



Today's presentation to the Commission is an introduction to the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). It is an increment of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and is designed to significantly reduce planning times and deliver a finalized plan for some key restoration projects located in the central Everglades within 18 months. CEPP is a new Army Corps of Engineer's pilot planning process and is one of only 7 projects that were selected as a pilot nationwide.

Presentation by Chuck Collins

April 2, 2012 Version

Presentation Outline

- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration and why it is important
- Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
- Central Everglades Planning Project
- FWC's role and involvement in the Central Everglades Planning Project
- Central Everglades Planning Project Timeline



South Florida's Ecosystem



Some background on South Florida's Ecosystem and why South Florida Ecosystem Restoration and Comprehensive Everglades Restoration is such an important endeavor to everyone in Florida especially the FWC.

- It is home to the Everglades, an area so unique the United Nations designated it as one of only three wetland areas of global importance.
- The area encompasses a population in excess of 6 million people. As a result of development, flood control, and agriculture it is currently experiencing a wide variety of pressures on its wildlife and habitat.
- Biodiversity is the highest in the nation with many species found nowhere else in U.S. and in some cases the world
- In the region there are 68 Species on the Federal Endangered and Threatened lists and it sustains approximately 40 additional wildlife species on the State's protected lists
- The area has also been referred to as ground zero for several exotic species including pythons, melaleuca, and lygodium (climbing fern).

South Florida Restoration Activities

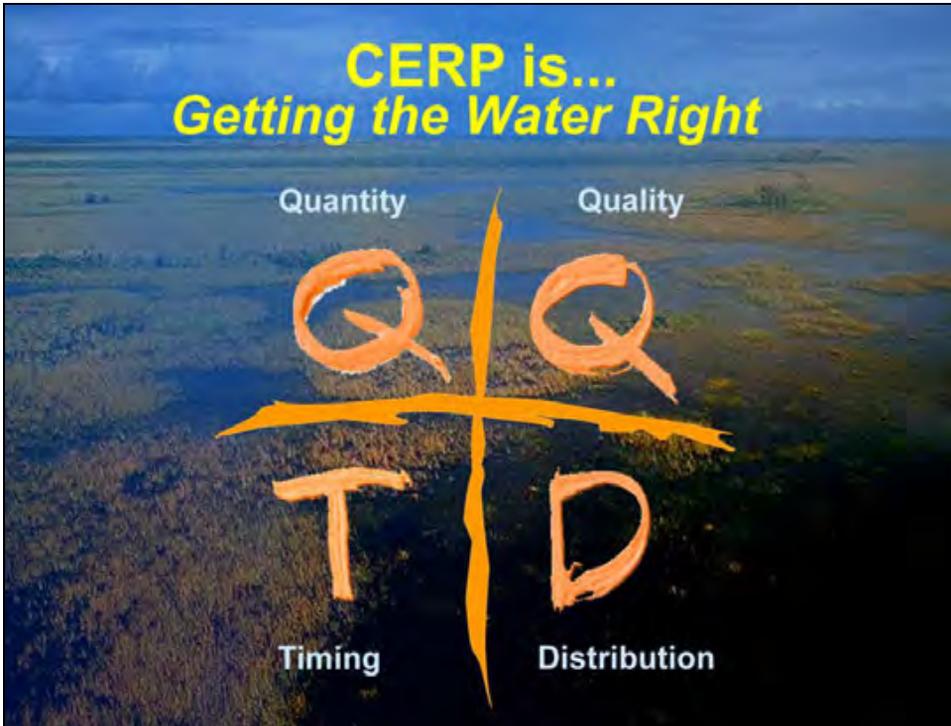
- Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)
 - Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) is a suite of components of CERP with a fast track timeline
- Coordination through the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force of which FWC is a working group member



Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Provides a framework and guide to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of central and southern Florida, including the Everglades. It covers 16 counties over an 18,000-square-mile area, centers on an update of the Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) Project and is being implemented as a joint effort between the federal government and the State of Florida. The plan was approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000. It includes more than 68 elements, will take more than 30 years to construct, and, in 1999 dollars, was estimated near \$8 billion which has increased with today's estimates between \$14 and \$19 billion.

The Central Everglades Planning Project is an increment of (CERP) and was created by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to deliver a finalized plan, known as a Project Implementation Report, for a suite of restoration projects in the central Everglades to prepare for congressional authorization as a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Planning Project.

