

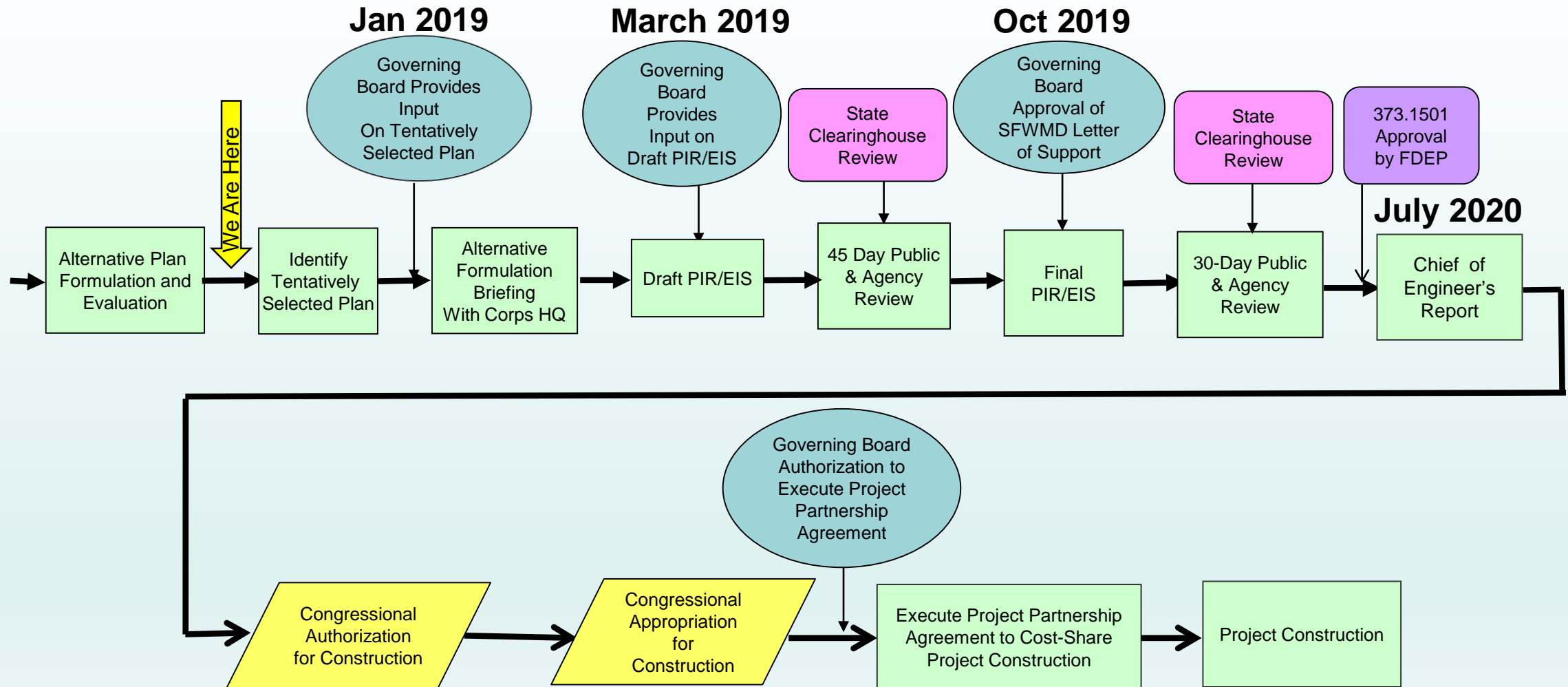
# WESTERN EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECT (WERP)

Jennifer Leeds, Section Administrator  
South Florida Water Management District  
October 25, 2018  
Big Cypress Basin Board Meeting

# Presentation Outline

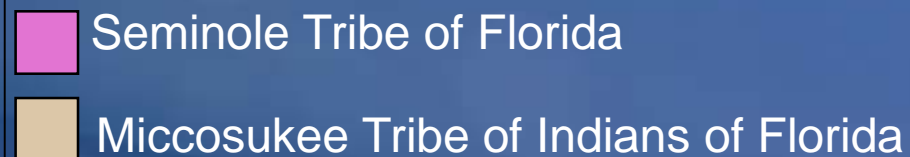
- Project Implementation Process
- Project Overview
- Critical Policy Issues
- Next Steps
- Requesting Big Cypress Basin Board input on project alternatives and critical policy items

