LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT (LOWRP)

Presented to the Task Force by:
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October 29, 2019
PRESENTATION PURPOSE

- Update the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force on progress made to complete the required Project Implementation Report (PIR) for agency approval and submission to Congress for authorization.

AGENDA

- Purpose and Location
- TSP and Benefits
- Project Support
- Current Schedule
LOWRP AND CERP OVERVIEW

- C&SF eliminated much of the floodplain storage and changed conveyance from slow overland flow to rapid canal flow.
- CERP components are intended to restore those functions.
- LOWRP is the only CERP project that influences the timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee, which is key to Everglades restoration, estuary protection, and water supply.
PROBLEMS

NORTHERN ESTUARIES: High volume freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee are associated with environmental and economic impacts

LAKE OKEECHOBEE: Frequent and prolonged high and low water levels affect lake ecology

WETLANDS: Loss of wetland habitat throughout the study area

WATER SUPPLY: Drainage of the watershed and the associated loss in storage has impacted water supply

OBJECTIVES

Reduce high volume freshwater releases to the estuaries from Lake Okeechobee to improve habitats in the Northern Estuaries-ACHIEVED

Improve flows into Lake Okeechobee to increase the amount of time stages are within ecologically preferred levels-ACHIEVED

Increase the spatial extent and functionality of aquatic and wildlife habitat-ACHIEVED

Increase availability of the water supply to the existing legal water users of Lake Okeechobee commensurate with improving Lake Okeechobee ecology-ACHIEVED
TENTATIVELY SELECTED PLAN (TSP) - ALTERNATIVE 1BWR

CO-LOCATING PROJECT COMPONENTS ENHANCES PERFORMANCE

LEGEND
- Wetland Attenuation Feature
- Wetland Restoration
- Tribal Trust Lands
- Tribal Owned Lands
- ASR Well Cluster
- Wetland Attenuation ASR Well Cluster

SHALLOW STORAGE
- K-05 WAF
  - ~13,600 acres
  - 46,000 acre-feet storage

AQUIFER, STORAGE & RECOVERY
- 80 ASR wells
- 448,000 acre-feet of storage per year (400 MG/Day)

WETLAND RESTORATION
- KRC: ~1,200 acres
- PR: ~3,500 acres
TENTATIVELY SELECTED PLAN (TSP): ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

NORTHERN ESTUARIES
- Reduces high volume freshwater releases by 16% to St Lucie and 14% to Caloosahatchee
- Increases the resiliency and health of the Northern Estuaries for submerged aquatic vegetation, fisheries and oysters

LAKE OKEECHOBEE
- Improves the lake stage levels and habitat for aquatic and emergent vegetation, fish, and wading birds
- Reduces the rate of spread of invasive/exotic species

WETLAND BENEFITS
- Restores ~4,800 acres of historic Kissimmee River channel and floodplain wetlands
- Provides habitat for a diverse population of plant and animal species

WATER SUPPLY BENEFITS
- Reduces water supply cutback volume to the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA) by 24%
- Reduces frequency and severity of water restrictions to LOSA
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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT COMMENTS

WRITTEN LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR DRAFT REPORT

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Interior (DOI)
- South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC)
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

SUMMARY OF AGENCY/TRIBAL/PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Broad support for storage north of Lake Okeechobee
- Seminole Tribe of Florida (STOF) objects to the TSP
- More water storage is needed
- Include water quality features (STAs)
- Mixed support for ASR wells
- Expand study area further north
- Maximize use of public lands
- Acquire land from willing sellers
- Wetland restoration is supported
- Concern of displacement of listed species
- Dam safety concerns
- Water quality concerns
- Support for recreational features
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SC SCHEDULE

SMART PLANNING PROCESS

1. Kickoff
   - ALTERNATIVES MILESTONE
     - Vertical Team concurrence on Focused Array of Alternatives

2. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATION & ANALYSIS
   - TENTATIVELY SELECTED PLAN (TSP) MILESTONE
     - Vertical Team concurrence on TSP
   - AGENCY DECISION MILESTONE
     - Agency Endorses Recommended Plan

3. FEASIBILITY-LEVEL ANALYSIS

4. CHIEF’S REPORT
   - SENIOR LEADER PANEL
     - Approve release for State & Agency Review

5. CHIEF’S REPORT
   - APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION

MILESTONE DESCRIPTION | BASELINE APPROVED MILESTONE SCHEDULE | CURRENT APPROVED MILESTONE SCHEDULE
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Study Initiation | 25 JUL 2016 | 25 JUL 2016 [A]
Alternatives Milestone | 03 NOV 2016 | 03 NOV 2016 [A]
Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone | 25 JAN 2018 | 04 MAY 2018 [A]
Agency Decision Milestone | 16 JUN 2018 | 14 MAR 2019 (A)
Senior Leaders Panel | 19 APR 2019 | 6 FEB 2020
Chief’s Report | 25 JUL 2019 | 25 MAY 2020

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COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN (CERP)

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