

Approved Meeting Minutes
Joint Meeting of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group
and Science Coordination Group
Dania, Florida
October 21, 2008

Welcome and Introductions

Dan Kimball called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM and recognized Ms. Lynn Scarlett Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior. Ronnie Best reported that a group from California will be in south Florida in November to discuss carbon farming and anyone interested in participating should contact him.

	Joint Mtg	Regular Mtg	
	Oct 21	Oct 22	Alternates
Working Group (WG) Members			
Dan Kimball - Chair - NPS - ENP & Dry Tortugas	√	√	
Greg Knecht - Vice Chair - FL Dept of Environmental Protection	√	√	
Ken Ammon - South Florida Water Management District	-	-	Joni Warner
Stu Appelbaum - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	-	√	Garth Redfield
Billy Causey - NOAA, FL Keys Nat'l Marine Sanctuary	-	-	Kim Taplin
Sheri Coven - Department of Community Affairs	-	-	
Bob Crim - FL Dept. of Transportation	-	-	
Wayne Daltry - Southwest FL Regional Planning Council	√	-	
Gene Duncan - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	√	√	Joette Lorion
Joe Frank - Bureau of Indian Affairs	√	√	
Roman Gastesi - Local Government	-	-	
George Hadley - U.S. Dept of Transportation	-	-	
Veronica Harrell - James - U.S. Attorney's Office	√	√	
Eric Hughes - Environmental Protection Agency	-	-	
Bonnie Ponwith - NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	-	
Barry Rosen - United States Geological Survey	-	-	
W. Ray Scott - FL Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services	-	-	
Paul Souza - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	√	
Jon Steverson - Office of the Governor of Florida	-	-	
Craig Tepper - Seminole Tribe of Florida	-	√	
Kenneth Todd - Palm Beach County Water Resources Manager	-	-	
Joe Walsh - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	√	√	
Vacant - Broward County Department of Natural Resource Protection	-	-	
Ed Wright - U.S. Department of Agriculture	√	√	
Greg May - Special Advisor	√	√	
Science Coordination Group (SCG) Members			
Ken Haddad - Chair - Science Coordination Group	-	NA	
Rock Salt - Vice Chair - Department of Interior	√	NA	
Calvin Arnold - U.S. Department of Agriculture	-	NA	
John Baldwin - Florida Atlantic University	√	NA	
Ronnie Best - United States Geological Survey	√	NA	
Joan Browder - NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	NA	
Todd Hopkins - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	NA	
Bob Johnson - Everglades National Park	√	NA	
Christopher Kelble - NOAA, AOML	-	NA	Libby Johns
Chad Kennedy - FL Dept of Environmental Protection	√	NA	
Cherise Maples - Seminole Tribe of Florida	√	NA	
Susan Markley - Department of Environmental Resource Management	√	NA	
Bill Reck - U.S. Department of Agriculture	-	NA	
Garth Redfield - South Florida Water Management District	-	NA	Susan Gray
Terry Rice - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	√	NA	
Debra Shafer - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	-	NA	

Follow-up from Task Force Meeting

Greg May noted the positive feedback from members concerning the joint Working Group (WG) and Science Coordination Group (SCG) meetings that have been held since April along with the improved interaction with the Task Force. He reviewed the results of the September Task Force meeting and reported the approval of the 2008 Strategy and Biennial Report. He noted the dissent of the Miccosukee Tribe concerning these two reports and the submission of their minority report. He reported the unanimous approval of the 2008 Plan for Coordination Science (PCS) and acceptance of the annual Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS). He said their recommendations to streamline the Project Implementation Report (PIR) process were well received and that the Task Force asked for even more details to include a case study to be provided at the December meeting. He also said that the Task Force was pleased with the format for the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS). He noted that the IDS had a few outstanding issues related to the River of Grass initiative and the IDS will be updated as significant new information becomes available.

