

A NEPA scoping letter dated June 28, 2016 was mailed to stakeholders soliciting comments for this action. The scoping letter was used to invite comments from Federal, State, and local agencies, affected Indian Tribes, and other interested private organizations and individuals. Comments were accepted through August 12, 2016. A public scoping meetings was held July 26, 2016 in Okeechobee, Florida. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the LOWP was published in the Federal Register (81 FR Volume 46659) July 18, 2016.

Table 1. NEPA Scoping Comment Response Matrix for letters and emails received.

LETTER	Date Received	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
STATE			
Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)			
FDOT-1	8/12/16	Thank you for providing notice of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) public meeting and preliminary planning stage. Please see the attached Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and its Guiding Principles as reference for on-going coordination with the FDOT in this regard (In Appendix). This proposed restoration project appears to fall within Highlands, Okeechobee, DeSoto, Glades and Martin counties. These counties correspond to FDOT's Districts One and Four geographically assigned boundaries. Notable highway facilities within the project area include US 441, US 98, US 27, SR 70, SR 710 and SR 78.	Thank you for your comment. We understand the MOU and will coordinate as required.
LOCAL			
Highlands County Parks and Recreation			
Clell Ford (CF) - 1	8/9/16	I have a brief comment on the subject project, specifically related to the preliminary project area map. During the first set of project delivery team meetings related to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project, I believe it was in the 1999 – 2000 time frame, comments were made about excluding the Lake Istokpoga watershed from the project. This 600 square mile watershed was then included in the project area. I was surprised to see that the preliminary project area map for the current effort again excludes the Lake Istokpoga Watershed as well as the Kissimmee River and upper Kissimmee Drainage	It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The

		basins from the project area. I hope that this can be addressed during the project delivery team process.	current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
CF-2	8/12/16	Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional comments on the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project’s preliminary plans. As I indicated in the PDT meeting on Wednesday, my comments focus on the Project Planning Boundary. Thank you for adding the 23, 877 acre section between Lake Istokpoga and the Kissimmee River, largely including the Istokpoga Canal, to the Project Planning Boundary. As it was presented in the meeting, this addition was largely done because of the presence of SFWMD owned lands in this section of the watershed, as well as opportunities to improve the hydrologic and ecological connection between Lake Istokpoga and the Kissimmee River.	The project footprint only includes lands downstream of Lake Istokpoga and not land upstream or within the lake. The inclusion of the lands east of the lake is consistent with that footprint. Approximately 1,300 acres of SFWMD owned lands are located just north of the Istokpoga Canal between Lake Istokpoga and the Kissimmee River. Water can be sent either from Lake Istokpoga to the Kissimmee River or vice versa. As such this site provides unique storage opportunities. While land ownership is not a constraint in this process, it is a consideration. . Basin boundaries from the Watershed Assessment Model (WAM) were used to delineate a reasonable expanded boundary based on hydrology. While land ownership is not a constraint in this process, it is a consideration.
CF-3	8/12/16	I expressed concerns about not including the 600 square mile Lake Istokpoga watershed in the Project Planning Boundary, though it was included in the 2002 – 2004 Lake Okeechobee Watershed PDT. Briefly, the rationale provided in response to my comment at Wednesday’s PDT meeting was that there were insufficient opportunities for habitat restoration and water storage in this watershed to justify its inclusion. At the	Lake Istokpoga was originally included in the project footprint because the previous LOWP objectives included updating the Istokpoga regulation schedule. The project area has been revised and this watershed is no longer included in the project area because the update of the Istokpoga regulation schedule would be better suited in the Kissimmee-Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual update, which is a separate project

		<p>same time, the planning team has identified having too small a water storage component north of Lake Okeechobee (250,000 acre-feet) as a project risk. Repeatedly over the past decade, the storage needs north of Lake Okeechobee have been identified as between 900,000 and 1.25 million acre-feet</p>	<p>occurring after the LOWP. Additionally, ecosystem restoration sites within the Lake Istokpoga watershed proposed during the previous LOWP effort are no longer within the project area and will not be carried forward as part of the current planning effort.</p>
CF-4	8/12/16	<p>Lake Istokpoga is the primary source of irrigation water for the Indian Prairie System, the only restricted allocation area in the lower Kissimmee Basin Planning area (Lower Kissimmee River Water Supply plan 2014). This is attributable to the limitations of the USACE’s Istokpoga Regulation schedule and an absence of water storage upstream. The previous PDT effort did recommend the Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule as a project to be incorporated into the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (Section 8.2.2, Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project PMP – Final, January 2004). In order to address storage in the Indian Prairie System, which was identified extensively in the first PDT as the location for several water storage projects, storage upstream in the Lake Istokpoga watershed should be considered.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Please see the response in CF-1.</p>
CF-5	8/12/16	<p>Numerous opportunities for a variety of water storage and wetland restoration exist within the Lake Istokpoga watershed, in partnership with both agricultural lands and federal landowners (the Avon Park Air Force Range). Ecological restoration in the corridor between Lake Arbuckle and Lake Istokpoga was considered during the ecological restoration work done for the earlier PDT effort (Section 6.5, Preliminary Planning Area Alternatives, Wetland Restoration – 2004). A mixture of these efforts would benefit of both local concerns and the larger consideration for the timing and delivery of water to Lake Okeechobee. Modifying the Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule also has the potential to restore wetland habitat in the lake that is currently degraded by the more artificial water regulation necessitated by flood protection in the rainy season and water storage in the dry</p>	<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for</p>

		season – upstream water storage would provide the capacity to supply both needs reflecting a more natural hydrology for the system.	additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
CF-6	8/12/16	These comments are meant as an overview of justification for including the Istokpoga watershed in the Project Planning Boundary for this iteration of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed PDT. I would appreciate consideration of including the full Lake Istokpoga watershed in the Project Planning Boundary. Please contact me if you have questions about these comments and this request	Please see the response to CF-1.
Spring Lake Improvement District			
Joe DeCerbo	7/1/16	Our small community of only 1,530 rooftops have been extremely proactive in doing our part. We have spent a lot of our own funds, as well as received several FDEP matching grants and a legislative appropriation. We have received ZERO dollars from SFWMD, which is a surprise to no one! Attachments	Thank you for your comments.
Osceola County			
Rick Baird	7/12/16	Is the LOW project area a federally mandated area, as far as projects to “improve quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee”? Would there be any benefit to your efforts to have someone from Osceola County, or any benefit to Osceola County to be there, if just to hear what the plans are for the LOW project?	We welcome all to participate in the project meetings.
Martin County (MC)			
MC-1	7/28/16	On behalf of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, I am writing to express our support for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) initial scoping session	Thank you for your comments.

		for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project to address storage and water treatment to the north of the Lake that will decrease harmful discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries. We are encouraged to see the USAGE and the South Florida Water Management District continue to make progress on projects identified in the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS).	
MC-2	7/28/16	Martin County supports planning and additional storage north of the Lake and recommends that the project boundary be expanded west and east to include the western and eastern coastal basins of the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, respectively. Including these areas may provide important opportunities for storage solutions that would otherwise not be considered.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>
MC-3	7/28/16	In this early phase of the process we also request that a restoration project be considered to create a wetland littoral zone on the eastern side of Lake Okeechobee. This project would improve fish habitats for the Lake and enhance the quality of Lake water that is released through the S-308 structure to the St. Lucie estuary.	We are looking in to littoral zone creation on the east side of the lake as a management measure for this project.
MC-4	7/28/16	Martin County has consistently advocated for projects that reduce damaging freshwater flows to the estuary and convey clean water south to the Everglades and Florida Bay where it is desperately needed. Our intention is not to disrupt the planning schedule for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed	The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The

