

Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force
Nova Southeastern University
December 7, 2012

Welcome and Administrative Announcements

Ms. Rachel Jacobson called the meeting to order at 10:13 AM. She thanked NOVA Southeastern University for hosting this meeting adding that the Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI) has moved on to this campus. Mr. Peter Witchen, Vice President of Facilities at NOVA welcomed the Task Force (TF) and encouraged everyone to explore their facility. NOVA just completed the National Coral Reef Institute Research facility (<http://www.nova.edu/ocean/ncri/>) and will soon break ground on an Applied Research Building. Ms. Jacobson suggested they could provide a presentation on the joint research at a future Task Force meeting. Ms. Jacobson recognized Commissioner Ron Bergeron.

Mr. Greg Munson, Vice Chair of the TF, deferred his opening remarks to Secretary Herschel Vinyard. Secretary Vinyard noted this was the first meeting since the state's landmark Everglades water quality plan. He thanked Administrator Lisa Jackson, Secretary Salazar, Secretary Darcy and Attorney General Holder. It was approximately 14 months ago when Gov. Scott asked him and Ms. Melissa Meeker to join him in Washington, DC for a meeting hosted by Secretary Salazar. It was there that Governor Scott presented the state's water quality plan. Secretary Vinyard noted the receptiveness from the federal partners was amazing and he recognized all the work done from that day forward by Ms. Gwen Keyes Fleming and her team at EPA, Mr. Munson and Mr. Ernie Marks from DEP. He thanked all of the people for the truly remarkable work that has been done in a short time. He said he did not want the momentum to stall and encouraged everyone to keep this process going. Ms. Jacobson said that the residents of south Florida will be the primary beneficiaries of this improved water quality which will also help Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park (ENP). On behalf of Interior she thanked the Governor and his team for making this a reality.

The following members were in attendance:

Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior

Greg Munson, Vice Chair, Deputy Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Buddy Cunill for Camille Mittelholtz, Acting Director, Office of Safety, Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of Transportation

James M. Erskine, Water Resources Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

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

Chris Kelble for Sally Yozell, Director of Policy and Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce

Gwen Keyes Fleming, Regional Director, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Melissa Meeker, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

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

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

Ethan Shenkman for Ignacia Moreno, Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
Herschel Vinyard, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Kevin Powers, Special Advisor, Water Resources Advisory Commission
Shannon Estenoz, Director, Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives

Mr. Ethan Shenkman attended on behalf of Ignacia Moreno who was unable to attend. Justice is very supportive of the efforts of this TF and all of the great work and progress that has been made on water quality. Ms. Ann Mills said USDA is an enthusiastic partner working with fellow federal members, state of Florida as well as farmers, ranchers, non-profits, foundations and business partners here in the state. They have been able to protect 95,000 acres in the Northern Everglades through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) one of their effective Farm Bill programs. The Northern Everglades is an important part of Everglades restoration which helps to recharge the Biscayne aquifer and is important to species such as the Florida panther. Partnerships are critical and she pointed out the American Prime parcel which consists of 1,400 acres along the south bank of the Caloosahatchee River. This was possible through the collaboration with Interior, Army Corps of Engineers, The Nature Conservancy and the state of Florida. The protection of these 1,400 acres provides a crossing for female panthers to go north which will help protect the genetic diversity and strength of the species. While USDA is waiting for a Farm Bill to be passed they are now focused on the restoration of these 95,000+ acres in the Northern Everglades.

Ms. Patty Power said she was attending for Mr. Jim Shore and held her remarks until later in the meeting. Ms. Melissa Meeker affirmed the SFWMD's commitment to implementation of restoration strategies on water quality adding that they are well underway on the construction of the L8 Reservoir and are in full design of the A-1 FEB. They are also working with the Corps on the NEPA and permitting requirements and are making progress on the land swap issue. On central Everglades planning the SFWMD is excited about the expedited process. She announced that the Lakebelt Committee approved the Southern Gardens project that will restore an old citrus grove and create an Everglades type habitat. As a Treasure Coast resident she thanked USDA and Martin County for Allapattah that will help move the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) project forward.

COL Jackson attended for Secretary Darcy who was unable to attend due to a schedule change. Ms. Darcy asked that he pass along her appreciation for the participation in the central Everglades planning project. They will learn a lot of lessons from this effort that can hopefully be applied in other areas. On behalf of the Corps and the Jacksonville District he noted their appreciation for their continued involvement. Mr. Munson repeated Secretary Vinyard's gratitude to all the folks who helped on the water quality restoration strategies. Since the last TF meeting the state permits were issued, challenge period passed without a challenge, now it is all about groundbreaking.

Ms. Gwen Keyes Fleming echoed gratitude and congratulations on behalf of Administrator Jackson and EPA to the folks in Florida for making that historic step in the continuum of Everglades restoration. Thinking outside of the box is what made it a success. EPA is looking forward to talking with others and keeping up the momentum to expound that success. Mr. James Erskine said that Chairman Colley Billie appreciates the opportunity to talk at a political level with all the representatives and the heads of agencies. That opportunity offers the ability to provide the tribal views regarding water quality and Everglades restoration. As a manager he is hopeful that the process that has been laid out with the state's restoration plans can remain on target and provide good results for WCA 3. Initiating the FEBs at the

beginning of the process for WCA 1 and WCA 3 are essential to maintaining that cooperation and improving the water quality. In addition he said he wanted to build on the cooperation and momentum that is in the system right now to improve habitat reconstruction and habitat improvements and true restoration to some of the tribal lands. The tribal lands have seen devastating impacts from hydrological modifications and nutrients. The time has come to start talking about solutions and he hoped that working through this TF and the cooperating agencies that they could develop plans to address those issues.