The Task Force also discussed the importance of having forums to synthesize science and having the necessary tools to help integrate that science synthesis into management decisions. Rock Salt noted the SCG hosted a Science Workshop the week after the Task Force meeting to discuss the IDS project sequencing and to identify consensus on those highest priority areas of ecological concern. They used the Conceptual Ecological Models (CEMs) as an organizing approach to try and identify those areas. There were some good discussions about what is happening with Florida Bay and then the discussion became more global. The first key point was that the whole landscape - from Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries to the Central and Southern Everglades, and out to Florida Bay - is an area of concern; and by solving that issue, one resolves the issues along the coast. The second key point is that the problems are very serious and there was consensus that the projects that can contribute to the restoration of this part of the system from the lake down needed to be achieved at a quicker pace. Chad Kennedy added the scientists were uncomfortable in selecting one region over another. Todd Hopkins added the scientists are not willing to trade one part of the system for another. Ronnie Best said it was a grueling exercise but they were able to come to closure at the end of the second day. The plan is the entire system and they need to start where they can make the biggest difference. Susan Gray noted that there is a hunger for the scientists to hear from the policy makers and she would like to see more of these workshops on a regular basis. Greg May noted that the workshop was a new forum hosted by the SCG but in cooperation with RECOVER and that 52 agency, university and NGO scientists participated. He said the next Task Force meeting will be in December and the agenda will include more detailed information on the PIR streamlining process and possible refinements to the IDS. Joette Lorion asked how they could streamline the PIR process when they have no idea which projects will be abandoned in light of the U.S. Sugar deal. Greg May said that the uncertainty was related to the IDS and not to the PIR streamlining recommendations. Susan Markley reported the Florida Bay and Adjacent Marine Communities Science Conference begins the evening of December 8th and could conflict with the December meeting. Greg May acknowledged that unfortunately there were several conflicts with other meetings in the first two weeks in December and he said they would work to minimize those conflicts.

Apple Snail Demography

Phil Darby provided a presentation (Encl. 2) noting he has been studying snails for about 12 to 13 years. They have found that there are many parallels between the needs of Apple Snails and Snail Kites that reside in the greater Everglades ecosystem. If the system cannot support Apple Snails then the Snail Kites have nowhere to go. The Snail Kite eats only Apple Snails and requires wetlands with a particular range of hydrologic conditions and structure in their habitat for foraging and nesting. It is important to address Apple Snail concerns in order to address concerns

associated with the Snail Kite. Snail Kites have been monitored since they were listed in the early 70s and the kites were doing okay in the late 80s and early 90s. Unfortunately, it has been downhill since then. Back in the 70s and 80s it was thought that all drydowns were bad for Apple Snails but in the mid 90s they concluded that snails could adapt to drying events. He reviewed the shift in water stages in WCA 3A and noted that because it was too wet for the Apple Snails the Snail Kites started leaving. They have found that the needs for Apple Snails are similar to the needs of Snail Kites, however, Snail Kites like it wetter than the snails. Apple snails live in a wide range of aquatic habitats and many of the wetlands do dry out periodically which makes emergent vegetation critical for their habitat needs. Apple snails do climb above the water line and deposit the egg masses so if they lose the emergent vegetation then they lose the opportunity to reproduce. Not all habitats support snails equally and they see a consistent pattern of snails preferring prairie habitat.

Phil Darby noted they are promoting the idea of a 'Dynamic Landscape Hypothesis' to talk about the need for periodic drying events. They recognize that wherever Snail Kites are foraging they are going to have habitats in varying conditions of suitability for the Apple Snails. If they need periodic drying events to promote the prairie habitat they need to determine how long the events should be and when they should occur. Snails move anywhere from 30 to 60 meters per week and the adults do well in dry conditions. He reported that studies have shown that in the last 20 years it has not been necessarily too dry for Apple Snails. Eighty percent of the total eggs produced in any wetland were produced in April, May and June and that is a critical time of year for recruitment. This coincides with the mid to late dry season and reproduction is favorable during dry season. Any given female has one chance to reproduce since they have a one year lifespan. The size of the snail affects survival and how fast snails can grow will determine whether they will survive a drying event. Studies have found that they do survive drying events so dry down timing is critical. He stressed that all drying events will impact Apple Snails but it is the degree and duration of the timing that will determine the impact.

Water depths are just as important as water stage and just because water levels are receding does not mean it is a favorable condition for Apple Snail reproduction. Water levels are being held high in WCA 3A and then the plug is pulled in anticipation of hurricane season and they are in effect forcing egg cluster production during the unfavorable wet season. It is better to let the water recede throughout the dry season, although it will increase the risk of a drying event, which is a better risk than wiping out recruitment. To support foraging they need an Apple Snail density of .14 and .15 as a minimum adding that the number could be different for nesting. Snail Kites are doing well in Lake Toho but most of the areas designated critical Snail Kite habitats are out of production. What is needed for Snail Kites is different than what is needed for Apple Snails. He advocated Apple Snail monitoring noting that more information would be helpful. The range of the Apple Snail is the greater Everglades ecosystem and they are a product of their environment. If it is too wet or too dry then the snails will be in trouble. The current research program on Apple Snails has been working in parallel with the program on Snail Kites and Wiley Kitchens has had similar findings for the Snail Kites.

