

**FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL WORKING GROUP:  
Florida Keys and South Florida Ecosystem Connectivity Team**

Meeting #1  
Tuesday, May 18, 2021  
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**NOTES**

**Attendees:** Jerry Lorenz, Cara Capp, Joe Weatherby, Suzy Roebling, Emma Haydocy, Chris Madden, Matt Semcheski, Kelly Cox, Karen Bohnsack, Amelia Moura, Steve Davis, Chris Bergh, Gus Rios, Luke McEachron, Shelly Krueger, Adam Gelber, Steve Blackburn, and Nick Parr.

**Absent:** Erin Muller, Jolly Benson, Steve Friedman, Mike Goldberg, and Chris Kavanagh,

**Working Group Website:** <https://floridakeys.noaa.gov/review/workgroups.html>

**New Action Items:**

SAC Coordination/Recommendations

- Request standing time slot on the FKNMS SAC agenda that will be reported out by Chair, Jerry Lorenz or Vice-Chair, Cara Capp.
- Identify appropriate action items to send to the SAC. There are key and proximal projects that we can give recommendations to the SAC at their bi-monthly meetings
- Prioritize working group recommendations to the SAC (LOSOM/BBSEER, mainland wastewater outfalls etc.)
- Recommend to submit to FKNMS SAC June meeting agenda to formally review and approve a resolution related to LOSOM.
- Create a sub-team to write the LOSOM resolution to provide to the SAC for recommendations. Monroe County has a resolution on their agenda for tomorrow and that language could be looked at for the working group draft we are crafting. Please let Karen, Cara, or Jerry know if you want to help work on writing the resolution.

Water Quality Monitoring/Connectivity

- EPA South Florida Initiative Grant will be released this quarter, which includes topics on harmful algal blooms, connectivity, water quality and seagrass monitoring, etc. Steve Blackburn will send the RFA to the group, \$350,000 max per project and anticipate 10-15 projects.
- Consider working group for water quality monitoring to make a clearer connection between Florida Bay health and coral reef tract. (Consideration to review management needs and the current water quality monitoring programming within the Sanctuary is an agenda item at the next FKNMS WQPP Steering Committee meeting, likely in July)

Other

- Future meeting topic should be an overview of the status of mainland Wastewater outfalls and where they are on the timeline for their deadlines (2025).
- Need representation with BBSEER and LOSOM.

**Past Action Items:**

- **COMPLETED:** Create a Google Drive folder or similar tool where WG members can provide resources, e.g., documents and videos.
- **ONGOING:** WG members send resources to Karen and Jerry to share with the group and/or add resources to the Google Drive "Resources" folder to create a living resources library.

**10:00 AM** Call to Order by Jerry Lorenz at 10:01. Purpose of working group is to work on regional approach for items related to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). Two new members were added: Chris Madden from SFWMD and Gina Ralph from US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Cara Capp has volunteered to be the vice-chair. Shelly Krueger is the secretary and will take the minutes.

Karen has set up a Google Drive where we will keep our items for future meetings, team membership roster, minutes, resolutions, etc. Please contact Karen if you have difficulty accessing the Google Drive.

Karen provided a summary of actions that working groups can take following the FKNMS SAC Charter. Working groups do not directly advise FKNMS staff or the Superintendent. Working groups advise the SAC; the SAC advises the Superintendent. The working group can make recommendations to the SAC to set up formal resolutions; recommend that the SAC invite an expert speaker to brief the full Council at an upcoming meeting; and can write summary blurbs, provide reports to the group, research issues, draft resolutions, etc.

**10:20 Everglades Restoration 101 Presentation, History and Restoration**

Cara Capp gave an overview. Total Everglades acreage overall 50% lost to development, 70% of natural water flow diverted, impacts from runoff from agriculture and urban development. Florida Bay collapse and seagrass die-offs in the 1980s catalyst for Everglades Restoration. In 2000, development of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP; Pres. Clinton and Gov. Jeb Bush). Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers increasing cyanobacterial blooms another call to action.

Dr. Stephen Davis gave Everglades' presentation about the links between the environment and economy. Value of real estate, tourism, and recreation tied to state of the environment. Historic discharges have been redirected to the west (Caloosahatchee) and east (St. Lucie River) instead of south to Florida Bay. 70,000 acres of treatment wetlands have been created to remove P out of the water (flow equalization basin) and sends cleaner water to the south. Biscayne Aquifer primary water supply for South Florida. More freshwater flow equals reduced stress on Florida Bay. Stated Gulf of Mexico primary source of phosphorus to Florida Bay.

Eva Velez (USACE) presented overview of integrated delivery schedule (IDS) and highlighted some of the projects that will most impact the Sanctuary. USACE has an ecosystem branch within Jacksonville District dedicated to Everglades Restoration, with 15-20 project managers that coordinate with the scientists and engineers. The Everglades restoration vision is to make operational and infrastructure changes to an existing developed system.

Getting the water right: quantity, quality, timing, distribution. IDS is a road map that guides and maximizes CERP efforts. Master implementation and sequencing plan that looks at what the federal and state governments are doing to implement this massive program. Best way to find more information is to Google "CERP IDS." Public engagement begins in August-October. Eva provided an explanation of

how to read the IDS “placemat.” About \$3 billion spent to date. Anticipate that \$23 billion will be required in total. 2020-203 estimate is \$7.4 billion for SFER, which is from federal and state budgets. Can contact Eva Velez for more information.

