

Development of a Land Acquisition Plan---DRAFT *Task Team Directive*

BACKGROUND: Land acquisition is critical to South Florida ecosystem restoration efforts. Land is needed to preserve habitat for native plants and animals and to act as a buffer to existing natural areas. Land is also needed for water quality treatment areas, water storage reservoirs, and aquifer recharge areas that will help restore natural hydrology. Land acquisition efforts are often complemented by less-than-fee acquisition and other conservation programs that provide permanent and long-term easements such as provided in USDA's Wetland Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program.

Several planning efforts related to land acquisition have recently been accomplished. In December 1999, an ecosystem-wide acquisition map (the "Graham Map") was developed. In April 2000, The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report entitled, "South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: A Land Acquisition Plan Would Help Identify Lands That Need to Be Acquired." Subsequently, the Task Force strategy document, "Coordinating Success: Strategy for Restoration of the South Florida Ecosystem," was delivered to Congress. This strategy document provides information on numerous land acquisition projects undertaken for ecosystem restoration. The Land Acquisition Plan will build on the information in "Coordinating Success" and the "Graham Map," updating and adding information as necessary.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Task Team is to develop a strategy for land acquisition needed for ecosystem restoration projects which are either federally or jointly funded by federal and non-federal agencies. When completed, this plan and its appendices should provide a broad picture of all current land acquisition initiatives that contribute to the restoration.

MEMBERS:

John Outland (FDEP) – Co-Chair

Allyn Childress (OED)

Rick Smith (EOG) – Co-Chair

Rafaela Monchek (OED)

Elaine Hall (NPS)

Lou Hinds (Ding Darling NWR)

Joan Lawrence (SFWMD)

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Mike Ornella (USACE)

Eva Shea (SFWMD)

Wanda Caffee Simpson (SFWMD)

Rich Walesky (Palm Beach County)

Paul Warner (SFWMD)

Carl Woehlcke (SFWMD)

TBD (Broward County)

TBD (FWC)

TBD (Miami-Dade County)

TBD (Miccosukee Tribe)

TBD (Southwest Florida)

TBD (USFWS)

GUIDANCE:

1. The plan will focus on acquisition efforts for lands where there is a federal or joint interest, including:
 - a) an assessment of the lands with both joint state and federal interest needed to accomplish each of the goals of the restoration,
 - b) a description of the purpose for which the lands will be acquired and how they will be managed,
 - c) an estimate of the cost of these lands,
 - d) an estimate of when the lands will be needed for related restoration projects, and
 - e) the agencies responsible for acquiring the lands.
2. The plan will focus on those federal or joint requirements supportive of Goal 1 (surface water storage reservoirs and ASR facilities) and Goal 2 (habitat protection).
3. The plan will be limited to those lands that will be acquired with federal funds or as part of a federally cost shared project.
4. The plan will be updated to reflect changes and additions to the restoration initiative's land acquisition needs.
5. The plan will not infringe on existing missions, authorities or jurisdictions of the participating agencies.
6. The plan should include other related state, district, or local government land acquisition projects in an appendix as appropriate.

DELIVERABLES:

The team shall produce the following interim and final deliverables for review and approval of the Working Group:

1. First draft for Working Group review (Target completion date: May 2001)
2. Second draft for Working Group review (Target completion date: June 2001)
3. Public comment workshops (June – July 2001)
4. Final draft for Working Group approval (Target completion date: September 2001)
5. Final draft for Task Force approval (Target completion date: October 2001)

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. All team meetings will be open to the public, and if appropriate, time will be included in the agenda for public comment. Meetings will be advertised in accordance with the Pilot Public Affairs Procedures developed by the Working Group.
2. The representative from the OED will serve as the Public Affairs representative for the team and will be responsible for providing public notice of meetings, facilitating public comment, and providing a brief meeting summary for each meeting that is suitable for publication on the Task Force Web Site.
3. The OED will provide contract staff support, as needed, to assist the team in drafting and producing its proposed plan.