Chad Kennedy asked whether nutrients have an impact on reproduction. Phil Darby replied that extremely high nitrate levels do not have an impact and few water quality studies have been done. Paul Souza said he was excited that Phil and Wiley are integrating data. He noted the data for both Apple Snails and Snail Kites are very telling about the health of the ecosystem and they should think about including both of these in their performance measures. He asked about the recovery rate when they have a long dry or wet event and whether there are things they can do to expedite the recovery time. Phil Darby replied that it depends on whether you are starting with high snail densities or not. In low densities the snails are not finding each other for reproduction

and they are having little recruitment. Based on data where Snail Kites have come back to areas that have been dry, with the right conditions, recovery seems to take about 2 to 3 years.

Rock Salt asked whether it is as simple as impounded versus natural water levels and asked if it would be good if the hydrology were to go back to a natural hydrology. Phil Darby said there is no base population in the northern end to expand from and the population will have to expand from the southern end. The best way to get the Snail Kites back in WCA 3A is to get the conditions right in southern WCA 3A knowing that it will still be too dry in the north. Rock Salt asked if the problems north of the Lake are due to something unnatural. Phil Darby said that part of the problem is that they are managing individual lakes and conservation areas as separate units. The fact that WCA 3A is high and Lake Okeechobee is low is not even close to being natural hydrological conditions. Susan Markley said that the transitional parts of the system have been impacted the most and that has impacted the overall resiliency of the system and they need to build in some more transitional zones to have resiliency at a larger scale. Gene Duncan asked what percentage of the Apple Snails were lost in 2003 in southern WCA 3A. Phil Darby said they lost about 80%. He noted he spent 40 – 50 hours the prior week in WCA 3A and all the tree islands were completely inundated. He also reported he only saw two snail clusters the entire week.

Population Ecology and Conservation of the Snail Kite Update

Wiley Kitchens thanked the group for the opportunity to provide the Snail Kite presentation (Encl. 3) noting the situation is now dire. He recognized the students who have worked with him over the years and thanked Phil Darby for his presentation. The Snail Kites will not survive into restoration without some sort of triage. The Snail Kite range is the entire south Florida ecosystem and there is a sub species of the same population in Cuba. They have been banding the Snail Kite for over thirty years and have found that although they are capable of making the flight to Cuba, not one banded bird has been reported there. The Snail Kite was one of the first endangered species and was put on the list in 1967. Snail Kites are a completely wetland dependent species and a food specialist with its exclusive diet being the Apple Snail. He reviewed the foraging and nesting habitat for the Snail Kite. The project started with reproductive studies and has expanded to include juvenile movement, survival and recruitment. The population was doing quite well back in the mid to late 90s and there were approximately 3400 – 3500 birds. The bad news is that this data misleads people to assume the Snail Kite was doing so well that it could be de-listed. Lake Okeechobee used to represent a hub that the kites were using and the conditions were suitable enough for the birds to find opportunities to bring off broods.

Movement studies have been refined over time and the movement patterns are not nearly as dynamic as they had once thought. They see a lot of movement within specific units of habitats and little movement outside to other areas. Adult survival is constant through time except for the period from 2000 – 2001 when there was an onset of a major drought and the survival rate dropped 16 percentage points. The population dropped from approximately 3400 to 1400 birds. The population today stands at 685 birds down from 3400 birds in 1999. During the drought there was some movement occurring with birds that had originated from Lake Okeechobee and they were able to subsist by moving back to the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. They found that the survival of adult birds generated from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes were unaffected by the drought, however, the birds from WCA 3A experienced a 16 point drop in survival. They have been trying to tease out the factors responsible for the population decline and contributing to the lack of recovery since that decline. He noted it is an enormous challenge and showed some modeling attempts that give them a fairly good idea of what is going on. It is the culmination of events that were taking place during this time that changed the carrying capacity of those wetlands and the drought precipitated the events that followed. In WCA 3A they have found that

three out of five years produced no Snail Kites. All of the production is now occurring in Lake Toho and the population is in a decline. Extinction is projected in the next 40 years or so and the Snail Kite may not be around to enjoy DECOMP. WCA 3A is just one key and provides the highest production with greater nest success and number of young per nests. It is the largest extent of connected suitable habitat. Wiley provided an in depth review of the three hypotheses explaining the decline of the Snail Kite which include long term habitat degradation, increase in frequency of drying events, and both effects being at play.

