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Jacksonville District

# News Release

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Academy of Sciences address Everglades restoration challenges**

Jacksonville, Fla. – Two recently released reports on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) state that technical, engineering and scientific experts recognize that the enormous challenges faced by federal, state and local agencies have delayed progress on the massive effort to restore America’s Everglades. “We are pleased to be one of 15 separate agencies and organizations with a role in this vital ecosystem restoration effort,” said Col. Paul L. Grosskruger, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District. “While we have many accomplishments to speak of, the biggest ones, those that involve restoring water to the Everglades, are yet to be realized. The possible solutions recommended by the greater scientific community as to how we can do better are greatly appreciated.”

On Fri., Sept. 22 Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works John Paul Woodley, Jr. transmitted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan 2005 Report to Congress. It was followed on Mon., Sept. 25 by the first in a congressionally-mandated series of biennial evaluations

of progress under CERP, developed by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Both reports noted that progress has been made in developing the scientific basis and management structures needed to support Everglades restoration, and acknowledged significant delays in project development. "It is gratifying to see that the Corps' and the independent reports are in general agreement," Grosskruger said.

"The ongoing Kissimmee River Restoration Project, one of the foundation projects under CERP, demonstrates that we have the ability to restore ecosystems damaged by our past actions," Grosskruger continued. "It is an example of how a project can be designed and constructed to provide astounding benefits far more quickly and at a higher quality than originally anticipated." Completion of Phase I of the project has already resulted in significant restoration of historically prevalent hydrologic conditions, reestablishment of native vegetation and an abundant return of wading birds to the region. Construction of Phase II of the project began in July 2006.

The National Academies' Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress, which developed the report for the NAS, highlights the many complexities and challenges that must be addressed and overcome, including budgetary constraints and a project planning process that can be delayed by unresolved scientific uncertainties.

"We completely support moving forward despite current scientific uncertainties," said Grosskruger. "Restoration science is a fairly new field of

research, and waiting for scientific certainty may result in further degradation of the ecosystem, perhaps even its demise. We are not willing to risk that. We agree with the independent review committee that today's uncertainties should not stand in the way of restoration progress."

As federally-funded projects have progressed more slowly than anticipated, the Corps has fully and completely supported the state of Florida's Acceler8 program as an alternative for delivery of restoration benefits.

The combined reports have contributed to a strengthened foundation that will further support adaptive management, removing barriers to natural sheet flow, and moving projects forward more deliberately. "We value the analysis and feedback provided by the NAS group," Grosskruger said. "We know now that we are on the right course, as we proceed with the largest and most complex ecosystem restoration project ever undertaken."

For further information about the Everglades restoration effort, please visit [www.evergladesplan.org](http://www.evergladesplan.org).

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