Mr. Kevin Powers said he was unable to attend the last meeting which was a real robust celebration of the water quality settlement. He recognized the tremendous leadership in the state of Florida and the federal government in coming together on that historic agreement. As a resident of Martin County, the St. Lucie Estuary has been hammered by the discharges from Lake Okeechobee and this settlement provides for storage and treatment south of the lake which can't happen fast enough. He applauds the efforts made to date and urged this gets into the hands of those with the shovels. Mr. Chris Kelble noted Ms. Sally Yozell was unable to attend. He noted that Ms. Yozell is impressed that the pace of restoration has picked up amazingly over the past couple of years. Mr. Buddy Cunill said he was attending for Mr. David Hawk, Acting Division Administrator.

Ms. Jacobson noted that Ms. Lawson recently retired from DOT and she served on this TF for many years. She recognized Mr. Mark Lewis, Superintendent of Biscayne National Park who retired over the last week. Mr. Mark Musaus, Deputy Regional Director for the Fish and Wildlife Service will also be retiring soon. Mr. Musaus along with Mr. Charlie Pelizza was instrumental in getting the Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge established. Ms. Mills announced that Mr. Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist for Florida will be moving west to California and she recognized the tremendous job he has done for NRCS.

Seven50 Regional Prosperity Plan

Jim Murley explained this process could complement the ongoing restoration process. Seven counties have joined together and are looking out 50 years at a regional prosperity plan. They understand that the success of the urban region depends on the success of the restoration. They also realize that they could mess things up if they don't tend to their planning in a thoughtful way. EPA and DOT along with HUD form the leadership at the federal level. The South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils formed the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership and along with the 7 member counties and 200 other government, public, not for profit and private entities are developing the regional prosperity plan. They have held one summit and a series of workshops with the major work being ahead of them in 2013. A prosperity plan can be looked at like a business plan. Southeast Florida has a population bigger than 33 states and is still growing and a coastline longer than the state of New Jersey. They will be working closely with the SFWMD, FL DOT, DEP and others to make sure they are using consistent data sets in conjunction with the work they are doing. He reviewed the livability principles that support the work they do and highlighted one 'enhance resilience to climate change' which is something they live with every day. He pointed to A1A where portions of it have fallen into the sand in Ft. Lauderdale because of activities that are exasperated by sea level rise and lunar tides. The TF agenda talks about the central and northern Everglades and the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership is the eastern Everglades, the interface from the coastline back to the levee and this is where they hope to coordinate more on with this TF. It is with the people that the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership is working a lot with. He

reviewed two word clouds as a result of a survey where 250+ participants were asked to provide one word that comes to mind about southeast Florida now and in the future. Mr. Murley said that it is with the TF's Goal 3 of fostering compatibility of the built and natural systems where the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership can provide further elaboration on for consideration as the TF continues its work. On climate change, four counties in southeast Florida are working with the three counties to the north and have produced a Regional Climate Action Plan which he believes could serve as a model for around the country. Their next summit is scheduled for January 2013 and he encouraged members to send staff.

Ms. Meeker said she and Mr. Murley have a long history in working together on sustainability issues and she re-iterated the importance of thinking about its importance. Ms. Mills said USDA is taking a regional approach to providing data and decision support tools for agriculture. Word clouds are interesting to map how people are thinking about the world they live in. Urban America does not recognize the importance of rural America and the ecosystem services that come from that. Mr. Murley said they have the Redland agricultural area in Miami Dade, Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) in Palm Beach and the citrus areas in the Treasure Coast. Land use decisions are primarily made by the local governments but they are hoping to provide information and make them aware of the work of this TF. They need a southeast Florida that has all of the economic vitality they have today. Now is a great time to do the planning and put options in place for private landowners to consider as they look at how they are going to use their land.

Ms. Jacobson noted the word that came up the most often in the survey was "connected". She was glad to hear the importance of the connection between Everglades restoration and prosperity. Restoration of the natural Everglades does contribute to prosperity and overall economic health of the region. Everglades restoration provides that resiliency to climate change. As they have seen with Hurricane Sandy, without that resiliency, billions of dollars are spent to recover from these natural disasters. She asked Mr. Murley to come back to the TF with an update on how they are doing. Ms. Estenoz thanked Mr. Murley adding she is committed to working with him on their Goal 3 language in the Strategy.

National Research Council Report

Ms. Stephanie Johnson noted this is the fourth Biennial review which was authored by the Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress (CISRERP). WRDA 2000 mandated the establishment of an independent scientific review panel to review the plan's progress towards achieving the natural system restoration goals and to produce a biennial report to Congress that includes an assessment of ecological indicators and other measures of progress in restoring the ecology of the natural system. The study has been ongoing since 2004 and they are under a 5-year contract with the Corps of Engineers with additional funding support from DOI and the SFWMD. The Congressional language was translated into a statement of Task and in every biennial report the Committee addresses these four items:

- 1) An assessment of progress in restoring the natural system
- 2) Discussion of significant accomplishments of the restoration
- 3) Discussion and evaluation of specific scientific and engineering issues that may impact progress in achieving the natural system restoration goals of the plan
- 4) Independent review of monitoring and assessment protocols to be used for evaluation of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) progress

Committee membership made up of 14 experts and the report represents the consensus of these experts. The committee concluded that notable progress has been made in the construction of Everglades restoration projects. As of June, eight CERP projects were under construction. Four 1st generation projects (Picayune Strand, Site 1, IRL-S and Melaleuca eradication), two 2nd generation projects (C-111 SC and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands) and two 3rd generation projects (Loxahatchee River and Lakeside Ranch). Four projects have been congressionally authorized and four have been expedited by the state of Florida. Early CERP implementation has been focused on the periphery of the Everglades and the projects with the greatest benefit to the WCAs and ENP continue to lag behind. For significant accomplishments, the committee highlighted the important development of the state water quality initiative agreement and praised the launch of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) because it offers a means to expedite restoration of the remnant Everglades. CEPP responds to early committee concerns to rapidly avert further declines in the ecosystem and to improve system-wide restoration planning. The report was released before there were any detailed plans and CEPP will be a topic for the next round of review.

