

**Minutes – Florida Keys and South Florida Ecosystem Connectivity Working Team
March 21, 2023**

Attendees: Karen Bohnsack, Jerry Lorenz, Shelly Krueger, Suzy Roebing, Jolly Benson, Gina Ralph, Caitlyn Lusic, Caitlin Newcamp, Caitlyn Bozza, Erin Muller, Steve Blackburn, and Chris Madden

Absent: Chris Bergh (Caitlyn Lusic serving as alternate), Adam Gelber, Nick Parr, Steve Davis, Amelia Moura, Joe Weatherby, Mike Goldberg, Matt Semcheski, Brian Cumbie, Emma Haydocy, Steve Friedman, Paul Julian, Tylan Dean, Luke McEachron, Kelly Cox, Jim Riley, and Cara Capp

Action Item 1: May meeting presentation – the Team would like to hear more about the recent red tide events in Monroe County. Paul Julian may have information about that; Jerry will reach out to Paul. Cory Walter from Mote may also be able to supply Florida Keys specific information since she is involved in the monitoring effort with FWRI, and likewise information about the larger effort. Erinn Muller will follow-up with Cory.

Agenda:

10:00am Welcome, Introductions, Administrative Items (15 min)

Jerry Lorenz called the meeting to order at 10:04 am. Welcome remarks by Jerry Lorenz and mission of the Florida Keys and South Florida Ecosystem Connectivity Working Team (“Team”). Karen Bohnsack captured roll call. The two SFWMD representatives were unable to present today but will be rescheduled for the May meeting. Apparently, there have been violations of minimum flow levels (MFL) for Florida Bay, and penalties have not been issued. The Team is keen to hear more about this topic. Sean Sculley will send some pre-meeting information to bring the Team up to speed.

Today’s meeting will be abbreviated since the speakers are not present. We will cover member updates and ideas for future meetings and ongoing issues.

Item 1: In 2022, the Team sent the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) a letter of opposition about the potential development in Miami Dade to expand the Urban Development Boundary and to develop ~800 acres of coastal habitat near Homestead, FL. This acreage is within the footprint of the Everglades Restoration Plan. The Department of Economic Opportunity sent a letter to Miami-Dade stating there were errors in the approval process and developers did not meet the deadline, and thus the approval process will likely start from the beginning. Link to letter from the FL DEO
https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23588927/skm_c75923012617400.pdf

Item 2: There is an infrastructure plan to provide more water to the south central part of Biscayne Bay and north of Card Sound, to put water into the Card Sound/Barnes Sound area, (e.g., backfilling canals, adding new canals). The current model had some drawbacks because the modelling did not provide salinity, but that has been remedied and will be added ASAP.

This project is still being evaluated. Primary concern: making sure the restoration of Biscayne Bay does not impair or reduce water flows to Card Sound/Barnes Sound or Florida Bay.

Link to The BBSEER Round 2 alternative scenario modeling results have been posted on the SFWMD ftp site. The posting includes the main performance measure set comparing scenarios FWOi, ALT21, ALT22, ALT23 and ALT24 and three other sets related to the five sensitivity runs (SR21A, SR21B, SR22A, SR23A and SR23B).

Link to the plan can be found here and using the following procedure:

<ftp://ftppub.sfwmd.gov/outgoing/BBSEER/20230314> can be accessed by using the following procedure: 1. Be sure to be connected to the internet. This is required. 2. Copy the ftp link, and 3. Paste it in the address bar of your file/directory browser (e.g., Windows Explorer/File Explorer in Windows or Finder in MacOS), NOT into a web/internet browser (e.g., Microsoft Edge or Safari or Google Chrome).

If you need help accessing through the link, you can contact Jerry Lorenz.

Item 3: EPA will have \$8 million in grant funding for this year's WQPP RFA that will be available soon on grants.gov. Steve will provide the links once they are active.

Item 4: The FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee (WQPP) met on March 8-9 with a 2-day meeting and a workshop for the Congressional Report that highlights the past 10 years of the WQPP and addresses future needs and priorities. The creation of the Connectivity Team will be covered in this report. Karen can circulate to Jerry and Cara for review. There was a field trip to Florida Bay. There will be a follow-up meeting of the presentations that had to be cancelled due to the water pipes bursting on US1, and the water outages caused the meeting to be ended early Marathon City Hall. Dr. Jennifer Rehage will be presenting about the bonefish and pharmaceutical research, and that topic would likely be of interest to this Team.

Item 5: April 18 is the next FKNMS SAC meeting in Marathon. The Team will cede our agenda time for this SAC.

Item 6: There has been red tide off of Cudjoe Key – it is very unusual for red tide to be off of Cudjoe. Does anyone have any information or data on these red tides off of Monroe County that have been frequent this winter? Cory Walter at MOTE does some of the HAB monitoring around the Keys, and she provides regular updates as part of the FWRI monitoring team.

Action Item: Short briefing about the red tide events in Monroe County for the May meeting. Paul Julian may have information about that; Jerry will reach out to Paul. Cory Walter may also be able to provide some Keys input and likewise information about the larger effort.

POSTPONED: Minimum Flow Level (MFL) for Florida Bay – POSTPONED UNTIL THE MAY MEETING. Seán Sculley, PE, Applied Sciences Bureau Chief of the South Florida Water

Management District's Water Resources Division and Dr. James Beerens, Lead Scientist on Water Resource Protection, South Florida Water Management District will lead the discussion and answer questions.