Bob Johnson asked when the population information began noting there were much drier conditions back in 1978. Wiley replied they do not have the data from that time and the stuff they do have is very anecdotal. They know there were birds there but they do not have the numbers. Paul Souza said one of the key messages is that Everglades restoration is important but they can't wait 20 years and they need to move the timetable up to reap the benefits quickly. The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes is where reproduction is now occurring and they need to be vigilant that that continues. Paul asked if there are specific actions that they need to take now. Wiley replied that short of raining snails he was not sure and added that until they have restored the system and have the mosaic of habitat conditions that were part of the natural system then the Snail Kites will continue to be in trouble.

Susan Gray said there was a significant shift downward in WCA 3A in 1999 which is when Hurricane Irene hit but added that it is a culmination of wet and dry and asked that they look at what happened during that time period since the data is shocking. Wayne Daltry asked about the Snail Kites in the Corkscrew Lake Trafford area noting there is now nothing there. Wiley said the birds go there but they are not nesting there adding that they cannot manage for adult survival but they can manage for nesting success.

Terry Rice reminded everyone that the deviations for the Sparrow started in 1998 and which led to higher water levels in WCA 3A and the drawdown in Zone E during the dry season. Bob Johnson noted the survival rate for the young population is all over the place and asked what could have happened in 1999 to cause it to drop way down. Wiley said they are not sure what could have happened to 'drop the bottom out'.

Rock Salt pointed to the hydrograph of WCA 3A reminding everyone that that was when the District and the Corps went to the rain driven operation which was quickly followed by the drought in the early 90s and then the rains followed. He said he was not sure if it was the Sparrow rule or if it was some discretionary change in 1992. He asked if there was discretion that would allow them within the existing regulation schedule to try and achieve some of the results that Wiley has laid out. Wiley said the population has lost its resilience to that kind of variability that used to occur and part of that is habitat degradation due to the cumulative effects over time. They can look at what is contributing to the decline but he has no other answer.

Paul Souza reported they had a fire this year in Sparrow habitat and they looked at the water coming out of the S-12D structure and the rainfall operations had 40 – 60 cfs. So as they start to think about this complex issue and the use of flexibility, to the extent they can use rates of recession in September and use the flexibility they have within the existing regulation schedule they could be positioning themselves to have Apple Snail and Snail Kite nesting success. They are clearly facing high water levels in WCA 3A and suggested there could be a host of flexibilities that could be brought to bear. Wiley agreed they need to be adaptive adding it could be positive in the short term.

Public Comment

Joette Lorion (Miccosukee Tribe) stated the Miccosukee Tribe said ten years ago that the Sparrow Water Management Plan would harm the Snail Kite in the Everglades and no one listened. The S-12 gates were closed, the water backed up and the tribal Everglades are being destroyed. Sparrow sub population A has not flourished but has declined. Meanwhile the Snail Kite population has gone from 3500 to 700 birds and its habitat is totally degraded. The FWS decided in their Biological Opinion that it was okay to degrade 184,320 acres of Snail Kite critical habitat in Indian lands and that is not acceptable to the Miccosukee Tribe. The Miccosukee way of life is also being destroyed and the tree islands are covered with water. They are not moving towards restoration but away from restoration. She pointed to the Corps' IOP EIS that states stages in WCA-3A exceeded 10 ½ feet in the last 10 of the past 13 years under the Sparrow Management Plan yet before that it only exceeded it four times in the forty year period of record. She provided everyone with an article from the Palm Beach Post (Encl. 4) on the Snail Kite along with an e-mail from Jon Moulding to Dan Nehler when there was a similar situation with the water levels being too high. She urged the Corps and the FWS to re-initiate consultation and find a new operational plan that takes care of both the Sparrow and the Snail Kite.

Dave Halleck said he was confused about the hypothesis and recommendations relative to the data. What contributed most to the survival of the population is the fertility of the adults and up until the late 90s you had the highest young fledged ever in an 18 year period of record. The years prior to the late 90s were some of the wettest years on record and yet the Snail Kites fledged the highest number of young. Wiley Kitchens said they need to look at juvenile survival rather than the number of birds fledged and survival not reproduction is driving the growth rate. Phil Darby said that no data exists for snail production prior to 2001 in WCA 3A and they need to look at what the high water conditions were during different parts of the year.