		<p>project (LOW); however, we firmly believe that a parallel effort must be initiated. This effort would identify storage and conveyance opportunities south of the Lake, in addition to the benefits of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP).</p>	<p>IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
MC-5	7/28/16	<p>The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) has always been based on flexibility and has emphasized that adaptive management is key to the successful implementation of these projects. In light of the devastating water conditions along the St. Lucie River, the Indian River Lagoon, and the Caloosahatchee Estuary, we continue to rely on our state and federal partners to expedite projects listed on the IDS to provide creative solutions to this complex problem.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
MC-6	7/28/16	<p>We respectfully request that the current proposed LOW project boundary be expanded as described above, and that consideration be given to include a component for the creation of an eastern littoral zone in the Lake. Additionally, we ask that the agencies begin a parallel effort to identify additional storage and conveyance features south of the Lake that will significantly alleviate excess water to the estuaries. The economic and environmental prosperity of Martin County and the greater South Florida region depend on a more comprehensive approach to Everglades restoration that recognizes all additional options for storage and treatment to reduce freshwater discharges to both the east and west coast estuaries.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. See response to MC-2, MC-3, and MC-4.</p>

PRIVATE			
Council of the Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation of Aboriginal Peoples (COMSNAP)			
COMSNAP-1	7/26/16	<p>SABLE TRAIL PIPELINE PROJECT (Document in Appendix)</p> <p>Enclosed are documents and information pertaining to the Sable Trail Pipeline Project, and letters written by Suwannee County, Hamilton County, and Marion County, requesting that the US Army Corps of Engineers conduct a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) relative to the Sable Trail Pipeline Project. Numerous organizations (WWALS Watershed Coalition, Our Santa Fe River, Spectra Busters, Inc., Suwannee- St. Johns Group Sierra Club, Earth Ethics, Inc. Gulf Restoration Network, Environment Florida, Environment Georgia, Clean Water Network and others) groups, and individuals have also submitted both written and oral requests to the Jacksonville Office of the USACOE asking for the USACOE to conduct a SEIS.</p> <p>We hope that you will take the time to review the enclosed documents and information, paying special attention to the two geology and hydrology reports that were submitted independently.</p> <p>It is imperative that the SEIS be done to avoid potential catastrophic impacts to our Floridan Aquifer, world treasured Springs, Rivers, and Falmouth Cathedral Cave System, and our diverse and unique Florida landscape, and critical wildlife habitat.</p>	Thank you for the Sable Trail Pipeline Project documents.
AUDUBON OF FLORIDA (AF)			
AF-1	8/12/16	On behalf of Audubon Florida, thank you for the opportunity to submit input during the scoping period for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project (LOW). Lake Okeechobee’s conservation is a top priority for Audubon, who has had full-time staff working in and around Lake Okeechobee since 1936.	Thank you for your comments

AF-2	8/12/16	<p>The Lake’s challenges are many. We support the stated purposes of the LOW project to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water to the Lake. Extreme water level fluctuations and excess nutrient loading have created untenable problems for the Lake and the systems downstream that receive its water.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments</p>
AF-3	8/12/16	<p><u>Setting discrete objectives for the LOW</u> Objectives for the LOW project include laudable goals such as reducing excessive Lake fluctuations and estuary releases, restoring wetlands in the watershed, and maintaining water supply. For water supply, the goal is discrete and includes achieving a 1-in-10 level of service. Yet, no discrete goal exists for ecological objectives. In order to determine the success of the project, specific goals should be set for the performance measures.</p> <p>For example, the duration that Lake Okeechobee water levels are within the Stage Envelope is a performance measure for the LOW project. A specific goal should be set to hold the Lake within the Stage Envelope 50% of the time, compared with about 25% of the time under current conditions. Similar discrete goals should be set for important ecological measures.</p>	<p>During the scoping process the objectives have been fine-tuned and are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better manage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster and SAV habitat in the northern estuaries • Increase aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee (attenuate extreme high and low water levels) • Increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetland habitat in the watershed <p>Performance measures with targets have been developed for each objective.</p>
AF-4	8/12/16	<p><u>Model north and south storage concurrently</u> Lake Okeechobee is the most important single feature of south Florida’s water management because it functions as the proverbial neck of an hourglass, funneling all the water from the 2.6 million acre Northern Everglades to the southern regions of Florida. Estimates of storage needs upstream of the Lake have ranged from a few hundred thousand acre feet in the first LOW Project Delivery Team analysis, to more than one million in the Northern Everglades Phase II Construction Project (Table 1). In our opinion, the most robust estimates of storage needs were developed in the River of Grass exercise</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the</p>

		<p>because it analyzed north and south of the Lake storage at one time. Doing this planning concurrently avoids learning only how the water enters the Lake, without knowing how and where the water goes when it leaves the Lake. The latter question is of utmost importance to Florida’s water management future, whether the concern is for water supply, flood control, or environmental stewardship.</p>	<p>focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>				
<p>AF-5</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>Because LOW modeling must consider outflows from Lake Okeechobee, at least in the form of estuary releases, it also could include a sub-routine that routes water southward.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="541 1182 1276 1349"> <tr> <td data-bbox="541 1182 936 1284">Exercise</td> <td data-bbox="936 1182 1276 1284">Approximate storage capacity north of Lake Okeechobee</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="541 1284 936 1349">Lake O Watershed Project (~2007)</td> <td data-bbox="936 1284 1276 1349">286,000 acre-feet</td> </tr> </table>	Exercise	Approximate storage capacity north of Lake Okeechobee	Lake O Watershed Project (~2007)	286,000 acre-feet	<p>LOWP modeling will consider water that will move south with the CEPP project because it is included in the future without condition.</p>
Exercise	Approximate storage capacity north of Lake Okeechobee						
Lake O Watershed Project (~2007)	286,000 acre-feet						

		<p>Northern Everglades Phase II construction project (2008)</p> <p>River of Grass (~2009)</p> <p>UF Water Institute Report (2015)</p>	<p>900,000-1.3 Million acre-feet</p> <p>At least 450,000 acre-feet assumed</p> <p>1 million acre-feet in some combination north and south of the lake</p>	<p>Assumed virtually all storage needs met north of Lake</p> <p>This value mostly to help meet water quality goals</p> <p>Based largely on River of Grass modeling</p>
		<p>Table 1. Estimated water storage needs north of Lake Okeechobee from various planning processes. The wide range of values relates to project goals and assumptions about matching project components in other regions.</p>		
AF-6	8/12/16	<p><u>Model wetland restoration benefits to water management</u></p> <p>The LOW project goals can be reached in many different ways, not only through large-scale infrastructure projects. For example, many smaller features could be spread throughout the watershed to achieve the same goals as a single large reservoir. We encourage you to analyze the benefits of wetlands restoration projects in addition to more centralized approaches to water storage.</p> <p>A precedent was set for such a combined approach in the Indian River Lagoon-South project where about 90,000 acres of wetland restoration was envisioned to help slow flows to tide. This allowed the reservoirs and STAs to be smaller. Specifically, the PIR for the project explained:</p>		<p>Wetland restoration is one of our project objectives and one of our management measures. The team will develop screening tools and performance measures to evaluate potential wetland restoration sites throughout the project area.</p>

		<p>The approximately 92,130 acres of natural treatment areas combined for all project basins 30,000 acre-feet and phosphorus reduction of 30,000 acre-feet of water quickly drain through a primary canal system, which then discharges attenuating the stormwater and its associated sediments on lands, the size of the more expensive, maintained STAs can be reduced.</p> <p>Source: Central and Southern Florida Project, Indian River Lagoon—south. Final integrated project implementation report and environmental impact statement, IRL-S PIR. (Page 7-4).</p> <p>Audubon recommends modeling what benefits could be derived from de-centralized approaches to storing water across the watershed.</p>	
<p>AF-7</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p><u>Expand the scope of the project to include the entire watershed</u></p> <p>At 922,108 acres, the study area covers only about one-third of the 2.6 million acre upstream watershed. The study area also is at the bottom of the watershed, making the project incapable of addressing factors from the much larger area that is upstream. This makes the study area too small and limited in location to effectively address watershed issues.</p> <p>As mentioned in the previous section, wetlands restoration has the potential to benefit the LOW greatly. But multiple projects will be needed to create system-wide benefits. Using the entire watershed for evaluation would be essential for a robust examination of possible contributions of such approaches.</p>	<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for</p>