Committee highlighted several key challenges that could affect future progress. Funding provided by the state and federal government over the past few years has led to important progress in project construction. However due to large cuts in the SFWMD's budget and projected expenditures for water quality improvements, the District projects modest outlays for CERP projects over the next five years. Important to note the state has vastly outspent the federal government to date considering land acquisition and expedited construction. Given the SFWMD's current budget constraints, the committee stated that an increased level of federal funding will be necessary to maintain the recent pace of progress. Project authorization could also be a major impediment. CERP is intended to be a 50/50 state/federal cost share and legally the federal cost share cannot exceed the state. The state can't be credited for their land acquisition and construction expenditures until the project receives federal authorization and a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) is signed. Only four projects have been federally authorized a large portion of the state's expenditures cannot be recognized. Additional project authorization on Generation 2 projects with Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) could allow more than \$500 million to be officially credited to the state. Committee estimates that if recent federal spending continues and no additional authorizations were provided federal credits would exceed the state in approximately 3 years.

As part of its charge, the committee looks at monitoring and assessment and scientific support for decision making. The committee was impressed with the extensive developments in science synthesis that have occurred since 2010. The synthesis efforts provide a means to advance understanding among the scientific community and help policy makers coalesce around a common vision of restoration and clarify key uncertainties and challenges. The committee did recommend that clear acknowledgement of conflicts and trade-offs are important in future science synthesis efforts. Monitoring data is essential for restoration progress and recent cuts to RECOVER's MAP pose a risk to system-wide assessment. Committee recommended that a comprehensive assessment of monitoring be conducted to ensure short and long term needs are met and gaps are addressed in a cost effective manner. A short coming of the recent RECOVER re-optimization was that they only had time to review RECOVER funded monitoring but because CERP related monitoring is supported by many agencies and funding programs, the committee recommended a comprehensive review include all CERP related monitoring.

Committee has long been concerned about the ongoing declines in the central Everglades ecosystem and the slow pace of restoration progress. Overall summary is that the pace of restoration implementation has improved but has focused on the periphery of remnant Everglades. Substantial progress has been made to reduce phosphorus. Minimal progress to restore hydrology and declines of hydrology dependent features continue. Declines will continue unless both hydrology and water quality can be addressed. A new strategy is needed that focuses on the core remnant Everglades system. Strategy should integrate analyses of water quality and quantity to explore opportunities to accelerate restoration and avoid costly and unproductive delays in planning and authorization. They considered CEPP to be a promising initiative and an important step in the right direction. The new committee met the prior week for the first time. Next meeting is scheduled in March 2013 and the next biennial review is due out in June 2014.

Ms. Jacobson reminded everyone that the information gathering is already underway and challenged the various agencies on this TF to improve their report card. To see that it will take centuries for some of these indicators to improve is sobering. Mr. Kelble said he was glad to hear that the next report will address climate change and sea level rise. Hard copies of the report will be provided to the members.

Working Group Sponsored Public Workshops for CEPP

Ms. Estenoz reminded everyone that the TF directed the Working Group (WG) and the Science Coordination Group (SCG) to create an enhanced public engagement process to make sure that the public or anyone wanting to be involved in the accelerated planning process was not left behind. They have held fourteen workshops with six of them occurring since the last TF meeting. They have averaged about 40 attendees and almost all of them were webcast. WG and SCG members have participated in the workshops along with CEPP team members. Two workshops were held specifically on recreation issues. An interactive simulation exercise of Lake Okeechobee/Northern Estuaries was done at one of the workshops to show how difficult it is to make water management decisions in the face of uncertain climate information. All workshop materials and videos are available on www.sfrestore.org.

Ms. Mills said it sounds like a transparent and very inclusive process. She said she hoped to see the simulation process and asked if they have built in the land management practices that are beginning to happen north of Lake Okeechobee. Ms. Meeker said that would be a very complex model and this is a high level model to give the general public the opportunity to see the trade-offs they deal with in terms of sending water south versus east and west. It may be something they can do in the future. Ms. Mills added that somehow quantify the positive benefits as they are making decisions they can capture those benefits in the overall calculation. Ms. Estenoz added that the modelers were able to add the A-1 FEB even though it is not up and running yet and they saw during the exercise that it will give them additional operational flexibility. Once that additional storage is online they can put some of the water in the storage reservoir rather than sending it out immediately to the estuaries. It was a great way to visualize what these structures are going to do in operating the C&SF system. Ms. Mills said that as they think about these large scale ecosystem solutions they keep in mind all the players who can make a contribution. To be able to provide food and water to urban centers they need to be protecting these open spaces. They can affordably and efficiently solve some of the challenges faced through natural systems. Mr. Powers said the website is an incredibly useful tool. As someone who has participated in that exercise, it is incredibly humbling when you make what seems like an easy decision only to realize it wasn't and you realize how challenging and constrained the system is.

Mr. Erskine said they have found the website extremely useful with all of the presentations and videos. He has attended a few of the recreation workshops since there is an overlying theme between recreation and the northern part of WCA 3. He asked if there has been an overlying theme throughout all of the workshops. Ms. Estenoz said it has depended on what part of the system the team was looking at. They divided up the central everglades (red line, blue line, green line, yellow line) and the agendas were been driven by what the team was analyzing which was driven by the timeline.

Ms. Jacobson commended Ms. Estenoz and her team for staging 14 workshops and thanked them for bringing the public in. Ms. Estenoz recognized Mr. Jose Cabaleiro who designed the workshop and Ms. Allyn Childress who has spearheaded the workshops and Mr. Greg Knecht, Mr. Dan Kimball, Mr. Barry Rosen and Mr. Chuck Collins who have all helped chair the workshops. Ms. Estenoz said they are not likely to hold another public workshop for a couple of months since the NEPA process will kick in and there will be a number of public hearings scheduled.

Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)

Ms. Kim Taplin reminded everyone that the project is aimed to: reduce undesirable discharges to east and west coast estuaries; deliver new sources of clean water to the central Everglades and Everglades National Park; and to restore habitat in the central Everglades and Everglades National Park focusing on the “River of Grass”. The goals and objectives have incorporated the CERP goals and objectives and the ecological objectives include increasing the total spatial extent of natural areas, improving habitat and functional quality and improving native plant and animal species abundance and diversity. Project aims to: restore seasonal hydroperiods and freshwater distribution to support a natural mosaic of wetland and upland habitat in the Everglades system; improve sheetflow patterns and surface water depths and durations in the Everglades system in order to reduce soil subsidence, the frequency of damaging peat fires, the decline of tree islands, and salt water intrusion; reduce high volume discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the quality of oyster and SSAV habitat in the northern estuaries. Of the 68 components that make up CERP, CEPP is focused on a few of these looking at storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA); Decompartmentalization and sheetflow enhancement; seepage management to the east coast and operational changes in the system.

CEPP was initiated in November 2011 and is on a fast track schedule. They are now ¾ of the way through the analysis phase. The next major milestone is to identify a TSP in January 2013 and undertake additional analysis of that plan to be documented in a PIR for release in late March for a formal public review process. The schedule has been aggressive in response to what the Corps has heard here in south Florida and across the nation, that the Corps Civil Works process is too long and costly. The Corps and the SFWMD have committed to this expedited schedule in an effort to be more efficient and in recognition that the Everglades ecosystem continues to decline further as they go through the planning phase.

The CEPP plan formulation framework takes a spatial perspective and they started at the top to follow the natural flow of water through the system that helps them define what the water they have to work with is and how much redistribution can be done and where. North of the redline looks within the EAA to capture, store and treat the water. South of the redline looks at options for best distributing the water coming in (both existing inflows as well as new water from Lake Okeechobee) across WCA 3A. Greenline looks at the levees and canals that bisect WCA 3A from WCA 3B and barriers to flow and

options to reconnect the system. Blueline looks at water coming out of WCA 3B over the L-29 levee and canal under the Tamiami Trail next steps project to restore the flow into Northeast Shark River Slough. Yellowline looks at seepage management options. Ms. Taplin reviewed some of what they heard from the public and agencies noting that 18 Project Delivery Team (PDT) meetings were held in addition to the workshops, and reviewed how that information was incorporated.

The final array of alternatives included four alternatives. All options include constructing A-2 FEB in the EAA and integrating with A-1 FEB operations as well as Lake Okeechobee operation refinements within LORS. Ms. Taplin reviewed each of the four alternatives noting that Alternative 1 is the minimal option and the other alternatives build on this one incrementally. Next steps include detailed RSM modeling of the final array of alternatives, continuation with design of project features and maintain engagement with the public and PDT. Governing Board will be briefed on December 13th and the WRAC will be briefed in January. Five evening public meetings have been scheduled from Dec 10-18, 2012.

Ms. Jacobson thanked Ms. Taplin for her presentation. Ms. Meeker added that she was very impressed with the amount of public input they have received and very proud of the work done. Ms. Taplin recognized the huge team of people working on this.

Public Comment

Mr. Ron Bergeron welcomed the Task Force to Nova and cowboy town Davie where he grew up at. His family has been in Florida for 170 years. Blessed to have a grandfather who was a game warden and introduced him to the Everglades 65 years ago and he saw the Everglades before most of the levees and pump stations. This is one of the largest restoration efforts in the history of the world and he thanked the Task Force for trying to understand the very complex issues they are dealing with. Hydrology and quality of water are their two major issues. They have been dealing with three foot of water in panther habitat for two years. This is not an act of God but a manmade event and they constantly have quantity of water issues. They want to save the global Everglades and look at multi species management. He urged them to keep the Everglades alive and healthy and operate the system in a way to minimize irreversible damage.

Ms. Sarah Barmeyer (NPCA) underscored one of the findings from the NRC report that they need more strategies that get to the core of the historic Everglades. In addition to CEPP is the bridging of Tamiami Trail. NPCA is very pleased that the one mile bridge is near completion and the Park Service has started the planning and design for the next phase. Construction funding is the hurdle they face and they are exploring various options including the federal lands highway program as well as other possible sources within the DOT, BP settlement penalties, stimulus opportunity and the general appropriations process. NPCA looks forward to working with the Task Force to explore possible funding sources.

Mr. Steve Davis (Everglades Foundation) acknowledged the hard work on CEPP adding the public workshops have been beneficial. Pretty clear when they read the reports from the NAS that they need to re-hydrate areas like northern 3A, WCA-3B and deliver more water into ENP as sheetflow. They also need to take bold action and begin removing the L-29 levee and let the Everglades flow to increase ecological connectivity. A couple of days ago there was an Alternative 5 that incorporated what they believe is a true vision for Everglades restoration that includes full removal of the L-29 levee.

Ms. Meghan Tinsley (Audubon of Florida) noted that one of the first projects she worked on over 5 years ago was Decompartmentalization and she saw very little progress for one of the most critical projects in Everglades restoration. During Mr. John Ogden's time at Audubon of Florida she was fortunate to learn from his stories of what wading bird nesting used to be in the Everglades and how they could not deem the system restored until they recovered the abundance of nesting in historic locations along the shores of Florida Bay and ENP. Mr. Ogden was deeply troubled by the lack of progress towards moving water through the central Everglades to reverse the ecological decline. He helped with Audubon's vision of project bundling to plan related projects together rather than independent vacuums. They are on the verge of selecting a plan that takes a bold step towards significant restoration. She offered her sincere compliments to the Corps, SFWMD and the numerous other state and federal agencies participating in the process. She thanked the Task Force for providing an integral role in directing the establishment of the workshops that provided the mechanism for public involvement. As they move forward she urged them to not lose the momentum. The selected plan must at a minimum address an increment of restoration of WCA-3B which has long been put aside as too difficult to address and it looks like Alternative 4 is moving in that direction. She thanked everyone involved for their hard work and Audubon will assist in any way they can to see that the selected plan receives authorization and funding for implementation.

Ms. Sara Fain (Everglades Law Center) said that they have always led the way and when ENP was first named a National Park it was the first one ever done so because of the biological values of the Everglades. They made some mistakes along the way but then they led the way again in 2012 with the announcement of the CEPP. Over the last year she has seen more progress since the passage of CERP. She commended the federal and state government. The public process has been transparent, collaborative and efficient. She urged them to continue to be visionary. They are supportive of Alternative 4 which offers some connectivity within WCAs 3A, 3B and ENP. Similar to Commissioner Bergeron they want to see a global Everglades.