The Science Management Connection

Matt Harwell noted he was representing RECOVER and provided a presentation (Encl. 5) reviewing some of the work being done focusing on science at the system-wide level, which could be applied towards making management decisions. The effective use of science is focusing on the content and quality of the science as well as looking at how it is generated, evaluated and applied. He provided an overview of the Monitoring and Assessment Plan (MAP) which is the vehicle RECOVER uses for system-wide science monitoring. The purpose of the MAP is to document restoration induced change and the status of the system, to confirm scientific information and to work towards informed decision-making. He provided an in depth review of Oysters in the Northern Estuaries as an example of utilizing Adaptive Management entry points to identify trade-offs and risks. They are trying to be strategic and apply the lessons learned throughout the process rather than at the end of the day. Lessons learned will be invaluable for refinement of the Conceptual Ecological Models and prioritization efforts among other things. System-wide science is a means of reducing risk and uncertainty. The key take home message is to focus on linkages between science and the CERP Adaptive Management (AM) program and focus on system-wide science that is directly related to management purposes. If they are not doing it to meet management's needs then they are not helping themselves maintain their science interests or managers. Translating simple scientific monitoring into a management decision framework so managers can identify the entry points is also key.

Dan Kimball said he hoped they could continue to use the WG and SCG to highlight some of the work of RECOVER. Greg May noted the managers have also said this decision support matrix is very effective in helping them design projects and asked how many matrices had been developed. It was noted that some of the science is not there yet and one Adaptive Management Plan was

approved for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands, however, it was noted that not every project needs need an Adaptive management Plan.

Rock Salt asked how ready RECOVER is ready to do this Adaptive Management sort of review. Matt Harwell said the revisions to the System Operating Manual are just starting but they do not have all the pieces needed. Agnes McLean said they will start writing the Project Management Plan (PMP) for the System Operating Manual Version 2 in March 2009. Greg May asked if RECOVER is considering how the Integrated Delivery Schedule would fit into this. Matt Harwell noted the IDS is still evolving and it would be difficult to determine that until the IDS has been nailed down and also added that they have not been charged with that task.

Wayne Daltry pointed to this month's Urban Land Magazine and the article 'At the Edge of the Everglades' written by Kameran Onley noting it was a good write-up. He also announced that the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan is out and public comment ends October 31st.

Dan Kimball thanked Lynn Scarlett for observing the WG and SCG in action. Lynn Scarlett said she has paid a great deal of personal attention to Everglades restoration issues adding that she enjoyed the Snail Kite presentation saying it has reaffirmed in her mind the concept of 'dynamism' and 'complexity' which suggest that simple solutions and static solutions are ill fitted to the problems at hand. She appreciated the Adaptive Management presentation and noted that in Washington a set of projects is nested within a much larger set of policy considerations in which one is trying to determine how to utilize scarce resources while faced with value trade-offs. She questioned how the same kind of science, at the policy level, could help reduce risks and uncertainties and find ways to soften the trade-offs by being informed of the science. She appreciated all the work being done here and thanked everyone striving to translate this into a reality.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.

*Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group
Dania, Florida
October 22, 2008*

Welcome and Administrative Items

Dan Kimball called meeting to order at 8:35 AM. The July and August meeting minutes (Encl. 6 and 7) were presented and approved without objection.

Whiparound

Gene Duncan reported he spent the entire week out in the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and it was disturbing to see tree islands completely under water for the past two months. The trees need air to hold the islands in place and they are losing tree islands at an alarming rate. Fish are breeding on the tops of the islands and he saw very little ground for mammals which are the food base for the raptors. There are not many raptor birds such as owls and those that are there are now preying on other birds. He pleaded with the group to get the water off the WCAs noting it is two feet too high. Stu Appelbaum said they are working on a number of things to work on in the short term to alleviate the conditions which are getting dire out there.

Joe Walsh added that staff from his office have reported the same thing and suggested they think about using those structures currently not in use even if on a temporary basis. The FWC will be organizing consulting teams at the regional levels and Ted Hain will help coordinate the teams. The FWC issued a resolution in support of Amendment 4 to the Florida Constitution and if adopted would go into effect in the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year. It will provide a property tax exemption for any lands that are currently or eventually go into a perpetual easement and it will also be provided for a conservation tax assessment that operates similar to a farm tax assessment.