		<p>For example, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project drains the one million-acre Kissimmee River Chain of Lakes (KCOL) region yet has no storage upstream of Lakes Kissimmee, Hatchineha, and Cypress to benefit and protect its hydrology. It also has no upstream water quality component. Considering both deep storage and wetlands restoration in the region could provide multiple benefits in the KCOL, Kissimmee River, and other downstream regions.</p> <p>The SFWMD and DEP have done extensive work characterizing the watershed land uses and characteristics as part of the Basin Management Action Plan, and other studies, creating a large body of detailed work that the LOW could build upon.</p> <p>Audubon recommends the study area be expanded to the entire upstream Lake Okeechobee watershed.</p>	<p>additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p> <p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts.</p>
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			The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
AF-8	8/12/16	<p><u>Paradise Run</u> Paradise Run is the name for the five miles of the Kissimmee River just north of Lake Okeechobee. The original channel of the C-38 was dug along the eastern side of the floodplain, leaving it largely intact and making it largely restorable by restoring flows. Paradise Run was originally part of the Kissimmee River Restoration project and was considered in the first LOW PDT effort.</p> <p>We strongly encourage the PDT to investigate finishing this high value project.</p>	Paradise Run will be evaluated in this project for storage, ASR and wetland restoration.
Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF)			
FWF-1	8/12/16	We submit these comments regarding the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project National Environmental Policy (NEPA) scoping process on behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation. According to the public notice posted at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Eco-system-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project/ , the aim of the project is to “improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee,” provide for “better management of lake water levels,” “reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries” and “improve system wide operational flexibility.”	Thank you for your comments

		<p>The Corps states that it is seeking to “identify opportunities to restore the quantity, quality, and timing and distribution of flows into Lake Okeechobee.”</p>	
<p>FWF-2</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>We have several concerns regarding the scope of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project as currently proposed. As proposed, the project is only looking at a small portion of the Lake Okeechobee watershed, with additional projects to be considered piecemeal in the future. Such a piecemeal look at a complex system is inadequate under NEPA. Instead, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (“Corps”) should be considering the entirety of the Lake Okeechobee watershed for potential projects, as the current issues plaguing the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries due to discharges from Lake Okeechobee are affected by the entire watershed. By avoiding a comprehensive look, the Corps is not considering all possible actions that can be taken to alleviate the nutrient pollution and discharge issues. As the name “Lake Okeechobee Watershed” project implies, the entirety of the Lake Okeechobee watershed should be considered.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule</p>

			<p>changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>FWF-3</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p><u>Geographic Scope</u> Lake Okeechobee has a long, complex history. Over the last century, a series of large disruptions to Lake Okeechobee have seriously altered the ecological and hydrological dynamics of the Lake Okeechobee watershed system. As a result of the hurricane of 1928, the Corps led the construction of an extensive diking system around Lake Okeechobee, isolating it from its historical floodplain, and exacerbating the influence of increased nutrient loads upon the lake’s trophic dynamics. The implementation of the Central and Southern Flood Control Project in the 1950s and 1960s provided water control through canals, structures, levees, and pumping stations, opening much of the historical Lake Okeechobee watershed system floodplain to development and agriculture. This destroyed most of the remaining natural relationships the lake had with its floodplain (with the exception of Fisheating Creek, which is the last free-flowing water body into and out of Lake Okeechobee (water can flow out of the Lake into the lower part of Fisheating Creek when lake levels are elevated)). These projects allowed diversion of water east and west of Lake Okeechobee in an effort to ensure protection of the 650,000 acre Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) created south and contiguous to the lake. The Central and Southern Flood Control Project resulted in one of the largest water control</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. These are captured in the problem statement for this project.</p>

		<p>efforts in the world, but seriously weakened the ability of the Okeechobee watershed system to regulate water and nutrient flow internally and to receiving estuarine systems to the east, west, and south, while greatly altering not only the rate of flow, but the scheduling of flow to the southern Everglades.</p>	
FWF-4	8/12/16	<p>The primary land use in the Lake Okeechobee watershed area is agriculture, comprising 51% of the watershed. Attachment 1 at 8-7. Most of the rest of the watershed includes wetlands, upland forests, and waterbodies, with urban areas comprising about 10% of the land use. <i>Id.</i> The agricultural land is used for improved pasture, for unimproved pasture (for cattle grazing), for citrus groves, and for sugarcane production, along with sod farms, row crops, and dairy operations. <i>Id.</i>; see Figure 1. The Lake Okeechobee watershed is large and complex. See Figure 2.</p> <p>By contrast, the area proposed by the Corps for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project is very limited, to an area immediately north of Lake Okeechobee. See Figure 3.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>
FWF-5	8/12/16	<p>The proposed Lake Okeechobee Watershed project by the Corps thus proposes to completely ignore project possibilities for the Lake Istokpoga Basins, the S-65BC and S-65A basins in the Northern Lake Okeechobee Basins, and the entirety of the Upper Kissimmee Basins, and that is just on the northern side of Lake Okeechobee. Just as importantly, the proposed project ignores the potential for projects east, west, and south of Lake Okeechobee. By defining the proposed project in such a narrow geographic area, in a small part of the entirety of the Lake Okeechobee watershed system, the Corps is too narrowly defining the project scope and will be leaving out potential alternatives that could better achieve the purposes of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project.</p>	<p>Please see the response to FWF-2.</p>

<p>FWF-6</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>The data produced by the South Florida Water Management in the South Florida Environment report demonstrates the necessity of looking at the entirety of the Lake Okeechobee watershed for the Lake Okeechobee watershed project. For water year 2015, of the total water discharge to Lake Okeechobee, 15.6% came from the Lake Istokpoga sub-watershed, 40.9% came from the upper Kissimmee sub-watershed (of which only S-65D is included in the proposal, a small portion of this part of the watershed), and 3.9% came from the east, west, and south watersheds. See Attachment 1 at 8-30. In total, more than 50% of the total water came from areas not included in the proposed project area. The geographic scope of the proposal is thus missing the area that has the <i>majority</i> of impact in terms of water discharge to Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>For water year 2015, for total phosphorus loading to Lake Okeechobee, 10.3% came from the Lake Istokpoga sub-watershed, 21.9% came from the upper Kissimmee sub-watershed (of which only S-65D is included in the proposal, a small portion of this part of the watershed), and 5.8% came from the east, west, and south watersheds. <i>Id.</i> The geographic scope of the proposal is thus missing an area that contributes to a third of the total phosphorus loading to Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>For water year 2015, for total nitrogen loading to Lake Okeechobee, 16.9% came from the Lake Istokpoga sub-watershed, 32.6% came from the upper Kissimmee sub-watershed (of which only S-65D is included in the proposal, a small portion of this part of the watershed), and 6.5% came from the east, west, and south watersheds. <i>Id.</i> at 8-32. The geographic scope of the proposal is thus missing an area that contributes to the <i>majority</i> of the total nitrogen loading to Lake Okeechobee.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will</p>
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<p>FWF-7</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p><u>The Proposed Piecemeal Evaluation Is Prohibited Under NEPA</u> The Corps acknowledges that it is planning to evaluate other areas of the Lake Okeechobee watershed for potential projects in subsequent studies. Attachment 2. The Corps also admits that it would be willing to expand the current project scope to include those other areas if a “non-Federal sponsor” could be identified. <i>Id.</i> The project scope should not, and cannot, be limited by the Corps’ ability to find a “non-Federal sponsor.” Under NEPA, if the project scope should include the entirety of the region, the Corps should include the entire region in its analysis, and is not excused from doing so based on a failure to find a “non-Federal sponsor.” This kind of piecemeal evaluation – waiting until 2021 to investigate the Everglades Agricultural Area – is anathema to the comprehensive look that NEPA demands. <i>See Fla. Wildlife Fed. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>, 401 F. Supp. 2d 1298, 1312 (S.D. Fla. 2005) (finding in development case where “Corps has conceded that it was aware of plans for future development;</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility</p> <p>The purpose of NEPA is to document potential environmental consequences of a Federal Action. The Corps has met the</p>