Ms. Kara Kapp (Clean Water Action) expressed support for the entire CEPP public process. All of the public workshops and information have been accessible. Also expressed support for project elements and options that focus on Decompartmentalization to prepare them for next steps and future restoration efforts. They believe the best Alternative is 4 and they believe they should be working towards the goal of restoring the Everglades to its natural pattern of sheetflow. They want to see an Everglades ecosystem that is healthy and self-sustaining without an intricate system of pumps, levees, structures and operational controls to the extent that it is possible while still maintaining healthy flow. One feature that will achieve this is the complete degrade of the L-29 which will eliminate a major barrier to flow. They are excited about CEPP, a visionary process and she hopes it lives up to the high expectations.

Mr. Mark Perry (Florida Oceanographic Society) said their northern coastal estuaries have been hammered and those decisions were made back in 1911 when they drained south Florida but they have also augmented that over the years. He went to see the restored part of the Kissimmee and described it as phenomenal. It used to take 6 to 8 months for the water to meander and slowly get down to the lake. The floodplain was very effective at holding that water above the lake. From the lake south it would take water 16 months to reach the tip of south Florida. None of that water was shunted east and west, none of that water went to tide and all of that water went to the Everglades. Currently 64% of the water goes to the estuaries, 23% goes to agriculture and only 13% gets down to the Everglades and they need to do more with CEPP. Even in the first increment, more is needed. He commended the CEPP process and

reminded them that it is only the first increment and they need to do a lot more. By the time they get this authorized and appropriated it will be 10 years down the road.

Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (Everglades Coalition) said she would be remiss if she did not stop and say “thank you”. The central Everglades team has been outstanding. They were empowered by this TF to not leave the public behind and the WG did an incredible job in making sure they met these timelines. She recognized the commitment of the people in the room and the people who are plugging away day and night. If they were to close their eyes and have an image of what the Everglades looks like it wouldn't be a series of canals or pumps but the defining characteristics of ridge and slough topography and sheetflow. Restoring the defining characteristics needs to be their highest priority. Substantial near term progress is getting toward that vision they all carry in their head intrinsically. Alternative 4 is now the only option for the central Everglades that takes the leap of reconnecting the system from an ecological and hydrological standpoint. She fully recognizes that there are problems with Alternative 5 that was screened out within the last 48 hours but there were elements in that, if modeled, could be put into one of the other alternatives. She urged them to continue to be visionary.

Ms. Jacobson welcomed Mr. Jay Geldermann who was sitting in for Justice and Ms. Gail Mitchell who was sitting in for EPA.

Invasive Exotics Update

Ms. Estenoz noted that those working on the Everglades know there are challenges big and small and over the last year and a half they have been tackling very big problems such as water quality and central Everglades. As the agencies look to plan ahead invasive exotics continue to rise to the top of the list. Dealing with invasive exotics is part of the Task Force's strategic goals. Scope of the problem is compelling and Everglades non-native species include 77 category 1 plants that the most invasive, 34 invertebrates, 12 mammals, 4 amphibians, 43 reptiles, 11 birds and 20 fishes. When the WG came to the TF in 2010 they had 50 category 1 invasive plants and 8 reptiles. The reptile statistic is particularly compelling since there are only 16 lizards that are native to the region. Examples were provided of various species such as Brazilian Pepper, Lygodium, Argentine Black and White Tegu, Oustalet's Chameleon, Burmese Python, Nile Monitor and fresh and saltwater fish all of which have the potential to impact Everglades restoration efforts.

The Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ECISMA) has done a tremendous amount of work with little resources such as fish roundups where anglers go out and log where species are captured. The invasion curve is helpful as an organizing principle to help think about this complex problem. The lowest costs are associated with catching the invasion really early and when the footprint is small. Prevention is the most cost effective way of combating the invasive exotics problem. As they go up the invasion curve they reach a point where eradication may not be feasible and it is really a matter of trying to control the spatial extent of the invasion. Strategic approaches include prevention and screening, early detection and rapid response and control. Recent ban on the importation of four constrictor species is an example of a tactic that falls under prevention and screening. The idea would be to think about each species fitting on the invasion curve and use that to help them think about how they allocate limited resources. This is not only an ecologically devastating problem but it is an expensive problem. Since 2002 over \$31.5 million has been obligated to initially treat and re-treat the infestation of four plant species in Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The cost per acre to treat *Melaleuca* in sawgrass marsh

at 5% infestation is \$61 per acre and the cost at 50% infestation is \$276 per acre. Costs increase significantly the farther out the invasion spreads. Restoration is about getting the water right but invasive exotics can impact performance measures. They need a comprehensive interagency coordinated approach that matches the coordinated approach they have for getting the water right. The Corps, SFWMD and restoration planners know that they have to think about invasive exotics in the early planning stages. It is a battle worth fighting to protect public investments in restoration. Invasive species can have broader economic impacts in the region and the problem will only get worse. Some species such as the Ambrosia Beetle and Lion Fish may change the ecosystem irrevocably. There are currently individual agency/government efforts, intergovernmental coordinated efforts and non-governmental efforts fighting the problem. There are a lot of people working on the problem but there may be opportunities to work together to make the efforts more effective and more efficient. In addition to ECISMA, there are six other Cooperative Invasive Management Areas and other groups that are coordinating their efforts on invasive exotics. Several plans exist that try to coordinate and prioritize invasive exotic efforts. Education and outreach tools such as the "I've Got It!" I-phone app has been developed. Examples of success stories include ECISMA receiving a \$25,000 grant from the Everglades Foundation to deal with the Sacred Ibis and the listing of four constrictors under the Lacey Act. Bottom line is that they are doing a lot with respect to invasive exotic species but there are ways to improve efforts and boost effectiveness because an Everglades landscape teeming with invasive exotic species is not a restored Everglades. In 2010 the WG made some recommendations to the Task Force that need to be updated. Staff recommendation to the Task Force is that it considers directing the OERI, WG and SCG to conduct a comprehensive review of current efforts to combat invasive exotics and, at the next regular meeting of the Task Force, present an updated set of recommendations for how to improve our efforts and boost our effectiveness.

