South Florida Water Management District

GOVERNING BOARD WORKSHOP
MINUTES

December 9, 2020
1:00 PM
via Communications Media Technology
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The purpose of today's workshop is to present the ecological conditions and water quality conditions of Biscayne Bay, including the urbanized watershed. This will include discussion of the programs and projects that are designed to improve the condition and function of these systems.

The Workshop is informative in nature and no final decisions will be made by the Governing Board.

Panel:
Dr. Joan Browder, Ecosystems Investigations Unit Leader, Biscayne Bay Habitat Focus Area Coleader, National Oceanic and Atmospheric (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service

Lee Hefty, Director, Division of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Julie Espy, Director, Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Eva B. Vélez, P.E., Strategic Program Manager, Ecosystem Branch, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Chauncey Goss	Chairman	Present
Ron Bergeron		Present
Cheryl Meads		Remote
Charlette Roman		Remote
Jay Steinle		Present
Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch		Present
Scott Wagner	Vice-Chairman	Present

1. Call to Order - Chauncey Goss, Chairman, Governing Board

   Chairman Goss called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

   Chairman Goss led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Workshop Introduction - Lawrence Glenn

   Mr. Glenn introduced workshop panelists and presenters and provided an overview of Biscayne Bay.

4. Historical Overview and Ecological Characteristics of Biscayne Bay - Dr. Anna Wachnicka

   Dr. Wachnicka presented a historical overview and ecological characteristics of Biscayne Bay. Items discussed included pre-drainage and post-drainage characteristics; recent ecological changes; long-term monitoring program results that would help with assessments and restoration success; and, responses to anomalies and extreme weather events.

   Board Comment
   In response to Mr. Wagner's question regarding technologies which would accelerate regrowth of seagrass, Dr. Wachnicka stated nothing had been reported of new technologies to accelerate regrowth of seagrass but, without improved water quality or light technology to accelerate regrowth of seagrass it would prove to be unsuccessful.

   In response to Mr. Steinle's questions on sargassum algae accumulation, Dr. Wachnicka stated sargassum events were a natural phenomenon and were linked to changing circulation patterns over the Sargassum Sea. Additionally, Dr. Wachnicka stated there were no new technologies available to reduce nutrient aqua biomass in Biscayne Bay.

   Mr. Bergeron commented on the importance of Everglades restoration to help with the impacts to Biscayne Bay through improved water quantity, quality, timing, discharges, and distribution.

   This item is recorded at:
   http://sfwmd.iqm2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=2043&Format=Agenda

5. Water Management Operations - Dr. Matahel Ansar

   Dr. Ansar provided a presentation on water management operations in Biscayne Bay.

   Board Comment
   In response Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch's question regarding which structures in South Florida were included in the *Works of the District*, Dr. Ansar stated staff would research to confirm if the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) structures were included as Works of the District.

Mr. Bergeron commented on the importance of Everglades restoration and reservoirs near Everglades National Park (ENP) to store enough water compatible for the environment in Biscayne Bay so when projects were ready to come online the proper quantity of water would be available.

Responding to Chairman Goss' question regarding resiliency and the existing pumps at the S-26 pump station, Dr. Ansar stated these pumps were funded from a FEMA grant after Tropical Storm Irene in 1999 and the no-name storm of 2000. With the District's Flood Protection Level of Service Project, research would assess areas where there were limitations and impact of sea level rise. Mr. Bartlett further added two Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants had been applied for the C-7 canal and the S-27 structure for $66M, and one for the C-9 canal and the S-29 structure for $24M.

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6. Water Quality of Biscayne Bay and its Watershed - Christian Avila, Lee Hefty, and Julie Espy

Mr. Avila provided an overview of water quality of the Biscayne Bay watershed.

Board Comment
Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch and Mr. Avila discussed water deliveries and monitoring along the Miami Canal as represented on slide 13.

Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Avila discussed slide 17 regarding water quality monitoring of the western flow-way bordering the Central Everglades and ENP.

Mr. Hefty provided a presentation on Miami-Dade Biscayne Bay Collaboration efforts.

Board Comment
In response to Ms. Roman's question regarding the how Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Board would integrate water protection for Biscayne Bay from growth management, land use, and permitting, Mr. Hefty stated these considerations would be developed as part of the watershed protection plan and efforts would be geared towards pollution prevention to provide a more cost effective solution. To this, Mr. Hefty stated pollution prevention might also include regulation of surface water and ground water pathways through oversight of stormwater management and design, growth management policies, and land development codes to address impacts to the natural system due to climate change and sea level rise.

Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch and Mr. Hefty discussed the management of secondary canals and stormwater utilities by municipalities and county governments throughout the system. Mr. Hefty anticipated the Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Board and Watershed Restoration Plan would integrate efforts to solve the challenges of Biscayne Bay by gathering a consensus amongst water management districts, municipalities, community groups, and county governments while partnership efforts between state and federal agencies would continue to collaborate on spending resources to restore the Everglades and Biscayne Bay.

In response to Ms. Meads' question regarding monthly Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP), Mr. Bartlett stated both ERP and Consumptive Water Use Permits (CUPs) were provided to the Board each month in the Board meeting packet, and there were approximately one-to-two permits reported per week. Ms. Smith concurred with Mr. Bartlett and stated current permit numbers would be provided to the Board. Ms. Meads then asked about permit delegation authority to which Ms. Ansay explained ERP permits were delegated to the Executive Director by state law, and Consumptive Use permits were delegated by the Board to the Executive Director. Additionally, Mr. Bartlett stated Biscayne Bay Consumptive Use Permits were capped and no new allocations would come from the aquifer.

Ms. Espy provided an overview of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) water quality restoration. Items discussed included Florida's requirements; watershed approach; Biscayne Bay nutrient regions and assessments; restoration alternatives; reasonable assurance plans; benefits of an alternative restoration plans; and, alternative plan development.

Board Comment

In response to Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch's questions regarding DEP's water quality regulations and residential fertilizer use, Ms. Espy elaborated on water quality with wastewater Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs); stormwater MS4 permitting; urban and agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs).

In response to Ms. Roman's comments on the watershed approach and implementation of water quality standards, Ms. Espy stated DEP had increased communication efforts by launching new webtools on the DEP website where municipalities and counties who were not meeting water quality standards could complete a survey which would further provide support to implement restoration to the waterbody. Additionally, Ms. Espy stated this survey was also presented at the Florida Stormwater Association to gain feedback and keep restoration efforts moving forward. Ms. Roman and Ms. Espy continued discussing grant programs offered through DEP to those who completed the survey and to further encourage restoration efforts.

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7. Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Projects: Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands and Biscayne Bay and Southeastern Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (BBSEER) - Mindy Parrot, Bahram Charkhian, and Eva B. Vélez

   Ms. Parrot provided a presentation on Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1 and the Biscayne Bay and Southeastern Everglades Restoration (BBSEER) of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Items discussed included Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1 project goals and objectives; project overview's of Deering Estate, the L-31 E Flow-way, and Cutler Wetlands Flow-way; BBSEER Overview; project opportunities, constraints, considerations and challenges; CERP planning process and schedule; and, the BBSEER study implementation process.

Board Comment
In response to Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch's question regarding the location of the 83-acre acquisition recently approved by the Board, Ms. Parrott referred to the L-31 E Flow-way on slide 5, and stated land was in the process of being certified with the USACE to move forward with construction.

In response to Chairman Goss' question regarding if the 8.5 Square Mile Area (SMA) would be incorporated into the BBSEER project as a CERP project and what potential impacts might occur, Ms. Parrott stated the 8.5 SMA was separate and was not part of the BBSEER projects, nor a component of CERP.

In response to Ms. Roman's question regarding if the project would use reclaimed water as a source for dry season flows to Biscayne Bay or incorporate a wastewater treatment facility, Ms. Parrott stated the CERP Yellow Book included treated wastewater from the south county waste water treatment plant, which was very close to the Cutler Wetlands component of BBCW Phase 1. Ms. Roman then asked if water reuse nutrient level standards had been established or evaluated to which Ms. Parrott stated this was one of the challenges of this component and that the project delivery team would be working closely with Miami-Dade County and the DEP representatives to understand the feasibility of meeting the required water quality standards.

Ms. Vélez provided an update from the USACE on the BBSSEER project. Items discussed included project Scope implementation during the Pandemic; public engagement events and outreach with stakeholders and partners; science workshops; and, project challenges.

Dr. Charkhian presented an update on the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetland, Phase 1 project. Items discussed included project objectives; Deering Estate operations, stages, salinity, groundwater, and flow; and, L-31 E Flow-way interim pump test salinity and vegetation response.

Board Comment
Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch and Dr. Charkhian discussed vegetation improvement studies.

Dr. Browder thanked the Board for the opportunity to participate as panelist during the workshop and expressed commitment to BBSEER projects in support of Biscayne Bay restoration effort.

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8. Public Comment

Irela Baque
Laura Reynolds
Richard Weisskoff, University of Miami
Richard Pinsky

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9. Adjourn

   Chairman Goss adjourned the workshop at approximately 5:10 PM.

Gina Kamak
Deputy District Clerk
South Florida Water Management District