		<p>that it will have jurisdiction over the next phases of development; and that it anticipates applications for those phases,” the scope of Corps analysis should include the entirety of the project, and should not limit that analysis to phase 1); <i>see also</i> 33 C.F.R. Part 325, Appx. B §7(B) (where there is “a specific activity requiring a Department of the Army (DA) permit . . . which is merely one component of a larger project . . . [t]he district engineer should establish the scope of the NEPA document (e.g., the EA or EIS) to address the impacts of the . . . entire project over which the district engineer has sufficient control and responsibility to warrant Federal review”). As the Corps knows that there will be future projects in other parts of the Lake Okeechobee region, and that it will have jurisdiction over those projects, the entire Lake Okeechobee watershed region <i>must</i> be included as part of the comprehensive analysis the Corps must complete to satisfy NEPA requirements.</p>	<p>intention of Sec. 1502.4 when we did the Yellow Book for all of CERP. In the Yellow Book the Corps described the separate projects (i.e. actions) and laid out a series of 68 projects that would be needed. The Yellow Book includes a programmatic EIS that we are tiering off of for this project. The Corps took a holistic approach using CERP and now are drilling down on specific projects and documenting potential environmental consequences of those.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>FWF-8</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p><u>The Project Should Specifically Consider Water Quality Solutions</u> Based on the August 10, 2016 Project Delivery Team call, it appears that the Corps is considering limiting the scope of the proposed project to the consideration of water quantity solutions alone, and will only be considering the ancillary water quality benefits of such water quantity solutions. Given</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction</p>

		<p>how important water quality is to the estuaries, Lake Okeechobee, and the entire Lake Okeechobee watershed system, water quality impacts and solutions <i>must</i> be considered, especially because water quality improvements is one of the project aims.</p> <p>While dealing with water quantity projects alone might be simpler, the Lake Okeechobee watershed does not need piecemeal, simple solutions that only consider part of the water problem. The Lake Okeechobee watershed needs comprehensive solutions that address water quantity <i>and</i> water quality.</p>	<p>in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans and the South Florida Water Management District’s Lake Okeechobee Protection Program which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.</p>
<p>FWF-9</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p><u>Conclusion</u> The Lake Okeechobee watershed system is a complex, interconnected system. NEPA requires a comprehensive look at the entire system when work is contemplated to avoid a piecemeal approach that will fail to implement the most</p>	<p>The Yellow Book includes a programmatic EIS that we are tiering off of for this project. The Corps took a holistic approach using CERP and now are drilling down on specific projects and documenting potential environmental consequences of those. Under NEPA, management measures</p>

		<p>effective economic and environmental strategies. The Corps' proposal to take a piecemeal approach violates NEPA's scoping requirements precisely because the Corps proposes to take a piecemeal approach that will miss the big picture – and could thus miss the best environmental and economic solutions to the current water pollution crises being caused by the Corps' discharges to the estuaries. The St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries continue to be devastated by the horrible pollution coming from the Lake Okeechobee watershed. Only by addressing the entire watershed in a comprehensive fashion will a comprehensive solution be found. Failure to do so will mean that the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries will continue to be devastated by harmful and toxic algae outbreaks in future years.</p>	<p>within the project area will be evaluated as well as the effects in the larger study area that includes the adjacent estuaries.</p>
American Sportfish Association (ASA)			
ASA-1	8/12/16	<p>The American Sportfishing Association appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and input to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on the planning phase of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) Project. Addressing the quantity and quality of flows into Lake Okeechobee (Lake) is an important component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and critical to reducing the necessity for and frequency of releases to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and the associated environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments</p>
ASA-2	8/12/16	<p>We fully support increasing the scope of the project to include the area east of Lake Istokpoga and strongly encourage further expansion to include additional areas extending northward to the Chain of Lakes. Maximizing the project planning boundary in this way will provide the greatest flexibility and benefit when determining options for aquifer storage and recovery as well as surface water reservoirs. We also fully support wetland improvements, particularly as they provide increased and improved habitat for fish and wildlife.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties:</p>

			<p>Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>ASA-3</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>It is promising that providing greater flexibility in managing the overall system is a major goal of the LOW Project. By constructing storage options to hold water before it reaches the Lake, at least 6 inches in Lake level flexibility will be gained.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary</p>

		<p>However during the August 10th Project Delivery Team meeting, we were extremely disappointed to hear that water quality is no longer a primary component of the LOW Project and is now only considered an ancillary outcome.</p>	<p>water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans and the South Florida Water Management District’s Lake Okeechobee Protection Program which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.</p>
<p>ASA-4</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>Both water quantity and quality are critical to achieving meaningful changes in the Lake, and not addressing both with this project is a greatly missed opportunity. Regardless of the storage achieved by the LOW Project, releases to tide will still be necessary during high inflow events thereby ensuring continued nutrient-laden discharges to the east and west. In addition, the continued inflow of untreated water into the Lake merely perpetuates the accumulation of legacy nutrients. Without addressing water quality entering the lake, we will merely be postponing addressing this important issue yet</p>	<p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida</p>

		again. While we appreciate the benefits of placing water storage components in proximity with state stormwater treatment areas, the greatest impact will result from a coordinated system designed to address water quantity and quality together through the LOW Project.	Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans and the South Florida Water Management District’s Lake Okeechobee Protection Program which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.
ASA-5	8/12/16	We understand the constraints of the 3x3x3 Planning Process and the \$3 million cap on construction and appreciate the USACE using this expedited process; however, exceptions to the monetary component have been granted in the past and should be granted for the LOW Project to undertake water quality and quantity issues simultaneously. It is unacceptable to miss the opportunity to address water quality before it enters the Lake due to a process constraint that could be adjusted.	There is not a \$3 million cap on construction. The \$3 million cap is only on the planning study. At this point in time the Corps is not planning on requesting a waiver from the 3x3x3 timing and funding constraints. Although water quality improvement is not a primary project objective, ancillary water quality benefits may be achieved with wetland restoration and water storage features.
ASA-6	8/12/16	Finally, we encourage synchronizing LOW planning with EAA planning and the continued expediting of all Everglades restoration projects, both from a planning and implementation perspective. Thank you for the opportunity for input on this most important project.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task</p>

			Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
Everglades Foundation (EF)			
EF-1	8/12/16	Please accept this as the Everglades Foundation’s recommendations regarding scoping for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project (LOW). The issues raised by the public at the scoping meetings were clearly centered around identifying land, total potential storage amount and estuary benefits. These must be addressed at the outset of project planning to maintain public support for this initiative particularly given the limited opportunities for public engagement anticipated going forward.	Thank you for your comments.
EF-2	8/12/16	The success of this project will be measured in its ability to achieve clear goals. The goals for the LOW project have been defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee • Provide for better management of lake water levels • Reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries • Improve system wide operational flexibility 	Thank you for your comment.