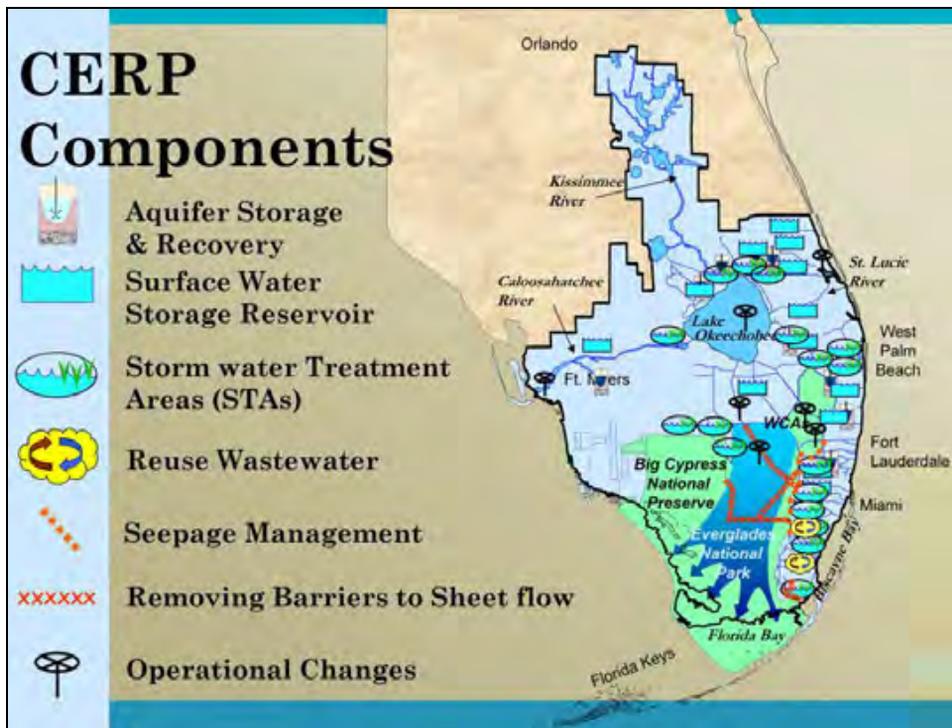
The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, includes staff from; U.S. Department of the Interior, Army Corps of Engineers, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Miami-Dade, Miccosukee Tribe, U.S. Department of Transportation, Palm Beach County, South Florida Water Management District, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice, Seminole Tribe, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Commerce and was established by Congress in 1996 to ensure consistent strategies among all the partners working towards Everglades restoration. FWC is a working group member to this Task Force.



The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is all about getting the water quality, quantity, timing, and distribution right to restore a sustainable everglades ecosystem.



This slide shows how the historic flow, how it has been altered, and what the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is hoping to achieve.



Getting the water right is extremely complicated. Due to development and agriculture, the size of the Everglades has shrunk by half. Since we get the same volume of rain, an elaborate system of canals, levees, and pumping structures were constructed to move water for flood control, water supply, and agriculture. It works well for these purposes, but has created a dysfunctional natural system. In order to craft a system where we can mimic the natural cycles, 68 projects were conceived as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. They include:

- above- and below-ground water storage, to capture much water that now is discharged to tide,
- areas to treat storm water runoff and to reuse wastewater,
- preventing the loss of water from the natural system,
- filling in, plugging, or shallowing some of the canals that now intersect the natural system, and
- changing operations so that we get the quantity and timing right.



The Central Everglades Planning Project incorporates several of the 68 CERP projects – EAA storage, ENP seepage, and Decompartmentalization (levees and canals), and focuses on FWC’s 736,478 acre Everglades Wildlife Management Area Complex which includes Frances S. Taylor, Holyland, and Rotenberger WMA’s. **Although these are components of the project, their specific designs and other aspects are being developed through an enhanced stakeholder input process.** This project when complete will redirect water currently discharged to the east and west coast estuaries, from Lake Okeechobee and restore water flow to the south, allowing for restoration of natural habitat conditions, with water sheet flowing through the central Everglades reconnecting the ecosystem from Lake Okeechobee to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The Central Everglades Planning Project will develop the initial suite of project features that provide for storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee, the possible removal of some canals and levees within the Frances S. Taylor WMA and seepage management features to retain water within the natural system.

CEPP Project Timeline

- Scoping phase Nov. 2011 through Jan. 2012
- **Implementation Report phase Feb. 2012 through Feb. 2013**
- Final planning phase Mar. through May 2013
- Issuance of Chief's report and State approval



- The scoping phase, which determined the project direction, is completed.
- The Project is currently in the analysis phase and upon completion the Army Corps of Engineers will recommend a tentative selected plan.
- The final phase will include the coordinated review by the Federal Civil Works Review Board and the issuance of a final Chief's report and State approval. The South Florida Water Management District would issue the State approval.

