

**Loxahatchee River Watershed Local Initiative - Summary of Findings**  
**Prepared by the Water Resources Task Force Working Group**  
**October 2018**

**Loxahatchee River CERP Project**

- The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), approved by the U.S. Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, included components (including a ~45,000 acre-foot reservoir) to meet several goals in Northern Palm Beach County (PBC):
  - Restoration of Loxahatchee River
  - Enhancement of Loxahatchee Slough
  - Reduce harmful freshwater flows to the Lake Worth Lagoon
  - Increase water supply availability
  - Improve flood protection
- Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP) Alternative 5R (expected to be the tentatively selected plan (TSP)) achieves river restoration flows > 90 % of the time
- LRWRP Alternative 5R includes:
  - C-18 West Reservoir on Mecca (9,500 acre-feet of storage; 7.5 foot water depth; 18.5 feet high embankments); connection to allow inflows from M-O Canal
  - 4 Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells
  - G-160 and G-161 Structures (already constructed) to reduce over-drainage and improve hydroperiods in Loxahatchee Slough and connect Grassy Waters Preserve to Loxahatchee Slough
  - Improved connectivity between Grassy Waters Preserve and Loxahatchee Slough
  - M-1 pump station to deliver lower M-1 Basin water to M Canal, Grassy Waters Preserve, G-161
  - Components in Martin County to reduce over-drainage and restore and re-hydrate watershed
- LRWRP Alternative 5R does NOT include:
  - Reductions in L-8 Basin runoff to Lake Worth Lagoon
  - Appreciable benefits to water supply availability
  - Appreciable flood control improvements
  - C-51 Reservoir Phase 2 (proposed by some local stakeholders)
  - Use of Indian Trail Improvement District or Lake Worth Drainage District canals to convey water from C-51 Reservoir
- The Draft Project Implementation Report is scheduled to be released by November 2018; project planning is scheduled to be complete by Jan. 2020 (Chief's Report)

**Non-CERP Activities**

- South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Everglades Water Quality Restoration Strategies plan (approved by USEPA and FDEP in 2012 and that helped guide the consent orders issued to SFWMD) assumed:
  - "replacement storage" of 46,000 acre-feet, and
  - redirection of a large portion L-8 Basin stormwater runoff away from the Lake Worth Lagoon and Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs)
- SFWMD's budget for Restoration Strategies included ~\$180 million for "replacement storage" (SFWMD purchased Mecca in 2013 from PBC for ~\$26 million)
- Consent Orders issued to SFWMD by FDEP in 2012 require "replacement storage" to be online and repairs to STA 1 East (STA-1E) Cells 5 and 7 be complete by December 2022
- The Lake Worth Lagoon will continue to be impacted by higher than desirable C-51 West Basin stormwater runoff due to needed repairs at STA-1E and higher than desirable L-8 Basin stormwater runoff due to the lack of a project to store/re-direct L-8 Basin stormwater runoff
- Achieving Everglades water quality requirements will be challenging until STA-1E is repaired and L-8 Basin stormwater runoff is redirected away from the STAs as planned
- SFWMD is currently evaluating C-51 Reservoir (per Senate Bill 10) to determine potential beneficial environmental purposes (expected to be complete by Dec. 2018)

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**Local Initiative**

- Federal funding via CERP would likely not be available for project components not included in the Loxahatchee River CERP project
- A Local initiative process could be led by SFWMD or a local government
- Local initiative components could provide benefits that will not be provided by the Loxahatchee River CERP Project (e.g. improve Lake Worth Lagoon water quality, water supply availability and flood protection)
- Funding options:
  - Federal funding (e.g. FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (if disaster is declared), FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program, etc.)
  - State of Florida Legislative appropriations
  - FDEP water quality grants (e.g. 319 grants)
  - SFWMD Cooperative Funding Program (if available)
  - Local government partnerships (budgeted projects and in-kind)
  - Public/Private partnerships
- Recommendations:
  - Immediate:
    - Water Resources Task Force should consider asking the PBC Board of County Commissioners to establish a coalition of local stakeholders to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD
    - Establish lead agency to administer local initiative
    - Prioritize project components by evaluating benefits and costs
  - Possible Future:
    - Develop project schedule
    - Establish tasks and partner assignments
    - Establish funding agreements
    - Plan, design and construct projects