EF-3	8/12/16	Agencies have already a clear idea about the parcels of land to be used for this project. Therefore, we request that the total overall storage amount estimated from this project be clearly identified within the next few weeks. The next consideration, particularly given the accelerated timeline must be to determine feasibility of storage options based on type, technology, cost and location. Finally, the project delivery team must quantify the reduction in discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and improvements to Lake Okeechobee water levels and water quality from the LOW project (during wet and dry years).	The team is in the process of identifying properties and identifying potential reservoir locations and sizes for the Alternatives Milestone on 18 October. The screening criteria include cost and reductions in flows to the estuaries. While land ownership is not a constraint in this process, it is a consideration.
EF-4	8/12/16	We believe you have sufficient tools in the Regional Simulation Model to answer these questions prior to the next Project Delivery Team meeting. In addition, it is vital to evaluate and clearly demonstrate existing and proposed changes to habitat values on each of the lands proposed for the LOW project. Lastly, we believe that transparency regarding the cost per acre-foot of storage is critical to guide sound decision-making.	The team is working on the screening to get to the Alternatives Milestone on 18 October.
Audubon Florida * Audubon Society of the Everglades Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (Riverwatch) Center for Biological Diversity * Ding Darling Wildlife Society * Everglades Trust Florida Wildlife Federation* Friends of the Everglades National Parks Conservation Association * National Wildlife Federation Sierra Club (NGO)			
NGO-1	8/12/16	<p>On behalf of the following organizations dedicated to protection and restoration of the Everglades, thank you for the opportunity to submit input during the scoping period for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project (LOW).</p> <p>The LOW project is intended to provide water storage and treatment to regulate extreme Lake levels, reduce phosphorus to the Lake, and reduce freshwater discharges to the east and west coast estuaries. In addition to these stated LOW project goals, one of the overarching goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is to expand the spatial extent of wetlands and wildlife habitat. As you develop the LOW project alternatives, we urge you to seek options that do not sacrifice</p>	Thank you for your comments. Existing wetlands and Kissimmee River Restoration Projects will be used in the screening of alternatives.

		valuable habitat or wetlands, such as those intended to be restored by the Kissimmee River Restoration project.	
NGO-2	8/12/16	In the midst of the water crisis resulting from prolonged discharges from Lake Okeechobee and chronic low freshwater flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, proceeding under current project schedules will not bring comprehensive relief fast enough. As you initiate the Lake Okeechobee Watershed study, we urge you to also initiate planning for water storage, treatment and conveyance options in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). We are encouraged by recent statements by Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, expressing willingness to initiate such a study quickly.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will</p>

			serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
NGO-3	8/12/16	The public notice for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project notes that “[w]ater inflows into Lake Okeechobee greatly exceed outflow capacity.” We assume that the LOW study team will model features upstream of Lake Okeechobee to determine the impact of high inflows on Lake Okeechobee levels and outflows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. With concurrent planning for project features in the EAA, proposed LOW features can be modeled to determine not only the impact on estuary releases, but to determine the benefits of different outflow options south of the Lake.	Please see response above.
Florida Farm Bureau Federation (FFB)			
FFB-1	7/27/16	Thank you for providing Florida Farm Bureau Federation the opportunity to comment on the initial startup of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project Plan. The Florida Farm Bureau has been a longtime supporter of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the Comprehensive Everglades Planning Process (CEPP). We believe state and federal money should be used exclusively to complete projects. As such we are supportive of exploring all existing opportunities utilizing land already purchased, north, south, east, and west within the watershed. We do not support the fee simple purchase of any more land.	Thank you for your comment. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
FFB-2	7/27/16	Within the specific boundaries delineated by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers’ (Corps) Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project map we believe there are opportunities to provide water storage, water quality, timing, and discharge benefits without having to purchase additional lands.	Thank you for your comment.
FFB-3	7/27/16	1. The South Florida Water Management District (District) owns close to 10,000 acres within the Taylor Creek /Nubbin Slough (TCNS) Basin. These lands include Taylor Creek, Nubbin Slough, Lakeside Ranch, and Brady Ranch. In addition, the District has 2 ASR wells in this Basin.	We are evaluating those lands for possible management measure locations.

FFB-4	7/27/16	1a. Completion of projects on these existing lands will complement agricultural BMPs that have been implemented during the last several decades, including the dairy industry's investment of confinement barns and stormwater water systems to capture and recycle nutrients and water within the farm.	Agreed, we are looking to maximize the effectiveness of our management measures.
FFB-5	7/27/16	1b. We encourage more public private partnerships between agricultural landowners through more dispersed water management throughout the Basin when benefits can be obtained by both parties.	Agreed. Public private partnerships are an important component of restoration that are being promoted through several programs. For example the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan legislation (373.4595 Florida Statutes) directs the coordinating agencies to maximize opportunities for partnerships with the private sector. Another example are easement programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
FFB-6	7/27/16	1c. We support aquifer storage and recovering (ASR) as a means to store and treat water thus reducing the need to look for more land for storage.	We are looking at ASR as a storage option for this project.
FFB-7	7/27/16	2. The District also owns close to 5,000 acres in the Indian Prairie Basin that include the Pearce property and properties within the Paradise Run area.	This area is being evaluated as part of this project.
FFB-8	7/27/16	2a. We encourage maximum utilization of existing lands under state and federal ownership within the basin and implementation of ASR in support of restoration efforts in the Paradise Run area.	We are looking at these options as we work towards our alternatives. While land ownership is not a constraint in this process, it is a consideration. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
FFB-9	7/27/16	2b. We encourage public private partnerships between agricultural landowners utilizing programs like dispersed water management throughout the Basin when benefits can be realized by both parties.	Thank you. Please see response to FFB-5.

FFB-10	7/27/16	2c. We encourage exploring water storage and supply opportunities with the Seminole Tribe on the Brighton Reservation.	The Seminole Tribe of Florida is a cooperating agency on this project.
FFB-11	7/27/16	3. The Florida Farm Bureau Federation supports existing and additional public private partnerships on agricultural lands in the Fisheating Creek Basin as well as utilizing lands already in state ownership for additional storage and wetland restoration.	We are looking at lands for areas for additional storage and wetland restoration.
FFB-12	7/27/16	4. We encourage coordination of Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project objectives in the S65D and S65E Basins with Kissimmee River Restoration efforts in order to provide maximum storage opportunities on existing state owned lands.	LOWP wetland restoration projects located in the S65D and S65E basins may provide additional storage within the Lake Okeechobee watershed. This storage will be calculated as part of a performance measure during the alternatives analysis.
FFB-13	7/27/16	5. We encourage the State and Federal agencies to look at possibilities to provide additional storage in Lake Kissimmee even if it requires additional facilities to provide upstream flood protection.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC)			
TCRPC-1	7/26/16	The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council discussed the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project at their monthly meeting on July 15, 2016. Council agreed this is an important project, especially as it relates to improving the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee;	The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland

		<p>and reducing releases to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River Estuaries. However, it is not clear why the project area does not include all of the sub-watersheds north and west of Lake Okeechobee. For example, the Lake Istokpoga, Upper Kissimmee, and northern portion of the Lower Kissimmee sub-watersheds are not included in the project area. Council recommends that these watersheds be included in the overall project area.</p>	<p>Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood</p>
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			<p>control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p> <p>In the upper portions of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, it is important to note that a monumental river restoration project, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, has been underway for several years. This precedent-setting restoration efforts is a partnership between the State of Florida and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). It includes restoring 40 miles of historic river channel and almost 25,000 acres of wetlands, and implementing changes to the Kissimmee headwaters lakes regulation schedules to provide water flows necessary to provide water needed for the restored portions of the River. These regulation changes will also improve littoral habitat within lakes Hatchineha, Cypress and Kissimmee and help address other issues in this area. Completion of the project is scheduled in 2020.</p>
East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC)			
ECFRPC-1	7/25/16	The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is of utmost importance to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, not only because of the Lake's impacts to the Indian River Lagoon, but also because our member communities discharge into the watershed. Impacts to the watershed contributed from the upper basin flow down to the Lake. Taking action in source areas is vital to the health and integrity of the entire system, not just those projects closest to the Lake.	Thank you for your comments
ECFRPC-2	7/25/16	Communities in the Upper Basin, such as Osceola County and Orange County, which impact the water quality and health of the basin, should be considered as part of the solution. Focus should be regionally based on magnitude and impact, and include the entire watershed, not just areas proximate to the lake. The Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan recognizes that the capture and reduction in nutrients	It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of