Ms. Jacobson said it was sobering to realize that under their watch while they are making progress in other areas they are not making enough progress on exotic and invasive species and some of these species are increasing.

Mr. Erskine said the invasive exotic species problem is very significant and it is still early enough that they can detect a lot of these species and perform a rapid response and have input for the control and/or eradication of the species as opposed to just letting it to take over the system. He recognized Mr. Rory Feeney and Mr. Gintautas Zavadzkas, Miccosukee Tribe Wildlife Department members who received Department of the Interior commendations for their involvement with ECISMA. The Miccosukee Tribe has been a supporter of ECISMA and has helped coordinate events such as the Exotic Fishery Round Up and Collections. One organism, the Red Ambrosia Beetle that causes laurel wilt disease that is affecting the Bay Trees. All along US 41 they now see that 1 out of every 3rd or 4th tree is infected. There are an enormous amount of Bay Trees in the ecosystem and it is a very robust species. Taking the Bay tree out of the system will open up a niche and at this point it is unknown what will fill that niche. This is of grave concern to the Miccosukee Tribe since it is a culturally sensitive species that is used for medicinal purposes. As part of the Miccosukee Tribe's annual meeting held the prior day they discussed holding a separate meeting on this beetle. Discussions will include what will happen when Bay Trees are removed from the system and whether there are any resistant trees. Mr. Erskine said it was an excellent recommendation for the TF.

Ms. Jacobson asked if the Miccosukee Tribe wanted the TF to set up a separate working group on this beetle. Mr. Erskine said the WG and SCG could certainly gather as much information on the beetle for

early detection and rapid response as part of the recommendation. Ms. Jacobson clarified the recommendation will remain as is with the understanding that there will be an emphasis on the beetle. Ms. Estenoz added that when the WG and SCG comes back to the TF, they may include broad based policy recommendations and specific actions for specific species that pose the highest and greatest threat to the work they are doing and to the landscape. Ms. Meeker made a motion which was seconded. All voted in favor and none were opposed. Motion passed.

Leadership of the WG and SCG

Ms. Estenoz said they have not yet identified a state person to replace Mr. Greg Knecht as WG Chair and the WG has asked Mr. Barry Rosen to serve as interim Chair. She asked the TF to approve Mr. Rosen until they find a state chair. Ms. Meeker made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Munson. None were opposed and the motion passed. Ms. Estenoz said the second item was to ratify Ms. Susan Markley as Chair of the SCG adding that she has valiantly served as the interim SCG Chair for several years. Ms. Meeker made a motion which was seconded. None opposed and motion passed.

Restoration of the Western Everglades Natural System

Ms. Jacobson recognized Mr. Jim Shore, Task Force representative, who was in the audience.

Ms. Patty Power noted the Seminole Tribe filed a minority report on the Strategic Plan and Biennial Report. She clarified the Tribe does not want the momentum to stall and recognizes that partnerships are critical. The restoration goal for the lands around the Big Cypress Reservation is to rehydrate the natural system and to restore a healthy and diverse ecosystem which was the intention of the Critical Project but that has not been fulfilled. The environmental water supply needs are not being met on the Big Cypress Reservation. The \$60 million Big Cypress Reservation Critical Project is not performing according to its design standards because there is not enough surface and groundwater to supply it. The ecosystem is suffering because it is too dry for too much of the year. The Tribe has made great investments in its support for Everglades restoration including its work on the Big Cypress Reservation and has committed to \$30 million in cash and real estate for the critical project. On a per capita basis the critical project has cost each and every tribal member \$30,000. The critical project's features cover over 4,000 acres. There is no question that the Tribe will not clean up a mess they did not create. This is an enormous undertaking for the Tribe with benefits that will enable the Tribe to receive their full entitlement of water under their Water Compact. The water storage facilities would restore the hydroperiods and natural areas that were previously drained by the major canals built in the C&SF project.

The term "natural system" is defined in WRDA 2000 as including Big Cypress National Preserve and any Tribal lands that are designated and managed for conservation purposes, as approved by the Tribe. Federal water law that applies is the Winter's Doctrine where the Supreme Court held that when Congress creates an Indian reservation, the water necessary to fulfill the reservations' purposes is implicitly reserved. The Tribe litigated these rights in the late 1980s that resulted in the Seminole Tribe's Water Compact enacted into federal and state law in 1989 in exchange for its Winter's Doctrine claim and state reservation land, the Tribe secured prescribed water supply for human and agriculture consumptive uses. The Tribe wants to address the environmental needs on the Reservation, not the same water needs addressed under the Compact. Under the Winter's Doctrine there is a parallel set of rights that provide for the natural system. The Tribe has hunting and fishing rights on the Reservation, the northwest corner of WCA 3A, in the Big Cypress National Preserve and in the Addition Lands. The federal government

owes a trust responsibility to the Tribes and the reservation lands are lands reserved by the federal government to provide a land base for tribes to engage in economic development and self-determination. The Tribe manages these lands in compliance with federal law. Big Cypress Reservation is 52,000 acres in Hendry and Broward Counties and included on the reservation is a native area of about 14,000 acres that is used by the Tribe for cultural and medicinal purposes. That is one area that the Tribe is very concerned about how the water needs are addressed.