Veronica Harrell-James reported they are getting close to the end of the trials for the East Everglades. Her office is beginning to handle the 8.5 Square mile area cases. Joe Frank said he enjoyed the presentations the prior day and reported that eastern Hendry County is experiencing a lot more foraging by the Snail Kites on private property and many farmers and ranchers have installed water retention ponds which are being utilized. Ed Wright reported they are currently in the rulemaking process for the Farm Bill and he offered to provide a presentation to the Working Group once they have the final rule. He extended an invitation to the members to attend the State Technical Committee meeting in Gainesville, FL on November 10 noting this is the meeting where they take information from organizations who want to help them set the course for the year and the meeting is open to the public.

Craig Tepper reported they are in the start up phase for one of their restoration projects with the Corps. He reported he is seeing larger mammals and wildlife on the western side of the WCAs and even while driving down the road and urged them to be more flexible with the regulation schedule. Paul Souza said the high water levels in the WCAs are a major concern and they are trying to address it. The FWS will be finalizing the Florida Panther Recovery Plan which marks the culmination of 10 years worth of work. They are working closely with the state, Big Cypress National Preserve and Collier County to finalize a Crossing MOA for panthers noting they are seeing more panthers being killed on the roads. Garth Redfield said they had a good meeting on water quality monitoring re-engineering and thanked all the participants for their input. They will be posting documents on their website and anyone interested can contact him to be added to the distribution list.

Greg Knecht said DEP is starting to put together legislative proposals for the next session particularly the budget. They need to figure out a way to do things cheaper and need to look at

things differently than they have in the past. Dan Kimball said that one of the things the Park can do in the short term to deal with elevated water conditions in WCA 3A will be to gap part of the old Tamiami Trail. They are hopeful it will provide from 100 to 300 cfs in additional flow across the trail into the Park. He reported that Dave Halleck has provided preliminary numbers on the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow in ENP and the population is 3,056 for 2008 down from 3,184 in 2007. Sub population A went up from 4 to 7 birds and sub population E went from 35 to 23 birds. They are investigating the cause for this decline noting the Mustang Corner fire could be part of the reason. He said that with climate change he receives many questions on whether Everglades restoration is still worth doing since most of the park is less than three feet in elevation. He encouraged everyone to take a look at the NAS' report which does a good job of addressing the issues in terms of sea level rise, changes in temperature and large storm events and the bottom line is that restoration is more important than ever.

Consultation Workshop

Melaleuca Eradication Informational Update

Shauna Allen provided a presentation (Encl. 8) reviewing the recommended plan, which is to construct a mass rearing lab as an annex to the existing Quarantine Facility in Davie and to implement the Adaptive Management Strategy with variable bio-control production and release. This means they will utilize two different release intensities.

This project was in the Yellow Book and the total initial cost is \$1,300,000 with an annual costs of \$76,000. They are attempting to maximize impacts in the most efficient and cost effective time frames. While the study area includes all of south Florida they are only looking at lands subject to invasion such as conservation areas and publicly owned lands that are not developed as well as the Kissimmee River Watershed. This project will work in concert with existing Integrated Pest Management Strategies currently employed by a host of public and private landowners. She provided an in-depth review of the alternatives which were evaluated.

John Morgan Jr. reviewed the recommended plan noting the first part is the rearing annex which is key for the needed mass production. The focus is on four plants (Melaleuca, Australian Pine, Lygodium and Brazilian Pepper). The draft PIR/EA will be released in November/December with the final PIR to be completed by July 2009. The total estimated project cost is \$14 million project, which is within the 902 limits. Construction of the annex will begin in 2011 and they envision producing two bugs per year. They have set up an Adaptive Management approach to review where they are at least once a year and hope to have complete saturation in 8 – 13 years.

Joe Walsh asked how closely they are coordinating with SW Florida and St. Johns noting most of those species are in those districts. John replied the PDT members are coordinating with others and they recently had an opportunity to make a presentation to the Florida Pest Management Council. Paul Souza said he has seen Melaleuca come in and infest the short hydroperiod wetlands and when they reach a certain density it makes it difficult for Woodstorks to forage. They are hopeful this will be a promising antidote to some of the challenges. He asked if they have established a record of success on a broad scale in the real world and whether there have been any unintended consequences. John Morgan Jr. said Melaleuca is their case study in south Florida for observing impacts. One of the unintended consequences is the strands of dead trees and stakeholders are expressing their desire to get the landscape back. Shauna Allen added that they do not anticipate biological controls to be a magic bullet but they do expect it to allow them to be more effective and efficient with their integrated strategies. They do expect that by reducing plant densities they will see different exotics coming up and they need to be vigilant and be prepared to work on the next worst plant.

