



South Florida Water Management District

WATER RESOURCES ACCOUNTABILITY AND COLLABORATION PUBLIC FORUM MINUTES

August 27, 2020

10:00 AM

via Communications Media Technology

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1. Welcome - Drew Bartlett, Executive Director

Mr. Bartlett opened the meeting at approximately 10:00 AM.

Mr. Erskine, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, provided an update on wildlife conditions in the water conservation areas.

2. Addressing High Water Levels in the Central Everglades

a. Historic/Natural Flows and System Alterations

Dr. Fred Sklar presented on historic/natural flows and system alternations of the central everglades, chronology of hydrologic alternations and ecological changes.

b. Status of Restoration Projects that Address High Water Levels

- Modified Water Deliveries, C-111 South Dade and Tamiami Trail Raising:

Robert Johnson, South Florida Natural Resources Center, Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Park, presented on the status of restoration projects addressing high water levels in the Central Everglades; Modified Water Deliveries, C-111 South Dade, and future steps for Tamiami Trail projects. Further, Mr. Johnson detailed the benefits of pre-CERP projects located at the southern end designed to remove water out of the Central Everglades sending it south to the Everglades National Park.

- Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) South:

Lesley Waugh provided an overview of the Central Everglades Planning Project Southern Features.

- Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP):

Zulamet Vega-Liriano, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provided an update on Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP) describing the area, the history and objectives of the project.

c. Current Conditions and Operations to Reduce High Water Levels in the Central Everglades

John P. Mitnik, provided an update on the conditions and operations to reduce high water levels in the Central Everglades.

These items are recorded at:

<http://sfwmd.ig2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=2036&Format=Agenda>

3. Discussion from WRAC Public Forum Participants:

- Adam Gelber, Department of the Interior, shared concerns on funding; challenges of high water in conservation areas; and impacts to tree islands.
- Gene Duncan, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians, explained the significance of Water Conservation Area 3 (WCA-3) to the Tribe; yearly challenges faced due to the continued water storage and high-water levels; and, the efforts posed by closures to S-12A/B structures. Mr. Duncan outlined the May 5, 2020, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removal of jeopardy opinion on the Cape Sabal seaside sparrow and inquired on the agency's ability under this new measure. In response, Mr. Bartlett, stated the District and FWC had engaged during high-water level events and both agencies had agreed to increase management the Central Everglades. Mr. Bartlett further added the District helped with the sparrow's recovery while at the same time explored flexibility and new management opportunities.
- Inger Hansen, Department of Environmental Protection, made general comments.
- Richard Pinsky, Akerman, LLP, inquired on policy, regulation and flows of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA).
- Charles LaPradd, Miami-Dade County, provided general comments.
- Doug Gaston, Audubon Florida, echoed Mr. Gelber's comments on funding.
- Grant Lanham, Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida, made general comments.
- Herbert Raybourn, Walt Disney World, provided comments on hydrologic conditions and thanked staff for the agenda item presented.

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4. Public Comment

- Mike Elfenbein commented on high water levels and impacts to wildlife, movement of water through several structures; and, thanked staff for their continued efforts.
- Daniel Watson commented on closures.
- John Rosier, Everglades Co-Ordinating Council, echoed Mr. Duncan's comments.
- Newton Cook, United Water Fowlers of Florida, Inc., recapped the June 15th Recreational Forum and invited all to attend the next forum scheduled for September 14th at 5:00 PM.
- Mike Collins provided general comments on Taylor River Slough, Florida Bay, and restoration projects.
- Mark Perry, Florida Oceanographic Society, made comments on basin run-off, flooding concerns, and environmental impacts.

This item is recorded at:

<http://sfwmd.igmp2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=2028&Format=Agenda>

5. Adjourn

Mr. Bartlett thanked the public and WRAC Public Forum participants for participating and engaging in discussion.

The Forum adjourned at approximately 1:00 PM.