comment

Mark Perry (Florida Oceanographic) said they needed to do more over the next five years and get the storage components in as well as the operational controls. There needed to be more focus on water quality and they needed to stop the pollution at the source of the problem rather than downstream. Ms. Castille stated they were working on BMPs and water quality and quantity changes through ERP.

Joan Bausch (representing herself) asked whether the natural wetlands purchases were still part of the Five Year Report. Mr. Duke said there had been a lot of confusion over this and added that 90,000 acres were added to the IRL project during the PIR process which was more than what was in the Yellow Book. There was concern over cash flow and how the lands would be acquired. There was a schedule in the PIR for implementation of the IRL plan and there will be a progressive acquisition of those lands.

Working Group PIR Consultation Summary

Mr. Jay Slack reported the Working Group was consulted on alternative formulations for the Acme Basin B PIR and C-43 Storage Reservoirs Part 1 PIR in October 2005 and it was a success. Mr. Duke provided a presentation on both projects reviewing the purpose, cost, scope, objectives and plan formulation. Mr. Slack stated the Working Group had a fair amount of discussion on the Acceler8 and CERP processes and that he understood the issues were being worked. He noted general consensus for the Acme Basin B PIR and said the details were being worked in a manner amenable to everyone. He summarized the issues that needed to be resolved for the C-43 PIR to include: guidance on how to deal with reservoirs associated with STAs and without STAs (there could be opportunities to solve potential water quality problems with STAs); dealing with Lake Hicpochee and potential means of alternate storage; natural function of the lake and concerns over using it for storage; deep water versus shallow water storage and the potential for algal blooms. He said everyone was talking about how to balance these issues so that it could be operated the best way possible. Mr. Collins added that they owned a lot of land in that area and if the reservoir was shallow they may not have the funding to buy additional farmland and would have to use the natural lands. Mr. Slack acknowledged there were trade-offs. There was discussion on evaluating additional groundwater storage and questions about the appropriateness of the models being used. Mr. Ammon said the reservoirs were not going to be static and there were technologies employed throughout the United States to mitigate for those impacts. For the Acme Basin B, the Corps and the District were discussing the appropriateness of the two major alternatives. The district was supporting an active Section 24 wetland. Ms. Power said it was helpful to have the Working Group look at this prior to bringing it to the Task Force.

Public Comment

Mr. Patrick Hayes thanked the SFWMD, FDEP and the Governor for taking steps to review and revise the ERPs. They needed to check the way they issue and transfer to have a better way of addressing water quality and volume impacts due to land use changes and new developments. ERPs which were originally issued as flood permits were misleading.

Ms. April Gromnicki (National Audubon) said that some problematic provisions remain to be solved with the WRDA bill. She said the \$60 million for MWD was a huge victory and said they would need \$150 million over the next two years. She also said that \$150 million was needed for the Kissimmee River for the next three years. Construction dollars would also be needed and there were challenges ahead.

Mr. Mark Perry (Florida Oceanographic) invited everyone to attend the 21st Everglades Coalition Conference scheduled for January.

Next Steps and Closing Comments

Ms. Allbright thanked Mr. May and the entire team for their hard work in putting these meetings together. Mr. May announced the abbreviated Working Group meeting scheduled for that afternoon would not be held. He recognized Ms. Allbright's leadership and guidance on behalf of everyone and presented her with a gavel.

Enclosures:

1. Administrative Items
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Draft Minutes, May 2005
 - c. Task Force Roster
 - d. Proposed 2006 Meeting Calendar
2. CSOP Update
 - a. Memo to Task Force
 - b. Recommendations to Task Force
3. Lake Okeechobee Update
4. Corps Restoration Update
5. Acceler8 Update and Accomplishments
6. Land Acquisition Task Team
 - a. Draft 2005 Land Acquisition Strategy
 - b. Status of Report to Congress
7. Executive Director's Update
 - a. 2005 Task Force Priorities and Powerpoint
 - b. 2006 Project Consultation
8. Five Year Report to Congress
 - a. Power Point presentation
 - b. Draft Report (11/23/05)
 - c. Overview
9. Project Implementation Reports Corps' Power Point
10. CSOP Alternatives and Modeling Results Power Point
11. Economic Development Consensus Tri Cities
12. FKNMS SAC Resolution