

Appendix 7B-4: Draft Process to Establish and Refine Interim Goals for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

INTRODUCTION

Development of a process to establish interim goals to “ensure the protection of the natural system consistent with the goals and purposes of the plan” is a requirement of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000. RECOVER, as the science and technical team in support of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) implementation, with assistance from CERP program controls and others, has been charged with the development of this process.

The establishment of both interim and long-term goals is essential to the success of CERP. The goals should guide CERP implementation by identifying collectively shared objectives and will provide assurance during the critical first phases of implementation that cooperative efforts have resulted in tangible and measurable improvements. The establishment of interim goals will communicate the commitment to ensuring that CERP goals and objectives are being met.

Additionally, federal and state law mandates that certain reporting requirements be met. WRDA 2000 calls for a report that “the Secretary [Army] and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Commerce, and the State of Florida, shall jointly submit to Congress a report...[that includes] progress toward interim goals...” These reports are to be completed no less than every five years. Florida’s Everglades Restoration Investment Act of 2000 requires that an annual report on funds received and expended and the progress made in CERP implementation be prepared for the governor, the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives, with copies to be made available to the public (Section 373.470(7), Florida Statutes).

BACKGROUND

Interim goals are predictions of comparatively short-term achievements during the implementation of CERP. Interim goals can be “milestones,” i.e., short-term quantitative goals, or they may be “pathways,” i.e., directions of change. Interim goals provide a basis for reporting on progress, made at specified intervals, towards the successful implementation of CERP and for periodically evaluating the accuracy of predictions of system responses to the effects of CERP. Interim goals are useful to policy makers, state legislators, Congress, scientists and the general public.

An interim goal can be defined by an “indicator” and a “target.” An indicator is an element or component of the natural or human systems that is expected to be positively influenced by CERP and has been selected to be representative of a class of desirable system responses. A target is a measure of the expected or desired change, based on the indicator, during and following the

implementation of CERP. The process of developing interim goals will be relatively straightforward for some targets (e.g., project implementation and hydrological responses), but more complex for others (e.g., ecological processes, such as wading bird nesting success). In either case, interim goals should provide a means for evaluating overall CERP performance, keeping in mind the interannual hydrologic variability experienced in South Florida. Interim goals should also provide guidance to individual CERP projects. It is also expected that the development of these goals will be an iterative process in which indicators and targets will be reviewed and revised periodically as new information becomes available.

To be meaningful, interim goals must be quantifiable, flexible and science-based. The initial interim goals will be based on predictions of the status of each indicator at appropriate intervals and reporting increments, and will continue throughout CERP implementation while also allowing for refinement through the adaptive assessment process as more is learned and for adjustment as schedules change due to unknown/unforeseen circumstances.

THE TEAM

It is anticipated that an interagency, interdisciplinary planning team composed of RECOVER members and others will be established. Initially, this team will vet the proposed process and will then begin to work through the process to develop the interim goals (Figure 1). Additional scientific expertise will be infused into the process when necessary to develop interim goals. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Department of Interior (DOI), and the State of Florida will reach an agreement by consensus regarding each step of the interim goals process.