Dan Kimball said it is important to talk about these things as they relate to Goal 2 and asked whether there were any institutional barriers that need addressing or streamlining. Shauna responded that the implementing agency is USDA and they have Cooperative Agreements in place. The Corps and SFWMD are facilitating the organizational issues at the field level and there are currently no issues that need to be elevated at this time. Greg May said the final consultation with the Task Force would take place in December. He also reminded everyone that Bob Doren provided the Task Force with an overview of invasive exotics at the May Task Force meeting as recommended by the WG and SCG and that the single most important action is prevention.

Panther Protection Plan

Laurie MacDonald (Defenders of Wildlife) provided a presentation (Encl. 9) reviewing the Panther Protection Program which is a practical collaboration among conservationists and landowners. It encompasses a variety of things from federal, state, local, private and public sectors involving regulatory and voluntary programs to address a regional program. She reviewed the history leading to the Panther Protection Plan when the Defenders of Wildlife decided to challenge the FWS and sent a notice of intent to sue over the Ave Maria project. They were contacted by Paul Marinelli, of Barron Collier Companies, who invited them and landowners to discuss the project. They all worked on the Panther Protection Plan for over a year and a half and the plan will undergo a scientific technical review which should be completed in approximately six months. She provided everyone with a copy of 'A Guide to Recognizing the Florida Panther, It's Tracks and Sign' (Encl. 10).

Christian Spilker reviewed the details of the program noting there are three main proposals with the first being the establishment of the Paul Marinelli Florida Panther Protection Fund. Money will be generated every time a property is sold and the fund has the ability to generate \$150 million through 2050 from private dollars to supplement federal and state dollars. The program proposes the creation of a north and south Panther corridor and creating underpasses and fencing. Because agricultural preservation is important to Panther protection this program provides an incentive to landowners to hold their development credits and use them somewhere else to remove the development pressure. The goal is to have rural landowners and conservation organizations enter into a binding agreement. They will undergo a federal consultation process with DOI and FWS to develop a Conservation Agreement. In the long run they are talking about 150,000 acres of preservation at no cost to the tax payer which is equivalent to the Sugar Deal.

Paul Souza said he believed this is one of the most significant possibilities for species conservation and with only 100 or so panthers left he is proud that they have joined forces. If this works, it could create a model that could be used in other counties. Because of the importance of private lands to Panther habitat, this is the type of partnership they will need if it is going to recover. They have created an internal team and are also awaiting the scientific review team's findings before moving to the regulatory process. This plan will provide more mitigation in the right corridors and a new fund that could reach \$150 million. He expects a public hearing next year to get the process started. Greg May added that they needed to explore every tool and resource available in order to achieve their long-term goals. He said he looked forward to an update in the near future. Dan Kimball noted there was no public comment. He applauded their efforts and noted his regret that Lynn Scarlett did not see this presentation and hoped she could be briefed before she leaves her position.

Project Implementation Report (PIR) Streamlining

Eric Bush provided a presentation (Encl. 11) noting there was a request from the Task Force to provide more detailed recommendations and bring them back to the December Task Force

meeting. He thanked Larry Gerry, Dennis Duke, Frank Metzler and others who have worked on this effort. He reviewed the PIR timeline, which is scheduled to take 3 years and 8 months. He noted they have never completed a PIR in that amount of time adding that it takes longer in practice. He provided an in-depth presentation of the C-111 Spreader Canal PIR as a case study to show how management actions in response to technical and policy issues, as well as changed conditions, can influence the time it takes to complete a PIR. As an example, this project had external forces affecting the schedule when FDOT wanted to know where the Spreader Canal would be so they could plan a bridge. Also, the modeling was so difficult that it was discontinued resulting in time and money being wasted. He reviewed the recommendations which were provided to the Task Force. The recommendations fall into three categories (changes to Pro Regs, policy changes and internal management). Greg May asked about the project sequencing and bundling recommendation noting that the IDS in and of itself does not explain to someone outside of the process how they came up with the sequence. He asked if someone would just accept the IDS as enough justification. Eric Bush said he thought it should be enough. Stu Appelbaum added the Yellow Book is the reason and rationale for each project justification.

