

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Codifying the understanding of federal, state, tribal and local agencies and governments for cooperating on scientific and technical endeavors in support of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.**

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1. **Purpose.** The purposes of this MOU document are:
  - a. to recognize that federal, state, and local agencies and tribal governments in south Florida have a mutual interest in achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), including the ecological restoration of the freshwater and estuarine wetlands that make up the greater Everglades ecosystem, as well as meeting the other water-related goals of the Plan;
  - b. to establish a process whereby the partnering agencies and governments can use all best available scientific information, cooperating and integrating their collective scientific and technical expertise and activities in support of the goals of CERP, and representing the perspectives of each agency regarding scientific and technical matters pertaining to CERP implementation;
  - c. to substantially improve the quality and quantity of scientific information available to the restoration planning and implementation teams, thereby strengthening the level of public trust in the ability of CERP to meet its objectives.
  
2. **RECOVER Coordination Meetings.** Interagency coordination pursuant to this agreement will take place at meetings of the Restoration Coordination and Verification (RECOVER) team. Objectives of these meetings include:
  - a. providing scientific and technical underpinnings for Everglades restoration throughout the period of implementation of CERP;
  - b. modeling and evaluating alternative plan designs, and to design and implement a system-wide monitoring and adaptive assessment program for measuring the performance of the plan relative to restoration performance measures;
  - c. reviewing the effects that other restoration projects have on the performance of CERP;
  - d. ensuring that an ecosystem-wide perspective is maintained throughout the restoration process;
  - e. maintaining and improving the definition of success, and the vision of the CERP; and
  - c. establishing long-term cooperation among the agencies that will maximize the benefits to CERP implementation and to the agencies through collaboration on scientific and modeling endeavors.
  
3. **Participants.** This MOU recognizes two categories of participation in the activities of RECOVER. The “sponsoring” agencies are the two lead agencies with the legal mandates to implement the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan on behalf of the federal and state governments, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District, respectively. The “participating” agencies are all other federal, state, tribal and local agencies and governments that agree to join this

partnership for coordination and cooperation on scientific and resource issues and tasks in support of the Comprehensive Plan. RECOVER also maintains liaison with the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group and the Science Coordination Team of the Working Group. In addition, meetings of the RECOVER team will be open to the public, and will be noticed in advance by posting the information on the CERP website or by publishing notice in an appropriate newspaper of general circulation, as appropriate.

**4. Organization.** In order to achieve its objectives, RECOVER is organized into inter-agency, technical teams and a coordinating leadership group. Descriptions of the RECOVER teams and leadership group, and of the responsibilities of each, are provided in the Master Program Management Plan for the Comprehensive Plan, and in the Program Management Plan for RECOVER.

a. *Technical Teams.* The activities of each of the technical teams are coordinated by tri-chairs. The tri-chairs of each team will include a representative of each of the two sponsoring agencies for the Comprehensive Plan (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District) and one representative from one of the participating agencies on RECOVER (federal, state, tribal or local). Tri-chairs representing the participating agencies will be appointed by the RECOVER Leadership Group, selected from candidates proposed by the participating agencies. Both federal and non-federal tri-chairs will be selected from among the participating agencies. Membership on the six technical teams of RECOVER will be made up of representatives of the sponsoring and participating federal, state, tribal and local resource agencies in south Florida. Agency members of RECOVER teams serve as partners in conducting all of the tasks of the teams. Members (tri-chairs and regular members) of RECOVER teams are expected to have appropriate scientific and technical expertise and experience in south Florida. Each RECOVER team will maintain a list of members and will keep all members informed of all team activities. Team meetings will generally occur no more often than monthly, while sub-team activities may occur more frequently.

b. *Leadership Group.* The managing body for the six technical teams is the RECOVER Leadership Group. Membership on the Leadership Group consists of the 18 tri-chairs for the six technical teams, plus one RECOVER Program Manager from each of the two sponsoring agencies (USACOE & SFWMD). The two program managers will chair the leadership group, and have the overall responsibility for coordinating the activities of RECOVER.

**5. Products.** On an annual basis, or as otherwise needed, RECOVER will produce documents with technical, scientific information that can be used by state and federal agencies as part of their decision-making procedures. The documents will include:

- a. system-wide monitoring and assessment plans;
- b. evaluation reports on the system-wide performance of each project-level plan;
- c. adaptive assessment reports on system-wide performance;
- d. evaluation, refinement and documentation reports for hydrological, water quality and ecological models;
- e. evaluation of alternative plan improvements;
- f. technical issue resolution reports;

- g. annual CERP report cards;
- h. RECOVER program management plans;
- i. conceptual ecological model reports; and
- j. restoration success white papers;

Production of these documents will require regular participation in team meetings and in periodic workshops. Team members will have the responsibility for coordinating agency reviews for all RECOVER draft reports. If unresolved scientific and technical issues are identified by the teams, the unresolved issues will be explained in the appropriate technical documents. More detailed descriptions of the RECOVER team tasks and the products from each are provided in the CERP Master Program Management Plan and in the RECOVER Program Management Plan.

**6. Sponsoring Agency Contributions.** In addition to providing appropriate staff as participants in the RECOVER meetings, the sponsoring agencies will provide, as appropriate:

- a. logistical and meeting management support;
- b. support for creating and publishing technical reports and documents; and
- c. other support and coordination needed for RECOVER's efforts.

**7. Participating Agency Contributions.** Each agency participating in RECOVER's efforts will determine its full level of participation on the RECOVER teams, and will determine the specific technical staff and other contributions that it will make in support of RECOVER, consistent with the needs of each team, the areas of expertise represented within each agency, and the availability of staff in the agencies. Team members will be expected to participate in all meetings and activities of the team(s) and to aid in communication between RECOVER and the member's agency or tribal government.

**8 Funding.** Each agency will fund its own participation in RECOVER except where existing or new inter-agency agreements identify other funding arrangements. This RECOVER partnership agreement does not identify sources of funding or propose inter-agency agreements for funding in support of RECOVER.

**9. Limitations.** Understanding the role of the RECOVER team also requires an understanding of its limitations. RECOVER is a science and technology team composed of agency staff and other interested group representatives, but RECOVER is not a policy or management team. The scientific and technical evaluations and assessments from RECOVER are developed by multi-disciplinary, inter-agency teams, and are not intended to represent the views of any single agency. The long-term goal for RECOVER is that it will serve as a principal body for coordinating and organizing technical information and inter-agency science in support of south Florida restoration programs. All policy decisions will be made independently by the sponsoring agencies and other RECOVER participants in accordance with their own decision-making requirements. No votes will be taken by the RECOVER participants or sponsors. Finally, nothing in this agreement

in any way alters or interferes with the existing legal responsibilities of the participants in RECOVER pursuant to applicable state or federal law.

**10. Effective Date.** This Memorandum of Understanding shall take effect once it is signed by each of the sponsoring agencies, and shall remain indefinitely open for signature by participating agencies and tribal governments.

SPONSORING AGENCIES:

South Florida Water Management District

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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A SEPARATE PAGE FOR "PARTICIPATING" AGENCIES??