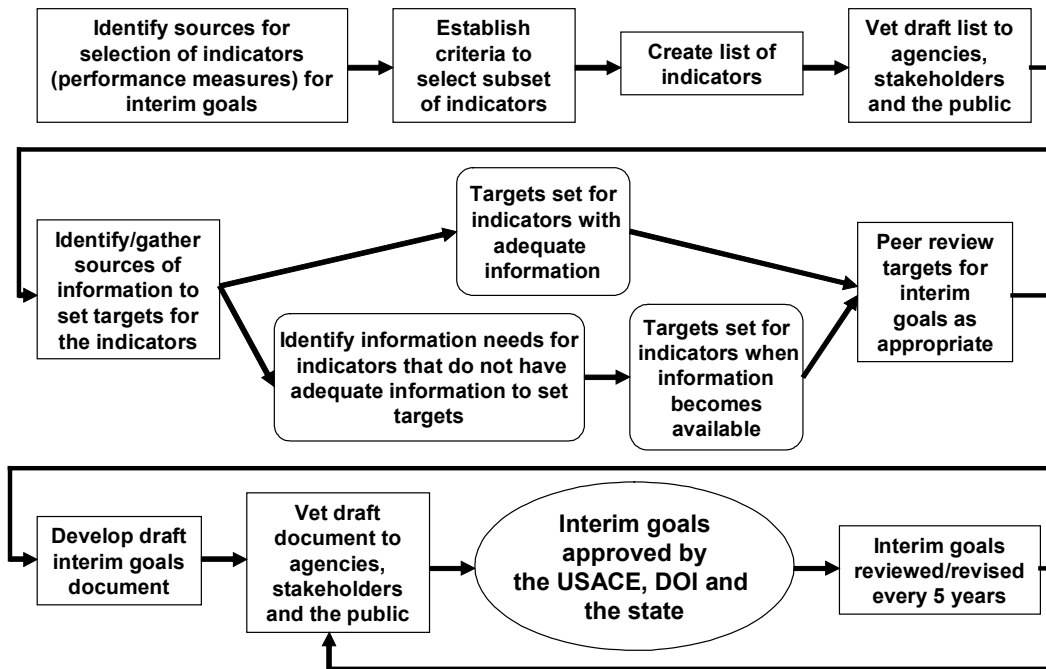


Figure 1. Process to establish CERP interim goals

THE PROCESS

1. Step one: The sources for the selection of indicators for interim goals will be built on existing planning documents. These documents include the *First Draft CERP Monitoring and Assessment Plan* (RECOVER, 2002), Total System Model [in prep.], *CERP Master Implementation Schedule* (USACE and SFWMD, 1999), regional water supply plans (SFWMD, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d), and the strategic plan for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF, 2000)).
2. Step two: Criteria will be established to select a subset of the total indicators possible for the interim goals. The criteria will be consistent with CERP goals and objectives.
3. Step three: A list of indicators for the interim goals will be created using the criteria established above. For each indicator, the appropriate interval over which it will be evaluated will be identified.
4. Step four: The list of indicators for the interim goals created in step three will be vetted to agencies, stakeholders and the public through suitable venues. Refinements will be made to the list based on the vetting process.
5. Step five: Information will be gathered to set interim targets for the indicators from currently available predictive tools and planning documents, such as the South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM) and other predictive models, the *CERP Master Implementation Schedule*, and other planning documents and regulatory requirements. Model results will be analyzed to develop information to set targets for the indicators.*
6. Step six (a): For indicators with adequate information, targets for interim goals will be set. Step six (b): Where more information is needed to set targets, those needs will be identified and the RECOVER Adaptive Assessment Team will develop processes and a schedule to obtain the needed information. As information becomes available, targets will be set for these interim goals. The targets for the interim goals will be scientifically peer reviewed as they are completed, as appropriate.
7. Step seven: A draft interim goals document describing the indicators and their targets will be developed when targets are developed for a substantial subset of interim goals.
8. Step eight: The draft interim goals document will be vetted through the same process used in step four and will be revised as necessary.
9. Step nine: The interim goals document will be approved by the USACE, the DOI and the State of Florida.
10. Step ten: The interim goals will be reviewed and revised at least every five years. New information will continuously be gathered to revise/update the interim goals, but a new interim goals document will be produced every five years only.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND MECHANISMS

WRDA 2000 requires that interim goals be established to “provide a means by which the restoration success of the Plan may be evaluated throughout the implementation process.” It also mandates a report to Congress, “beginning on October 1, 2005 and periodically thereafter” that includes “progress toward interim goals established in accordance with subsection...”

Chapter 373.470, F.S. states that “[t]he district, in cooperation with the department, shall provide a detailed report on progress made in the implementation of the comprehensive plan, including the status of all project components...”, and that this information “shall be provided annually in a single report...” For fiscal years 2000 and 2001, the CERP Annual Reports were published as stand-alone documents (SFWMD and FDEP, 2000, 2002). Beginning with fiscal year 2002, this report will be published within the annual Everglades Consolidated Report.

Clearly, Congress wants periodic reports on the progress of the CERP, and the Florida Legislature requires annual reporting. Potential reporting mechanisms for the interim goals are the Adaptive Assessment Report, yearly reports to the state, five-year reports to Congress, a CERP Annual Report Card (see **Appendix 7B-2**) and the CERP Annual Reports (see Chapter 7a).

LITERATURE CITED

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