		upstream can have a beneficial impact to the quality and quantity of water released to the lake.	service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
ECFRPC-3	7/25/16	Therefore, to ensure a complete regional discussion for solutions and implementation of these solutions, it is necessary to include the Upper Kissimmee Basin Communities in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.	In the upper portions of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, it is important to note that a monumental river restoration project, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, has been underway for several years. This precedent-setting restoration efforts is a partnership between the State of Florida and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). It includes restoring 40 miles of historic river channel and almost 25,000 acres of wetlands, and implementing changes to the Kissimmee headwaters lakes regulation schedules to provide water flows necessary to provide water needed for the restored portions of the River. These regulation changes will also improve littoral habitat within lakes Hatchineha, Cypress and Kissimmee and help address other issues in this area. Completion of the project is scheduled in 2020.
ECFRPC-4	7/25/16	It is the strong recommendation of the ECFRPC Board that this project include Osceola County and Orange County in the	You are invited to be on the LOWP team. The PDT meeting dates and information are posted on http://bit.ly/LakeOWatershed . The PDT is currently meeting

		dialogue and as members of the Lake Okeechobee Project Team.	monthly on the second Wednesday of the month for a 2 hour teleconference/web meeting at 9:00 AM. The dates and times are subject to change and will be posted on the above web page.
Florida Crystals Corporation (FCC)			
FCC-1	8/11/16	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the information presented at the scoping meeting for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (LOWP) held in Okeechobee on July 25th 2016. We have been active participants in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan ("CERP") process and the Central Everglades Planning Project ("CEPP"). The complexity and scale of the challenges in developing a plan for the LOWP make it a fitting subject for a major initiative under the CERP umbrella. Recent events have made it apparent to all interested parties that improving the quality of the water flowing into the Lake and providing a more manageable system to hold water upstream are among the highest priority elements of the regional ecosystem restoration program.	Thank you for your comments
FCC-2	8/11/16	Our company has farms that are directly affected by the management of the Lake and the quality of the water that flows into it. Farmers in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area are dependent on Lake Okeechobee for irrigation during the dry months, which provides an effective and positive outlet for Lake water that in many years would otherwise have to be diverted to the estuaries. In addition, farmers in the Everglades Agricultural Area must comply with water quality limits to protect the downstream Everglades. Since the Lake is also a significant source of water for the Everglades it is imperative that this project reduce phosphorus in Lake Okeechobee.	While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities.

<p>FCC-3</p>	<p>8/11/16</p>	<p>We would like to offer the following specific comments on the presentation made at the meeting on the 25th and on other relevant points for this phase of project planning.</p> <p>1. The Project Purpose is given as "to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water flowing into Lake Okeechobee" yet the first Project Objective is to "reduce undesirable discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie estuaries." That objective does not line up exactly with the Project Purpose. All are worthy goals but the recommended plan may be different depending on what is really the top priority. This should be clarified as the study progresses.</p>	<p>The purpose and objectives have been fine-tuned during the scoping process. The objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better manage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster and SAV habitat in the northern estuaries • Increase aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee (attenuate extreme high and low water levels) • Increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetland habitat in the watershed
<p>FCC-4</p>	<p>8/11/16</p>	<p>2. Recent discussions of this project at the South Florida Water Management District and the Federal Task Force have indicated that this iteration of the LOWP will include aquifer storage and recovery ("ASR"). Since the ASR pilot project is complete and the final report, showing excellent results for the LO ASR Pilot, has been accepted, ASR should be an integral component of plan formulation. ASR was a major feature of the CERP, and has an obvious linkage to this LOWP planning process. The presentation on the 25th was silent on this topic other than one inconspicuous reference on slide 8. ASR could turn out to be the cornerstone of the LOWP and should be factored into the analysis from the start.</p>	<p>Since a lot has been learned since the previous project effort and from the ASR Pilot Project, ASR is being evaluated as a possible management measure.</p>
<p>FCC-5</p>	<p>8/11/16</p>	<p>3. The scoping presentation made no reference to water supply other than to list "maintaining existing water supply" as a project constraint. This fails to recognize that the context of Lake Okeechobee management has changed dramatically since CERP was approved in WRDA 2000. LORS 08 has resulted in a significant negative impact to agricultural water supply and it is unclear that the Corps is committed to restoring the previous water supply performance once the repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike are complete. With the availability of ASR on a large scale it may be possible to restore the water supply</p>	<p>LORS 08 is a water control plan change that was not implemented under CERP authority and is not required to comply with Savings Clause provisions of WRDA 2000. There is no obligation to restore water supply to pre-LORS 08 conditions. However, water supply will be considered in the alternatives evaluations and Savings Clause requirements will be fully considered for the LOW Project.</p>

		<p>performance of previous lake schedules without sacrificing the ecological health of the lake. This was one of the features that made the original CERP framework appear so successful. Enhancing water supply should therefore be a project objective in this study, not just a constraint. Alternatively, this constraint could be rephrased as "maintaining existing water supply present in December 2000, when the CERP was authorized by Congress."</p>	
FCC-6	8/11/16	<p>4. Another technology that was not included in the original CERP formulation, but that has drawn significant attention since, is the use of deep disposal wells as a mechanism to reduce the inflow of high nutrient runoff to the Lake, and therefore the amount of water that must be released to the estuaries. The SFWMD produced a report in 2007 entitled "Feasibility Assessment of Deep Well Injection to Assist in Management of Surface Water Releases from Lake Okeechobee to (the) Estuaries." This report presents useful information regarding the cost and effectiveness of this technology. A network of strategically placed injection wells would provide a way to deal with serious water quality issues in the upstream watershed as well as a way to reduce the volume of both water and pollutants now released to the estuaries and should be part of the plan formulation on this project.</p>	<p>Deep injection wells are being evaluated as a potential management measure.</p>
FCC-7	8/11/16	<p>5. The ACOE presentation lists the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule as a constraint. Surely that is meant as a general statement and not a reference to the existing LORS08 remaining fixed for this planning process. Any significant water storage feature upstream of the lake will require adjustments to the lake operating rules to achieve the best performance. This is definitely the case if ASR or Disposal Wells are part of the plan. As with the original CERP, framework adjustments to the lake operations were necessary to define when water would be stored in the aquifer and when it would be released</p>	<p>Due to the strict schedule and budget in this expedited SMART Planning effort, the PIR/EIS will not involve re-evaluation of regulation schedules. However, if refinement opportunities to regulation schedules are identified in the process, they will be noted and appropriately considered.</p> <p>Per the IDS, the planning process to update the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) will commence in 2022. The current LORS08 regulation schedule will serve as a basis for analysis of the LOW Project alternatives.</p>

		based on the lake stage. It would seem that the changes to lake operations would be an integral part of any plan that includes storage upstream of the lake, whether above ground or in an ASR well network.	
FCC-8	8/11/16	In general we are supportive of the Corps' 3x3x3 planning process because of the discipline and efficiencies that should come with it. However, an adequate plan with a scope this broad will be difficult to produce in that time frame, especially since a large portion of the 3 year allotment will be taken up with the federal reviews and approvals after the plan itself is complete. It is therefore of utmost importance that the necessary resources are provided to the planning team both at the Corps as well as the other federal agencies that will play a critical role in completing an implementable plan in this time frame.	Thank you for your comment.
FCC-9	8/11/16	The successful conclusion of this planning effort is very important to our company. We intend to be actively, and constructively, involved as an affected interest throughout the process and will continue to communicate our ideas and questions as the NEPA process moves along.	Thank you for your comments
Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida (SCGCF)			
SCGCF-1	8/12/16	Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida is an interested and affected stakeholder in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. Our grower-owners farm 75,000 acres south of Lake Okeechobee in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and rely on Lake Okeechobee for supplemental irrigation water. We are long-standing champions of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and are pleased that you have re-started the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project with the South Florida Water Management District as the local sponsor.	Thank you for your comments
SCGCF-2	8/12/16	Water storage, treatment and conveyance north of Lake Okeechobee will provide many benefits to the entire ecosystem. The importance of this major initiative has become	Since a lot has been learned since the previous project effort and from the ASR Pilot Project, ASR is being evaluated as a possible management measure.

