

Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration and Coordination Team (BBRRCT)

Report to the Working Group, October 2009

In response to a request from Chairman Dan Kimball we are pleased to provide the Working Group with this synopsis of the Team's recent activities. The Team's overall purpose is to provide active support to the Working Group and its members in matters important to the restoration of Biscayne Bay. We do so by acquiring knowledge and sharing it among our members (and thereby the Working Group's member organizations), by holding in-depth discussions among our members, and by calling the Working Group's attention to especially urgent concerns. Our meetings are characterized by thorough and lively engagement on the day's topics.

This report is not all-inclusive but the topics listed below reflect the subjects and concerns that have been especially important to the Team over the past two years and remain so today.

- **Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project** – In a letter to the Working Group dated March 20, 2009, the Team expressed its urgent concerns for the implementation of both Phase I and Phase II. Both phases are needed to prevent further degradation of the quality and distribution of surface water inflows to the southern part of the Bay. For several years we have been receiving frequent presentations on the status of this project and will continue to follow it closely.
- **FPL's Turkey Point Projects** – Team members have a heightened interest in the long term impacts of FPL's proposed projects at Turkey Point. We have heard presentations and held discussions on the proposed expansion and power uprate of the nuclear power plant. Special attention was given to plant siting requirements and permitting, impacts of the plant's future water needs on the aquifer and adjacent Bay, and current status of saltwater intrusion mapping. There has been discussion and concern about possible impacts of the proposed rock quarry on the hydrology of land adjacent to Bay, including land within the scope of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project.
- **Annual Drawdown of Groundwater** – The Team is specifically concerned about the drawdown's impacts on inflows to Biscayne Bay and on the Bay's salinity during the dry season. We have heard presentations from the National Park Service and the South Florida Water Management District about the history and current status of the District's annual drawdown of groundwater levels adjacent to Biscayne Bay. We are encouraged that the District is currently taking a closer look at the practice and we will continue to follow this issue.
- **Overall Surface Water and Groundwater Needs for Biscayne Bay Restoration** – In the Yellow Book, the Corps' feasibility report to Congress, CERP is unambiguously committed to maintaining freshwater inflows to Biscayne Bay at no less than 1995 levels to prevent further degradation. Team members are greatly interested in efforts both to prevent further degradation of the Bay and to truly achieve restoration of the Bay, and we believe it is important to be aware of the differences between the two. We have heard presentations on CERP's C-111 Spreader Canal, USGS modeling to identify the Bay's water supply needs, the status of the District's rulemaking process for water supply to the Bay, Miami-Dade's pilot project for reuse of water to rehydrate wetlands, and NPS hydrological and ecological targets for restoration of the Bay. Water deliveries to Biscayne Bay are inextricably affected by water deliveries to the Everglades and so the Team has followed CERP projects involving water delivery and storage, in particular Seepage Management.
- **Water Quality and Salinity** – This overarching area of concern encompasses many of the other topics listed in this report, including Surface Water and Groundwater Needs, the Annual Drawdown of Groundwater, the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetland Project, and Sustainable Uses of the Bay. Almost all presentations and discussions at Team meetings continue to have some bearing on water quality or salinity. In 2007 the Team sent a letter to the Working Group with

concerns and specific recommendations regarding one particular problem, the serious algal bloom in southern Biscayne Bay.

- **Land Acquisition for Resource Protection** – The Team has long considered land acquisition for both protection and restoration of Biscayne Bay to be a high priority. Members believe the current decline in property values makes this a uniquely propitious time for acquiring land for this purpose. We have heard presentations about Miami-Dade County’s Environmentally Endangered Lands program and also the county’s program for Purchase of Development Rights. Team member Alvaro Rodriguez has described the Trust for Public Land’s recent project identifying and prioritizing lands needed for protection of Biscayne National Park. We strongly support the SFWMD’s negotiations to acquire lands for the CERP projects in this watershed. Land acquisition is a frequent topic of discussion at Team meetings.
- **Sustainable Uses of the Bay** – The Team has a strong interest in sustainable uses of the Bay. We have heard presentations and held discussion on the BBCW Recreation Plan which includes a bird viewing platform, an overlook shelter, a hiking/biking/fishing site, a shade shelter site, and a kayakers' campsite. Other presentations have addressed plans for waterfront redevelopment that would affect access to and use of Biscayne Bay, including recent plans for the waterfront at Coconut Grove. Research on the Spiny Lobster population was also presented to the Team.
- **Compatible Land Uses** – The Team believes that restoration of Biscayne Bay is only possible if land uses within the Bay’s watershed are compatible with restoration. With this in mind the Team has heard presentations and held discussions about various proposed land use changes, including those for Virginia Key, Miami’s Museum Park, and the Miami River waterfront.
- **Habitat Restoration** – Habitat restoration is vital to the health of Biscayne Bay and the Team seeks to stay informed about restoration projects. Gary Milano has made presentations to the Team about several of his successful habitat restoration projects on the Bay for Miami-Dade County and has taken the Team to one of his project sites. The Team has heard a presentation on the County’s development of key indicators to guide restoration of fish habitat, and we have heard two presentations on invasive exotic species.
- **Sea Level Rise** – The Team’s interest in this topic is especially focused on the current state of preparation (or lack thereof) for impacts of sea level rise. We have heard four presentations and held discussions on the predicted impacts of sea level rise and the state of planning for those impacts.
- **Re-Shaping the Team for Greater Effectiveness** – The Team’s overall objective is to provide active support to the Working Group and to its members in matters of greatest importance to the restoration of Biscayne Bay. Toward this end we devoted substantial time and effort during the past two years to revising our Charter and Action Plan. The Action Plan was then translated into Action Steps, specific goals that now drive the activities of the Team.

We hope this review has been helpful and would welcome any further interest from the Working Group either collectively or from individual members.

Richard W. Frost
Chair