

**The Museum of Discovery and Science and the
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Collaboration Committee**

OUTREACH PLAN FOR GREATER EVERGLADES ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

PHASE I PROGRESS REPORT – SEPTEMBER, 2002

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The primary intent of Phase I was to begin the implementation of the public-private partnership between the Task Force and the Museum of Discovery and Science. The Museum was a natural partner for the Task Force to provide public outreach. The Museum has a 25-year record of success in educating its half million visitors (including urban, minority and underserved communities throughout South Florida) through on site and outreach programs and exhibits about Florida's unique environment. Specific Phase I tasks updated the Museum's existing environmental education efforts and build the foundation for implementing Phases II and III of the Outreach Plan. These projects represent a range of programmatic offerings that could be started immediately and accomplished within existing budgets while establishing the foundation for future activities of the partnership.

PHASE I ACTIVITIES

Projects

- Retrofit displays and exhibits
 - *Living in the Everglades*, a series of new kiosks and interactive exhibit modules on the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration, will open at the Museum in September 2002. Conceived by the Museum Collaboration Committee (MCC) using existing agency documents, the Museum based the design and fabrication of the exhibit on the MCC proposal.
- Museum-based education
 - The Museum implemented twice daily animal encounters focusing on animals that live in the Greater Everglades Ecosystem.
 - The Museum created and implemented *Bad Boys of the Everglades* – an educational skit (with handouts) that focuses on invasive plants and the problems they are causing in Florida's ecosystems.
 - The Museum created and implemented *Dr Roots Discovery Lab* – an educational program/experience that focuses on plants and the crucial role they play in Florida's ecosystems.
 - The Museum developed two guided tours of the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit: one focused on water and one focused on plants. Tours were delivered to school and scout groups as well as the general public.
- Outdoor exhibitry
 - Existing greenspace adjacent to the kiosk is being redesigned and developed into an exhibit area. Improvements include interpretive signage, enhanced plantings and creation of a pathway. This project is slated to be completed in September 2002.

- The Museum worked with Cross Creek High School (a K-12 center for the Severely Emotionally Disturbed) to create 84 themed mosaic stepping stones depicting Florida's flora and fauna which will be part of the outdoor exhibit area.
- School-based education
 - The Museum, in partnership with three local public middle schools, developed *The Florida Water Story* curriculum consisting of nine weeks of integrated lessons that use water as a unifying theme. It was piloted, revised and tested with more than 1,500 students and 65 teachers over two years.
- Electronic outreach
 - *Expedition Everglades* (a microsite focused on the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration) has been added to the Museum website (www.mods.org).
 - *Florida Water Story* website (www.flh2o.com) is operational. It includes links relevant to the restoration of the Everglades as well as career development interviews with staff from a variety of Working Group agencies and other agencies/organizations.
- Logo
 - The Museum Collaboration Committee worked with a graphic design firm to create a logo for the partnership.
- Information dissemination
 - The Museum has solicited pamphlets, flyers, and other public education/information from the partners and has disseminated all materials received.
- South Florida Restoration Science Forum
 - This activity was deferred to Phase II as the Science Coordination Team rescheduled the Forum until at least 2004.
- "Fun" childrens' educational piece
 - This activity was deferred to Phase II so that its content and design can complement the Living in the Everglades exhibit, Outdoor Exhibitory or Phase II programming.

Funding

- Approximately \$121,000 was raised for retrofit of displays and exhibits, outdoor exhibitry and public outreach related to the Science Forums: Funding provided by members of the partnership (\$76,500) was nearly doubled through related grants to the Museum (\$66,367).
- Secured in-kind contributions for information dissemination, electronic outreach, school and Museum based education initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

Phases II and III of the Outreach Plan approved by the Working Group and the Museum's Board of Trustees will take the partnership to the next logical level on a variety of fronts. During phases two and three, the reach and impact of the partnership will be extended by building upon both the activities undertaken in Phase I and by working with the Museum as it utilizes grants received to revitalize and enhance its facility. Phase II activities include developing and delivering new programmatic offerings, serving as a community resource and providing new and/or improved interpretive exhibits. Phase III has the potential to utilize the Museum's 4.4 million dollar PECO grant and matching funds to build the Florida Environmental Education Center. All of these activities will allow the Museum to provide useful and engaging public information about the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and its Restoration to its nearly 400,000 annual visitors and through its outreach to urban, minority and underserved communities throughout South Florida.