Problems CEPP Is Addressing

- Freshwater releases to estuaries from Lake Okeechobee
- Disruptions in hydro-patterns and sheet-flow
- Harmful dry-downs
- Soil subsidence
- Impacts to fish and wildlife



- Freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee cause extreme salinity fluctuations with adverse effects on sea grass beds, oyster reefs and submerged aquatic vegetation.
- Disruptions in hydro-patterns and sheet-flow characteristics, leads to a fragmented, unproductive ecosystem.
- Harmful dry-downs (removal of water from an area) disrupt natural cycles and adversely affect native species.
- This promotes soil subsidence (compaction of the soil and observable sinking of the surface due to loss of moisture), peat fires, the loss of tree islands and alters the structure of vegetative communities.
- All of this negatively impacts the areas fish and wildlife.

CEPP Objectives

- Restore seasonal hydro-periods and freshwater distribution
- Improve sheet-flow patterns and surface water depths and durations in the Everglades system
- Reduce water loss out of the natural system
- Restore more natural water level responses to rainfall
- Reduce high volume damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the northern estuaries



The overall objectives of the projects that are included in the CEEP include:

- Restoration of seasonal hydro-periods and distribution supports a natural mosaic of wetland and upland habitat in the Everglades system.
- Improving sheet-flow patterns, depths and durations reduce soil subsidence, frequency of damaging peat fires, the decline of tree islands, and prevents salt water intrusion.
- Reducing water loss from the natural system promotes appropriate dry season recession rates for wildlife utilization.
- Restoring more natural water level responses to rainfall promotes plant and animal diversity and habitat function.
- Reducing high volume water discharges from Lake Okeechobee improves the quality of oyster and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation habitat in the northern estuaries.

A more natural system will have direct positive impacts on nearly all aspects of our FWC mission.

Planning Constraints

- Water supply
- Flood protection
- Water quality
- Cost



Planning constraints are found within the Water Resources Development Act, Everglades Forever Act, Federal Courts, and the Federal budget.

The Water Resources Development Act specifies that --Until a new source of water supply of comparable quantity and quality as that available on the date of enactment of this Act is available to replace the water to be lost as a result of implementation of the Plan, the Secretary and the non-Federal sponsor shall not eliminate or transfer existing legal sources of water, including those for— an agricultural or urban water supply; allocation or entitlement to the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida under section 7 of the Seminole Indian Land Claims Settlement Act of 1987 (25 U.S.C. 1772e); the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida; water supply for Everglades National Park; or water supply for fish and wildlife.

Also

Implementation of the Plan shall not reduce levels of service for flood protection that are—
(i) in existence on the date of enactment of this Act; and
(ii) in accordance with applicable law.

Also

The Plan shall be implemented to ensure the protection of water quality in, the reduction of the loss of fresh water from, the improvement of the environment of the South Florida Ecosystem and to achieve and maintain the benefits to the natural system and human environment described in the Plan, and required pursuant to this section, for as long as the project is authorized.

And the funding levels were set in the Authorization.

Project Development Team Member Agencies

- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- Department of the Interior
- National Park Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Osceola, Glades, Lee, Palm Beach, Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade Counties
- South Florida WMD



Listed here are the Central Everglades Planning Process project development team members that are contributing in the development of the plan.

How Does FWC Participate

Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades-Big Cypress-Coordination-Team

- Purpose: ***to coordinate and prioritize*** FWC involvement in the entire South Florida ecosystem restoration
- FWC Emphasizes:
 - Fish and Wildlife Conservation Expertise
 - Habitat management
 - Public Access and Recreation
 - Partnerships



- FWC involvement in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Central Everglades Planning Project is complex, highly technical, and evolving.
- Restoration in this vast system is a huge undertaking. There are well over 100 committees and projects tied to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.
- In order to address these challenges, we formed our Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades-Big Cypress-Coordination Team (KOEBCC). It is composed of FWC staff from different divisions in the South Region to coordinate, prioritize, provide comments and technical support specifically related to our mission for the various South Florida Ecosystem Restoration teams.

FWC Issues Related to the CEPP

- Fish and Wildlife Conservation
 - Habitat management
 - High water refugia
- Recreation
 - Points of public access
 - L-67 canals
 - New projects designs include recreation



The planning framework for the Central Everglades Planning Process includes enhanced public engagement with input being collected and analyzed by the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District. We have been to all of these meetings listening and providing technical advice. Issues that have been brought forth that specifically relate to the FWC and the land we manage concern habitat management, high water refugia, and recreation which includes access, design of recreation into new projects and maintaining the L-67 canals and the valuable fishery they support.

Questions?

CENTRAL
EVERGLADES
PLANNING
PROJECT