Mr. Steve Walker said the Big Cypress Reservation is suffering from the same problem as the rest of the Everglades. The upstream headwaters have been cut-off reducing the flow through the Reservation and construction of federal facilities and other facilities to drain the land has caused the water that does remain to flow out in an inappropriate way causing a loss of groundwater and surface water and endangering the natural ecosystems that are on the Reservation. They need to efficiently deliver enough clean water to sustain those environmental systems. The Big Cypress Reservation sits on the cusp of three different ecosystems with sawgrass prairie on the east, Big Cypress National Preserve to the south and the pine lands to the north and is a very unique piece of property. They don't get enough water most of the year and when they do get water it is filthy so it is a water quantity and water quality issue. Promises have been repeatedly made since the 1950s and never delivered. The Seminole Tribe has repeatedly requested, since before the RESTUDY, meaningful monitoring and modeling of the lands adjacent to the Big Cypress Reservation to allow full assessment of proposed project impacts and to consider needed projects. This request was never addressed. The Seminole Tribe supports Everglades restoration and does not want to see any part of it not restored. They applaud the fast tracking but the Tribe is concerned that they are missing an opportunity to address this as part of CEPP. They need data, information, modeling and science to help bring water back to this region from the most logical source, Lake Okeechobee. They need a credible plan to construct whatever infrastructure is necessary to bring the water to the Reservation. They also need a water reservation to restore their ecosystem. Reserve our water like you would reserve water for other CERP projects. They want to be sure that for future generations that water is there to support that ecosystem. They want this in the same time schedule as CEPP. They've had plans and promises before and they have waited almost 60 years and they are not waiting any longer. The Seminole Tribe is willing to continue to work with the TF because they believe in Everglades restoration but they must have action. They can't wait until 2024 to get results especially when they don't see any of the necessary ground work being done. The Tribe requests that the TF ask the WG to come up with a plan and a strategy to bring this issue to closure. Ms. Power added that there have been plans for decades and here they are in the same place. The Seminole Tribe would like to see this happen on the same schedule and with the same level of attention that CEPP is getting.

Mr. Erskine recognized that these issues are very close to the heart of the Miccosukee reservation and the Tribe has been looking for significant improvement for a long time. The L-28 Interceptor canal has brought hydrological modification to the central Everglades, in WCA 3, an area identified as outstanding Miccosukee waters. The combined effect of the hydrological modification and water quality nutrient in the canal, which often spikes above 100ppb, has completely enriched an area in those outstanding Miccosukee waters. The Miccosukee Tribe has been looking for solutions for this particular problem for a number of years. The time to talk about this is now so they can start to develop and implement a solution.

Ms. Meeker reminded everyone that CEPP is an increment and will not address all of the concerns. She offered to sit down and have some offline discussions and come back to the next TF meeting with a recommendation rather than direct the WG to take this on as a task. Steve Walker said they are happy to sit down with any and all agencies on this Task Force. The only game in town is CEPP and they would like to be on it.

Ms. Jacobson reminded everyone that the formal comment on the CEPP process is starting the following week. It is hard to direct the WG to come up with a solution because this has to be attached to some authorizing vehicle for implementation. The TF members all accept the importance of the northwestern portion. The TF cannot direct the Corps but they can help inform the process as they are trying. She suggested that they continue these offline meetings between the Seminole, Corps, Interior and SFWMD and any other TF members who wish to engage and make sure the matter is addressed robustly in the ongoing NEPA process. Ms. Power said they are not looking for the TF to tell the Corps what to do. They are coming to the TF to help them figure out how to address this issue. They are not saying to re-scope CEPP just to address this with the same urgency as CEPP. Ms. Jacobson stated the TF agrees this problem needs to be addressed and the question is the authority and vehicle to implement the project or suite of projects to address it. If they need a resolution, they could draft something. The Biennial Report could be a good place to include this issue. All of these things could be done to heighten awareness and acknowledge urgency of the issue. Ms. Estenoz said the question is whether it is the WG or a subset of the TF that should come together to tackle this issue. She suggested that there could be a commitment that a subset of the TF would come together and begin to wrestle with the specifics of this problem. Mr. Walker said they are flexible just looking to see something put together. Ms. Estenoz said they could have a statement from the TF that would encourage a subset of the TF members (SFMWD, Corps, EPA, DEP, others) to engage with the Tribe.

Ms. Jacobson encouraged the meeting take place sooner rather than later and have some very focused discussions on some statement that could be presented to the TF at the next meeting to be adopted as a resolution. The statement may also perhaps address a different authority other than CEPP to begin this process and then the WG may be able to help frame it out. Ms. Power said the TF should acknowledge this is an issue that needs to be addressed and they are willing to work through this.

Mr. Erskine said the TF could acknowledge there is an issue out there that needs to be addressed and a solution needs to be identified and that it would be appropriate to tee up that meeting. The quality and quantity problems, as the NAS pointed out are heavily intertwined. Ms. Meeker acknowledged on behalf of the SFWMD that this is a problem not being addressed under the current process and she would like to see a subset of the TF get together by the end of January and discuss possible opportunities. They can schedule first meeting by the end of January.

Ms. Mills not sure that they can play as valuable role on that piece of it but there could be a role for USDA and NRCS in terms of thinking more strategically, assuming they get a Farm Bill, targeting easement programs to protect the natural flows that are coming off the agricultural lands. Mr. Carlos Suarez said they could look at the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) as a tool to assist in the rehydration of the Big Cypress Reservation. USDA will have to do an evaluation to see if those lands qualify under the WRP.

Ms. Jacobson said it was an excellent suggestion and a reminder that not all roads to restoration run through CERP or CEPP and that there are a lot of authorities, programs and other alternatives.

COL Jackson said the Corps fully supports the way forward as a collaborative TF to take a look at this. Ms. Jacobson said it was the role of the TF to convene other meetings as necessary to facilitate discussion and Interior will schedule and host this meeting. Mr. Walker said the SFWMD and the Corps do not have all the pieces to the puzzle and they are better together. The Seminole Tribe wants to make sure their issues are addressed. Ms. Estenoz said that her office will begin the process to convene that meeting in Florida and invite the entire TF to attend.

Strategy and Biennial Report Approval

Ms. Estenoz presented the Strategy and Biennial Report for approval noting it has been approved by the WG members. The Seminole Tribe's minority view was also provided. Ms. Meeker recommended the cover letter acknowledge the inclusion of the minority report and the parallel process the TF will have to address the Seminole Tribe's issue. Ms. Estenoz said her office would draft the language for the cover letter to Congress and can provide the language to the members. Ms. Meeker made a motion which was seconded and the report was approved.

