

Title:

S-28: Support Everglades flow restoration to reduce land-based sources of pollution and improve water quality in estuaries and inlet contributing areas connected to the coral reef ecosystems of southeast Florida.

Background:

- This recommended management action relates to all counties in the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) region and the nearshore coastal area where the nine southeast Florida inlets discharge. The Everglades, Florida Bay and coral reef ecosystems will benefit from improved quality, quantity, timing and distribution of cleaner freshwater.
- This recommended management action is being proposed due to the high volume of freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee to estuaries. These lead to seagrass, coral and oyster mortality and the accumulation of muck. This recommended management action will improve nutrient uptake by stormwater treatment areas and practices before the water is discharged to the Everglades or estuaries, thereby improving the quality of downstream waters.
- This recommended management action is consistent with goals and objectives of county, state and federal governments.
- The SEFCRI Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) fully supports this recommended management action and recommends that it be given high priority.

Objective:

- The intended outcomes of this action are improved water quality and improvements to the quantity, timing and distribution of water for human needs and the natural systems in south Florida.

Intended Benefits and/or Potential Adverse Effects:

- Benefits of implementation of this recommended management action include: (1) improved fish and wildlife health, (2) the entire south Florida region will experience improved water quality as a result of Everglades' restoration, (3) water management improvements, and (4) a reduction in harmful algal blooms.
- The potential disadvantage associated with this recommended management plan is the cost. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is estimated to cost \$7.8 billion in project costs, and costs associated with operations and maintenance (O&M). While the cost of Everglades restoration and water management are enormous, so are the benefits. This recommended management action will bring coral reef ecosystem into the discussion as water management in the south Florida region changes.
- Failure to implement this recommended management action and complete Everglades' restoration will result in continued degradation of the natural systems, including the coral reef ecosystem in southeast Florida.

Agencies/ Organizations:

- The lead agencies for implementation of this recommended management action are SEFCRI, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

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- Other potential agencies or organizations who could be involved include the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, United States Geological Survey, United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Park Service and county and municipal government agencies. It might be worth looking into activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) as they relate to Everglades Restoration.
- Key stakeholders for this recommended management action were not identified.
- This recommended management action is consistent with current legislation.

Permitting/ Enforcement Requirements of RMA:

- There are no new permitting requirements with this recommended management action.
- Means of measuring the success of this recommended management action include: measuring loads of land-based sources of pollution (LBSP) at southeast Florida Inlet Contributing Areas (ICA), success criteria described in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, and the creation and persistence of the ad hoc working group.

Cost:

- The estimated direct cost of implementing this recommended management action is minimal, as it would entail time allocation for SEFCRI members.
- Potential sources of funding include FDEP, SFWMD, NOAA and FKNMS.

Time Frame & Extent:

- The anticipated timeframe for implementation of this recommended management action is ongoing for decades.

Miscellaneous Info:

- This recommended management action is linked to N-69.
- Some uncertainties or gaps with this recommended management action include watershed management plans for ICAs within the SEFCRI region (east of the Everglades).
- Supporting and relevant data include NEPA evaluations and watershed protection plans completed by SFWMD and USACE.
- Currently, SEFCRI partner agencies are involved in planning, building and operating CERP projects and related systems. To date SEFCRI representation in CERP and CERP scoping/dialogue has been limited.

Goals/ Objectives to be achieved:

Refer to the [SEFCRI Coral Reef Management Goals and Objectives Reference Guide](#)

- FL Priorities Goal C1, Obj. 1 / FL Priorities Goal C1, Obj. 7.
- SEFCRI LAS LBSP Issue 4, Goal Obj. 3.