Eric Bush reviewed how changes will be implemented including revisions to the Pro Regs and Guidance Memos, revisions to USACE planning policy requirements, state policies and internal management at USACE SAJ and SFWMD. The Task Force could provide recommendations to help with the revisions to the Pro Regs and also provide a memo to Corps HQ on the policy change. Eric Bush reviewed the schedule to complete the revisions to the Pro Regs noting they are looking at a year. Dan Kimball asked if anything conflicted with the recent NAS report and suggested they provide that linkage for the Task Force in the December presentation. Eric replied he did not think there were any conflicts adding that this recommendation is actually more detailed.

Greg May said he agreed with revising the Next Added Increment (NAI) language adding that using the word 'eliminating' could cause some undue concern at HQ. People who study negotiations differentiate between 'stated position' versus 'underlying interest' and that may be an important concept for them to keep in mind because the underlying interest is that they want to make sure that tax payer dollars, both federal and state, are invested in a project that will deliver environmental benefits. But in practice not only is Next Added Increment difficult to model and causes a huge increase in the amount of model runs they have to use, but it doesn't result in an increase in understanding to justify an investment of tax dollars. He asked if they are not going to have the NAI then what type of analysis is going to be used to make sure tax payer dollars are well invested. Eric Bush said that NAI is intended to describe what would happen if nothing else was ever built and in CERP they do system formulation. They take that final array of alternative plans and to each of the plans they add the rest of CERP and evaluate it to see which one gives the best system-wide performance. Once the best plan is selected then they do the justification step, which is what is not currently working very well. They want to eliminate the justification requirement, but still do the next added comparison. Greg May suggested they adjust the framework of the presentation to help communicate that [point with others.

Eric Bush reminded everyone that the assurances analysis involves identifying water to be reserved or allocated for the natural system or for other water related needs. It also involves impacts to existing legal users and existing legal sources. They have to prepare three baseline conditions and model all three and it is very complex. If they could use fewer baselines then it would reduce the time it takes to complete that work. Some project specific opportunities where PIRs are underway and they can apply these ideas include DECOMP 1, 2 and 3, ENP Seepage Management, Broward County WPA, Caloosahatchee Watershed, BBCW and C-111 SC. Everyone was encouraged to provide comments on the presentation which will be updated for the

December Task Force meeting. Next Steps include outlining specific recommendations for PIR streamlining by category; seeking representatives for an inter-agency working team (SFWMD, USACE, USDOJ, FDEP) to add details to the recommendations; coordinating this effort with the Programmatic Regulations review process and the DCT and preparing a Statement of Guiding Principles for CERP Execution.

Greg May commented that it was a great briefing noting that the recommendations in September were extremely well received. He recommended they informally put the team together in advance of the December meeting and do as much work as possible. It would also be helpful to make it explicit that they need to get Task Force member buy-in. Greg recommended the Working Group draft the Guiding Principles and then send it out electronically.

Public Comment

Sara Fain (National Parks Conservation Association) thanked Eric for his presentation adding that it is now much easier to understand. She agreed with the National Academy of Science that the NAI is 'bad' and she was not sure if rephrasing it will deal with the issues and recommended eliminating it. She said she is still unclear as to how habitat units are calculated and she is glad to see they are looking for new solutions. She liked the idea of bundling and hoped to hear more about it in the future.

Dan Kimball thanked Eric Bush for doing a great job and noted that the list was full of common sense. He asked if there were going to get pushback from the internal management adjustments that were being proposed. Stu Appelbaum said it won't be easy adding that the system is designed to minimize how many projects go forward for authorization. There are more projects and priorities than money and the system is not designed to make it easy. The Pro Regs will be the guidebook and is what will be looked at when a project is reviewed. They may want to get a little more prescriptive of what they are going to do and how they are going to do it and get it all the way into rule making.

General Discussion

Gene Duncan thanked Wiley Kitchens and Phil Darby for their presentations. He noted there were 3,500 Snail Kites before IOP and the last count was 763 birds which is 78 percent worse than 10 years ago. No kites fledged out of WCA-3 in 2007 and 3 of the last 5 years have not produced any birds out of the WCA. Closing the gates is not helping the Sparrow and it is killing the WCAs.

Dan Kimball thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

Enclosures:

1. Agenda
2. Apple Snails Presentation
3. Snail Kite Presentation
4. Miccosukee Tribe Yellow Handout (Palm Beach Post article and E-mail)
5. Science Management Connection Presentation
6. Draft Meeting Minutes July
7. Draft Conference Call Minutes August
8. Melaleuca Eradication and Other Exotic Plants Presentation
9. Panther Protection Plan Presentation
10. Florida Panther: A Guide to Recognizing the Florida Panther, It's Tracks and Sign
11. PIR Streamlining Presentation