The June 2012 meeting minutes were also approved without objection.

Update on Northern Everglades

Ms. Charlie Pelizza, Project Leader for the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge, provided information on the conservation efforts that are occurring in the upper watershed of the Everglades ecosystem. In January 2011 they went to the public with an idea/concept for a new NWR north of Lake Okeechobee and south of the Kissimmee/St. Cloud area. They held multiple meetings, received many comments on the concept and to this day still continue to work with interested groups, agencies and organizations that are active in this landscape. They developed a proposal for a new national refuge and conservation area that total approx. 150,000 acres primarily in the Kissimmee River basin which is the project area for this proposal.

The Fish and Wildlife Service would like to enter into agreements with landowners in a conservation easement program for up to 100,000 acres of land. They also identified areas that are of extreme conservation concern and are looking for the opportunity to work with landowners interested in selling fee title for up to 50,000 acres. On January 18, 2012 Secretary Salazar established the 556th unit of the national wildlife refuge system with a 10 acre donation from The Nature Conservancy. Funding for this proposal would come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a dedicated funding source. There has been concern that they would be in competition with CERP and CEPP and that is not the case. The process typically takes about two years from the time of establishment to the time of acquisition funding to be provided but because this project was of such interest to Interior they were able to reprogram \$1.5 million in FY12. They are currently in the process of spending this on conservation easements on this landscape. They have requested \$3 million in the President's FY13 budget and anticipate the first official funding from the LWCF in FY14. There are no new dollars for facilities and staffing and they will have to reprogram within the FWS. Current efforts include establishing an office within the landscape, hiring staff and entering into a partnership with NRCS and FWC for WRP planning for 98,000 acres of conservation easements.

Mr. Lefty Durando noted his family has been involved in ranching and politics. The cattle business is not the way to get rich but it is a way of life that they want to pass on. They need to protect the resources, water and land. In the beginning he was not crazy about the idea but now that he understands what conservation easements are about and that it keeps him from selling to a developer, he loves the idea. He recognized Mr. David Houghton who helped them form the Northern Everglades Alliance with close to 900,000 acres worth of ranches and land. He also recognized Mr. Pelizza and thanked the FWS, Interior, DOD and USDA for trying to help them. He noted his concern that they have been at this for two years and it will be another two years before money exchanges hands. He gets offers about once a month from developers and he would like to see this happen soon before development comes back strong. He thanked everyone for their support in helping them keep their lifestyle and reminded them that the Northern Everglades Alliance will be there.

Ms. Jacobson agreed that the funding is the big issue. They have asked for the LWCF money but don't know if they are going to get it. There are other potential sources of money and are glad to see USDA playing an active role. This is a cornerstone for Interior and will be a model of a 21st century refuge that does allow ranches that have been in families for generations to continue and keep a working landscape. They are in this together and they have to make this work. Ms. Mills acknowledged Mr. Durando's leadership role in the ranching community to help save an important part of the state's culture and keep open lands open. They do get better water quality and healthier flows at a much cheaper rate when they make these types of investments.

General Public Comment

Ms. Dawn Shirreffs (Everglades Coalition) invited everyone to attend the Coalition Conference which starts on January 11, 2013 at the Biltmore in Coral Gables.

Mr. Manley Fuller (Florida Wildlife Federation) noted that Everglades restoration is an excellent natural example of climate adaptation. As they restore the natural system it will serve as a buffer for the built environment. Just like a restored coastal Louisiana is imp for the future of Louisiana so is Everglades restoration as they deal with issues such as rising sea levels and climate change. He said it was excellent working with the CEPP public meetings. They have participated in the public processes and in many respects their issues have been taken into consideration and in some cases incorporated. Of the alternatives shown, they are most supportive of Alternative 4 recognizing that Alternative 5 has a lot of great values. It is critical to move more clean water south and do it in a way that utilizes natural flow characteristics and enhance it wherever possible. The Everglades needs friends, the restoration is a long term process and requires support from all elements of society since they are all in it together. They are strong supporters of the bridging and think that the region faces great challenges from exotics such as Laurel Wilt. This region has more than its share of exotics problems with the constrictors and Nile Monitors. He urged all the agencies, when they develop the most effective plans(s) to manage or control these exotic species, to look at all the rules and regulations and make sure there are not some unnecessary impediments. The need to have adequate flexibility in the management plans to respond to invasive exotics. On behalf of his members he said they remain supportive.

Ms. Julie Hill Gabriel (Audubon of Florida) said it was a great meeting and thanked the presenters. As Mr. Murley said they have to remember they have one Everglades. She appreciates the fact that they do focus on different parts of the ecosystem because there is so many different things going on. She pointed

to the Northern Everglades presentation that shows how to do things through partnerships. She thanked Mr. Durando who has been a great spokesman. This project also shows how to use all available resources to make progress. They hope this helps to focus in on the water quality problems north of Lake Okeechobee and that they continue planning for the Florida Panther Wildlife Refuge expansion and Fisheating Creek. At the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary they have had their on invasive exotics problem and have had to invest a great deal of funds. She urged them to keep looking at this one Everglades view.

Assignments, Next Steps and Closing Comments

Ms. Jacobson thanked everyone, especially the presenters. At every one of these meetings she learns so much. The Task Force appreciates all the public participation and is happy the Corps is moving ahead. They are committed to working with the Seminoles and look for a full invasive species report at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:42PM.

Enclosures:

Briefing Binder

1. Administrative Items
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Draft Minutes, June 2012 meeting
2. Seven 50 Regional Prosperity Plan
3. National Research Council
 - a. Presentation
 - b. Report in Brief
4. Working Group Sponsored Workshops for CEPP
5. CEPP Presentation
6. Invasive Exotics Presentation
7. Leadership of the WG and SCG
8. Restoration of the Western Everglades Natural System
 - a. Minority View – The Western Basins
 - b. Presentation
9. Strategy and Biennial Report
 - a. Final Draft Report
10. Northern Everglades presentation