



October 20, 2021

Via Email: James.L.Booth@usace.army.mil

Colonel James L. Booth
District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, Florida 32207

Dear Colonel Booth,

Palm Beach County (County) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) 2021 Working Draft Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) published on September 23, 2021, which is intended to serve as a roadmap to plan, design and construct Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and other South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program Projects through Fiscal Year 2032. It is my understanding that the Final 2021 IDS is scheduled to be published later this year.

As I stated during the August 5, 2021 IDS 101 and Stakeholder Listening Session hosted by the USACE, the County supports state and federal efforts to implement ecosystem restoration projects in South Florida. But for many, including me, the IDS is somewhat of a mystery. Over the years, certain projects have been prioritized over others. Several projects have been in the "Planning/Feasibility" category for years with no movement. Even worse, many other projects have been "Pending" in CERP purgatory for many years. Unfortunately, this has been the fate of many Palm Beach County CERP projects identified more than 22 years ago and documented in the 1999 Restudy (aka the Yellowbook).

Of the 68 CERP components identified in the 1999 Restudy, at least seven were located within Palm Beach County and provided benefits to the Lake Worth Lagoon Estuary, while also improving flood control, water supply and water quality. Other than the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (which appears on the 2021 Working Draft IDS), there are no plans to implement any of the CERP components planned within Palm Beach County.

Stakeholders within the County are frustrated with both the pace of CERP project implementation and the process by which CERP components are removed during scoping due to revised definitions of "federal interest". Unilateral decisions by USACE to continually postpone implementation of CERP projects within the County has

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effectively cancelled projects that have been previously authorized by Congress.

While not surprising based on recent decisions and statements made by the USACE, one indicative and truly disappointing oversight by the USACE on the 2021 IDS is that the Lake Worth Lagoon Estuary, a key ecosystem identified for protection and restoration in the 1999 Yellowbook which was authorized by Congress in 2000, is nowhere to be found on the CERP Components Map (IDS Page 2). The Lake Worth Lagoon Estuary should be designated a Northern Estuary, similar to how the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries are shown.

In addition, I understand that USACE wants to show progress and attempt to disprove the long-standing statement that "only one CERP project has been completed." However, claiming that a CERP component is "Complete or Phase 1 Complete" while no discernable benefits are being provided (e.g. Site 1 Impoundment with ASR (Component M)) or claiming that a CERP component is "Complete or Phase 1 Complete" while in fact it was re-purposed by the South Florida Water Management District to achieve Everglades water quality requirements (e.g. C-51 and Southern L-8 Reservoir (Component GGG)) is misleading at best.

Meaningful progress on projects within Palm Beach County is needed now. I welcome conversations with USACE to understand when and how the multiple CERP projects planned to provide benefits to the ecosystems and the more than 1.5 million residents of the County will be prioritized for implementation by the federal government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregg K. Weiss".

Gregg K. Weiss
Commissioner, District 2
Palm Beach County Commission

cc: Lt. Col. Todd Polk, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Eva B. Vélez, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Representative Lois Frankel, United States Congress

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