		<p>even more evident given the recent events driven by the El Nino wet dry-season. The project will help manage lake water levels and may provide some relief in making releases to the coastal estuaries. ASR wells were a significant component in CERP, especially within the Lake Okeechobee region. Now that the pilot project and report has been completed, we hope these findings are incorporated into this planning process.</p>	
SCGCF-3	8/12/16	<p>We are encouraged that your stated project purpose, "to improve the quality quantity, timing and distribution of water flowing into Lake Okeechobee," recognizes the importance of planning for the serious water quality challenges in the watershed. By staging water upstream, or holding it above or below ground, this plan will augment the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Plan for meeting water quality standards.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p>
SCGCF-4	8/12/16	<p>While planning for this important project there are policy issues that must be kept in mind. We are glad to see that your presentation recognized that all CERP projects, including this one, must meet the Savings Clause requirements embodied in WRDA 2000. This means that the level of service for flood protection and water supply cannot be diminished from the date of enactment of the law.</p>	<p>Water supply will be considered in the alternatives evaluations and Savings Clause requirements will be fully considered for the LOW Project.</p>

SCGCF-5	8/12/16	We support the geographic boundaries identified in your presentation for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Plan since storing and treating water north of the lake provides the most benefits to the entire Lake Okeechobee/ Everglades ecosystem. Based on the presentation in Okeechobee it is not clear that you recognize the potential benefits of including a series of deep disposal wells in the plan formulation for this effort. Significant review of this technology has taken place since WRDA 2000 and there is clearly a place for this approach in the Lake Okeechobee watershed.	Deep injection wells are being evaluated as a potential management measure.
United States Sugar Corporation (USSC)			
USSC-1	8/12/16	USSC has long supported restoration of the Everglades ecosystem in accordance with CERP's goals and objectives. To this end, USSC strongly supports prompt completion of the LOW Project feasibility study and environmental impact statement. As a stakeholder and agricultural land owner in the Lake Okeechobee area, USSC representatives attended the public meeting held July 26, 2016 in the City of Okeechobee, and we look forward to continued participation as USACE implements the expedited, "SMART" Planning process for this civil works feasibility study.	Thank you for your comments
USSC-2		As noted on the November, 2015 Integrated Delivery Schedule, the LOW Project is the next step toward maximizing achievements of the goals and objectives of CERP at the earliest possible time. By moving forward with well-crafted projects north of Lake Okeechobee, including both above and below ground storage as outlined in CERP, many opportunities for improving the C&SF Project's multi-purpose operations can be realized. Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) projects were a key component of CERP's formulation; the LOW Project should embrace the opportunity to plan for including integral CERP features as part of this next component.	Since a lot has been learned since the previous project effort and from the ASR Pilot Project, ASR is being evaluated as a possible management measure.
USSC-3		We recognize the LOW Project is currently at a conceptual level. Therefore, no LOW Project details are available yet. The	Thank you for your comments

	<p>process is in the Scoping Phase, geared to formulate alternative plans and identify LOW Project priorities and issues for evaluation in the federal feasibility study. In light of the limited available information, we pledge to remain engaged and provide further comments. We discuss particular that also need to be within the scope of LOW Project in the attached and incorporated Exhibit A; referenced documents are attached and incorporated in Exhibit B. As the issues are developed, we look forward to continued opportunities to comment.</p>	
<p>USSC-4</p>	<p>1. LOW Project Meeting the CERP Savings Clause and Other C&SF Project Commitments</p> <p>During the July 26, 2016 public meeting on the LOW Project, USACE staff indicated the interim 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS) would be a LOW Project planning constraint. If the USACE uses the interim 2008 LORS in the project evaluation, we believe this reliance is misplaced and may create an inability to meet CERP's legal commitments.</p> <p>The "Savings Clause" in WRDA 2000 requires that "[u]ntil a new source of water supply of comparable quantity and quality as that available on the date of enactment of this Act [(December 11, 2000)] is available to replace the water to be lost as a result of implementation of the Plan, the Secretary and the non-Federal sponsor shall not eliminate or transfer existing legal sources of water, " Public Law 106-541, 114 Stat. 2688; (WRDA 2000) at §601(h)(5). The "Pre-CERP Baseline" developed for the purpose of identifying 2000 conditions protected by the Savings Clause, assumes that Run 25 is in existence, and, therefore, water supplies available for use assuming such Lake operations would</p>	<p>Due to the strict schedule and budget in this expedited SMART Planning effort, the PIR/EIS will not involve re-evaluation of regulation schedules. However, if refinement opportunities to regulation schedules are identified in the process, they will be noted and appropriately considered.</p> <p>Per the IDS, the planning process to update the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) will commence in 2022. The current LORS08 regulation schedule will serve as a basis for analysis of the LOW Project alternatives.</p> <p>LORS08 is a water control plan change that was not implemented under CERP authority and is not required to comply with Savings Clause provisions of WRDA 2000. There is no obligation to restore water supply to pre-LORS conditions. However, water supply will be considered in the alternatives evaluations and Savings Clause requirements will be fully considered for the LOW Project.</p>