# State Input and Decision Points During Federal Process



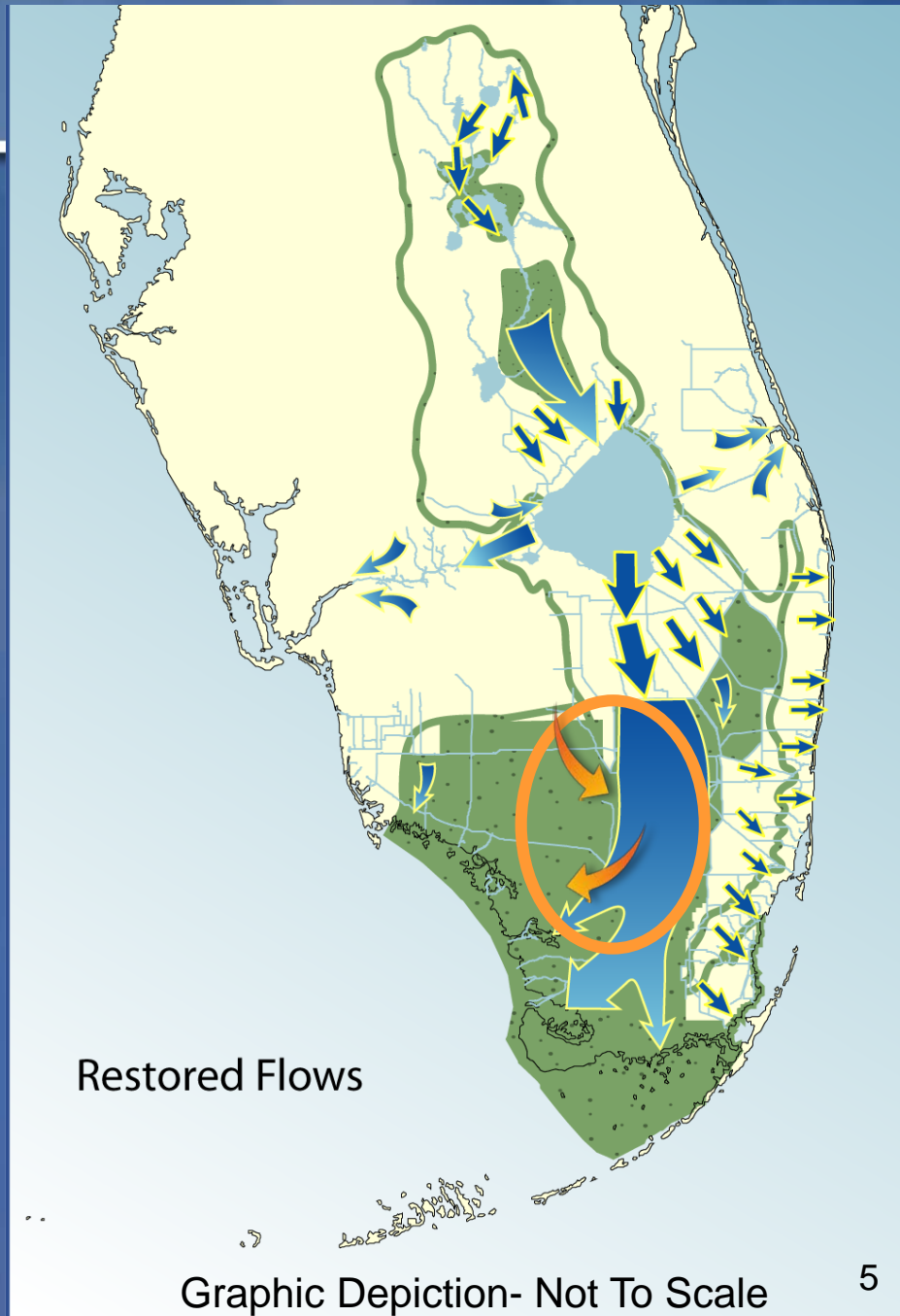
# WERP Project Planning Area

- Approximately 772,700 acres (1,200 square miles)
- Roughly the size of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) area
- Historically dominated by wetlands
- Current land use and land cover include:
  - Natural Land/ Wetlands
  - Agriculture



# WERP Objectives



- Restore the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of freshwater to improve seasonal hydroperiods and historic distributions of sheet flow
- Reestablish ecological connectivity and ecological resilience of the historic wetland/upland mosaic
- Restore water levels to reduce wildfires associated with altered hydrology
- Improve water quality conditions
- Promote system-wide resilience and improve system-wide operational flexibility





# WERP Proposed Project Components

- Feeder Canal Basin
  - West Feeder Canal Basin water flow south
  - North Feeder Canal Basin water flow east
- L-28 Interceptor Canal
- L-28 Canal
  - Backfill the canal
- L-28 Canal South

-  Seminole Tribe of Florida
-  Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

# Critical Policy Issues

## Flood Protection Policy for Big Cypress National Preserve

- Primary project benefits are based on raising water levels and extending hydroperiods
- Over 150 existing structures
  - Approximately 80 are home sites
- Requires policy guidance on current levels of flood protection and potential mitigation strategy
- Possible flood protection mitigation strategies:
  - Raise structures, berms and pumped systems
  - Flowage easements
  - Acquisition

# Critical Policy Issues

## Western Everglades Restoration Project – Central Everglades Planning Interactions

- CERP envisioned decompartmentalizing the western side
  - Redistributes flow from Water Conservation Area 3A to the west
- Model results for the alternatives indicate a potential reduction in authorized CEPP benefits south of the redline
  - Loss of approximately 50,000 acre-feet average annual basis to eastern Everglades National Park
  - Flow volume shifted to western Everglades National Park



# Critical Policy Issues

## Water Quality

- State – Tribal – Federal
  - State responsibilities and federal project responsibilities
  - Varied numeric and narrative standards and authority
  - Varied monitoring requirements
- Stormwater Treatment Areas
  - Treating water upstream for downstream standards

# Critical Policy Issues

## Real Estate

- Several alternatives considered with approximately 6,000 to 26,000 acres of land acquisition
  - Stormwater Treatment Areas
  - Create natural flow ways
  - Four 298 Districts
- Additional constraints:
  - Conservation easements within the project footprints
  - Florida panther habitat and preserve in the Feeder Canal Basin

# Western Everglades Restoration Project Next Steps

- Management team engaged on policy issues
- Conduct additional technical analysis to address critical policy issues
- Governing Board Project and Lands Workshop November 2019
- Return to Governing Board for input on Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) in January 2019
- USACE Vertical Team concurrence on TSP March 2019





## Discussion

Center of Cypress dome, northern Big Cypress National Preserve, courtesy of Robert Sobczak