Picayune Strand is a very large restoration project that is undergoing construction right now to help the western side of the Everglades with water delivery across Tamiami Trail and Out to the Ten Thousand Islands. Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands will be complete in next few years. Central Everglades Planning Project is a massive infrastructure project to redistribute water flow ~\$5 billion with many moving parts in 4 phases, one of which is the Everglades Agricultural Area. Removing barriers to flow is essential. Removing old roads and replacing roads with bridges so that water can flow underneath Tamiami Trail (41), which benefits Shark River Slough and then Florida Bay.

BBSEER – planning ongoing, encouraged members of the working group to join mini-meetings and workshops. This project is intended to restore healthy water flows to Biscayne Bay and portions of nearshore Florida Bay, this is very important right now. Southern Everglades project planning study will start in 2023 to capture remaining water budget to cross Tamiami Trail and help Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

Getting the water right. Acknowledge CERP best defense against sea level rise and climate change. 68+ components, status, etc. can be found in the Yellow Book of CERP components, status and locations by recover regions.

#### **Discussion and Q&A.**

Jamboard session from first meeting identified working group priorities. BBSEER is a current priority. But what are the operational plans for some of the other projects? Work to develop action items to send to the SAC. There are key and proximal projects that we can give recommendations to the SAC. Piney Point phosphate plant releases into southeastern Tampa Bay and manatee deaths in winter 2021. C-111 down Taylor Slough into Florida Bay critically important. Monroe County not represented in LOSOM, could be a good idea to put on the front burner for SAC consideration, letter to that effect. Jerry, Steve, Emma, and Cara are active in the BBSEER meetings; LOSOM is getting close to decision time. Action Item: Need to prioritize what this group wants to provide recommendations to the SAC.

The following links and resources were shared in the chat box:

- FDEP daily email update on Piney Point here:  
<https://protectingfloridatogether.gov/PineyPointUpdate>
- Links to May 19 working group/science coordination meeting for Everglades Restoration:  
<https://www.evergladesrestoration.gov/working-group/may-19-2021-working-group-science-coordination-group-meeting>
- 8 July 2021 – Ecological Performance Metrics Workshop. To present and discuss with more detail the performance measures considered in the BBSEER. Share the desired restoration condition, how we will evaluate the alternative plans’ ability to improve habitat function, and how elements such as salinity and sea level change will be considered in these performance measures. Audience: BBSEER Interagency and Interdisciplinary PDT, RECOVER, Everglades Scientists and Universities, and the public.

- Links to LOSOM meetings: <https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/LOSOM/>
- Video on Everglades Restoration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yOmWhU-fEo>
- View the latest South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program Fact Sheets - <https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/SFER/>
- Integrated delivery schedule - <https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Integrated-Delivery-Schedule/>

**Public Comment:** none

**Discussion:**

High nutrients and hypersaline water detrimental to reef health but not a lot of supporting research/information, mainly anecdotal. Action Item: Consider working group for water quality monitoring to make a clearer connection between Florida Bay health and coral reef tract. Current FKNMS Water Quality Monitoring Plan performed by FIU and Briceño Lab for over 25 years in place for quarterly measurements but does not capture episodic events. Everglades National Park now has monitoring in place and could be used as a template and expand out to the coral reef tract.

Phase 2 of Tamiami Trail, will there be more water coming out of that area and will LOSOM be affected by that? Yes, there is more water coming south now. Construction complete on bridges on Tamiami Trail by the structure that helps connect central Everglades across Tamiami Trail and into Everglades Park, with more water flow into Shark River Slough. Must raise water level on north side of Tamiami Trail (Canal L-29) which requires raising the road to push more water south into Everglades National Park (ENP), which is under construction. Army Corps not leading that project. Seepage management is important to get more water into Taylor Slough – eastern side of park C-111 South Dade and 8.5 square mile area are operational but it is not enough for the future. SFWMD is building a seepage barrier and has authorization.

LOSOM study for lake operations to balance 5 Congressional purposes (water supply, flood control, recreation, navigation, and preservation of fish and wildlife). Preservation of fish and wildlife is key, and also applicable to the water conservation areas and sending water to ENP. LOSOM is looking at 5 alternatives to balance the distribution and timing of water. Timing especially critical.

**Team Member Updates:**

EPA South Florida Initiative RFA will be coming out around June and would fit into this groups priority areas. Steve Blackburn will send the RFA to the group, \$350,000 max per project and anticipate 10-15 projects.

There are opportunities for public comment with CERP, which has been ongoing for decades.

Wastewater outfalls out of mainland sending semi-treated sewage to the Florida Keys. State Law requires being dealt with by 2025. Need to know that status of that law and where they are on the timeline for their deadlines.

Need representation with BBSEER and LOSOM.

Need for more water quality monitoring, spatially and temporally, to connect Florida Bay inputs with Florida's Coral Reef and elsewhere.

Recommend to submit to FKNMS SAC June meeting agenda to formally review and approve a resolution related to LOSOM. Public comment is open. Alternatives were just released and currently working on the inter-agency consultation, which will be provided in June. Now is a good time to provide input once the alternatives are released. Create a sub-team to write the resolution to provide to the SAC for recommendations. Monroe County has a resolution on their agenda for tomorrow and that language could be looked at for the working group draft we are crafting. Please let Karen, Cara, or Jerry know if you want to help work on writing the resolution. Consider a short presentation on how LOSOM affect the Sanctuary during the June SAC meeting.

Ask FKNMS Superintendent and SAC Chair/Vice-Chair to include 30 minutes in every agenda for recommendations or updates from this working group. We think that is already the expectation, but not 100% certain. Updates from Cara or Jerry.

Jerry Lorenz closed the meeting at 12:04.