	<p>continue to be available until replaced from some other comparable source.</p> <p>As an interim Lake regulation schedule, the 2008 LORS temporarily operates Lake Okeechobee at substantially lower levels, due primarily to public health and safety concerns associated with instability of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD), and consequently imposes temporary, yet substantial and adverse, impacts on the water supply rights of existing legal users. Explaining the temporary nature of the 2008 LORS lake regulation schedule, the 2008 LORS Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Interim Nature of the Selected Plan - A new regulation schedule is required to respond to high lake levels that have resulted in integrity issues and concerns with the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD), high volume releases to the estuaries, and impacts to Lake Okeechobee littoral zones. Hence, a new Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule was developed. <i>[2008] LORS is intended to be an interim schedule.</i> 2008 LORS FSEIS at iv. (emphasis added)</p> <p>Although 2008 LORS remains in effect today, the USACE formally committed to replace this Lake schedule by 2021, per the CERP Integrated Delivery Schedule and concurrent with the completion of the HHD dike repairs. In fact, USACE noted in its HHD Final EIS that model evaluations had been conducted demonstrating previous Lake regulation schedules could be accommodated by the repaired HHD. See Appendix C (USACE response to SFWMD-2) to the HHD DSS FEIS. In the CERP planning process, the previous Lake regulation schedule, which was based on Run 25, was an integral component of the USACE's analysis to develop the Comprehensive Plan (D-13R).</p>	
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	<p>See Appendix A 4-5 of the C&SF Project Comprehensive Review Study, Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (April 1999) (the "Restudy"). The Restudy contemplates modifications of Run 25 only as necessary to implement alternative storage projects in a phased manner to reduce discharges to the coastal estuaries. See Section 9.2.1.1 "Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (F)" of the Restudy. This is indicative of the incremental approach under CERP to restore the ecosystem, while meeting other water related needs of the system, including water supply. WRDA 2000. To the contrary, the temporary use of 2008 LORS, made necessary due to the public health and safety issues with the HHD, caused an abrupt, extensive reduction in Lake storage. Therefore, the use of the interim 2008 LORS as a system constraint in the development of the LOW Project effectively ignores the nature of the temporary lake schedule and is inconsistent with the Savings Clause. Such conditions were never assumed in development of CERP and are a dramatic departure from it. Nowhere is such a manipulation of the Savings Clause protection authorized in WRDA 2000 or recognized in CERP.</p> <p>If the LOW Project does not recognize the temporary nature of 2008 LORS, which will be replaced before the LOW Project becomes operational, such invalid assumption will result in conflicting and outdated project designs and operations. This action would significantly complicate opportunities to reconsider the 2008 LORS as committed to by the USACE in order to restore water rights to water users upon HHD repair. Simply put, embedding the temporary 2008 LORS as a LOW Project constraint is not appropriate and should be avoided. Instead, the LOW Project scope should embrace this opportunity to conduct alternative evaluations that incorporate Lake operations not constrained by the condition</p>	
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		<p>of the HHD. At a minimum, a bracketing analysis based on the Run 25 Lake regulation schedule, per CERP, should be performed to identify the range of opportunities available in designing and operating the LOW Project consistent with a higher lake schedule. In addition, the system's constraints should be revisited to provide for water supply as envisioned by CERP. Performance measures which protect water supply availability should be part of this evaluation.</p>	
<p>USSC-5</p>		<p>2. LOW Project Purpose Clear definition of the LOW Project's purpose and objectives will be critical to evaluation of alternatives as this planning process proceeds. The public meeting materials indicate the LOW Project's purpose: "... is to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water to Lake Okeechobee." Several LOW Project objectives were also provided and indicate additional objectives, including "reducing high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake." A clear understanding of the LOW Project's purpose and objectives will lead to meaningful alternative evaluations.</p> <p>One such alternative, which could reduce high-volume discharges sooner and more economically, is the use of deep disposal wells as a component capable of significantly improving conditions in the Lake and both coastal estuaries.</p> <p>Additionally, clarification as to which CERP purposes will have primary focus in this next incremental component is necessary. USSC looks forward to providing additional comments in this regard.</p>	<p>The purpose and objectives have been fine-tuned during the scoping process. The objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better manage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster and SAV habitat in the northern estuaries • Increase aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee (attenuate extreme high and low water levels) • Increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetland habitat in the watershed <p>Performance measures with targets are being developed for each objective.</p> <p>Deep injection wells are being evaluated as a potential management measure.</p>
<p>USSC-6</p>		<p>3. Status of 2004 Project Management Plan for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed In January 2004, a Project Management Plan for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed was developed by USACE and</p>	<p>There are several major differences in this study and the previous study which was stopped in 2007. The PMP is being updated to reflect the following changes:</p>

		<p>SFWMD as a CERP component. See Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project, Project Management Plan - Final (January 2004) (included in Exhibit B). This material was not referenced in the presentation materials. Could the USACE please explain what portions of this prior work it intends to rely upon in this process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous study formulated for water quality and included management measures such as stormwater treatment areas (STA's). We are no longer formulating for WQ as the State has programs to address WQ standards. Water quality will be evaluated as an ancillary benefit of restoration and storage features included in the array of alternatives. • The previous project did not evaluate Aquifer Storage, Recharge and Recovery (ASRR) as a means of additional storage. Several pilot projects, including the Kissimmee River ASR, have been completed since 2007 and will provide useful scientific data to evaluate the location and effectiveness for implementation of ASR technology with the project area. • The regulatory schedule for Lake Okeechobee has changed since the previous study. During the previous study the WSE regulation schedule was used to determine regulatory releases from Lake Okeechobee (S-77 and S-80 as well as the structure releasing water to the south). Currently the lake is regulated according to the LORS08 schedule. This change provides a different downstream boundary condition for the LOW Project that may affect the evaluation of alternative plans.
<p>USSC-7</p>		<p>4. Natural Resources and Listed Species Natural resources and listed species issues are an important consideration in the development of the LOW Project. Because these issues may affect planning decisions, it would be helpful to include these considerations early in the study. The LOW Project presents a unique opportunity to create flexibility and incentives in addressing the natural resources and species issues. This includes the ability to explore additional storage or habitat projects or both north of the Lake through public-private partnerships. To assist in creating this flexibility, we encourage the agencies to approach these topics</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We have begun consultation with USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Flexibility in species issues are being included in the plan formulation and alternative screening.</p>

		in a holistic manner, balancing the many benefits of the LOW Project, and avoiding single species management. This approach is contemplated in CERP and is consistent with the C&SF Project's comprehensive operations. Such an approach would greatly enhance the success and benefits of the LOW Project.		
USSC-8		Index to Documents to Supplement the Record for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (In Appendix)	Exhibits are included in the appendix	
		No.		Document Description
		001		2016-02-23 USSC Herbert Hoover Dike Dra
		002		2016-07-05 USSC Herbert Hoover Dike Fin
		003		2016-02-00 CERP Integrated Delivery Sche
004	2004-01-00 Final Project Management Plan			
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP)				
CHNEP-1	8/10/16	The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) attended the July 26, 2016, Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping meeting and is pleased to share our comments on the proposed project area.	Thank you for your comments	
CHNEP-2	8/10/16	The CHNEP applauds the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers USACE) implementation of the 3X3X3 strategy for completing the NEPA process in a timely manner. Identification, development and implementation of watershed restoration projects north of Lake Okeechobee will benefit the Caloosahatchee Estuary and the greater Charlotte Harbor Estuary.	Thank you for your comments	
CHNEP-3	8/10/16	The CHNEP urges the USACE to consider the comments of a number of attendees regarding the expansion of the project boundary. The headwaters of Lake Okeechobee reach into	The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in	

		<p>Orange County and are not currently included in the project boundary. As Dr. Hilary Swain pointed out, the proposed project area leaves out almost two-thirds of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. In addition, staff and officials from Osceola County are requesting their lands be included in the project boundary. Expansion of the project boundary to include the entire Lake Okeechobee Watershed will increase the opportunities for restoring natural water quality, quantity, timing and distribution while also conducting ecosystem restoration. CHNEP concurs with these comments and fully supports expansion of the project boundary.</p>	<p>the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of</p>
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			the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
CHNEP-4	8/10/16	<p>The CHNEP is a partnership program, created by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act, to protect and preserve the Charlotte Harbor estuary, recognized as an estuary of national significance and one of the most productive estuaries in Florida. Long term management, preservation and restoration activities within the CHNEP are guided by our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) 2013, developed and implemented by our partners. This project implements the CHNEP’s CCMP; specifically the following Priority Action:</p> <p>HA-1: By 2020, identify, establish and maintain a more natural seasonal variation (annual hydrograph) in freshwater flows for [the] Caloosahatchee River.</p>	One of the objectives of this project is to provide for better management for releases to northern estuaries.
Center for Biological Diversity (CBD)			
CBD-1	8/12/16	<p>On behalf of the staff and members of the Center for Biological Diversity, we respectfully submit the following scoping comments to the Army Corps of Engineers (“Corps”) regarding the July 18, 2016 Public Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (“LOWP”). We submit these comments on behalf of our organization and its members, including those who recreate and live in Martin, St. Lucie, Palm Beach, and Lee counties. After listening to the Corps’ presentation at the public scoping meeting on July 26, 2016 and reviewing the Public Notice and presentation materials, we conclude the Corps must expand the scope of the LOWP to include storage south of the lake in the Everglades Agricultural Area (“EAA”), adjusting the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan’s (“CERP”) Integrated Delivery Schedule (“IDS”) so that these projects are completed concurrently.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

			<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
CBD-2	8/12/16	<p>I. The best available science shows storage both north and south of the Lake developed concurrently is necessary to realize the LOWP’s stated objective to reduce undesirable discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries.</p>	<p>Please see the response to your first comment.</p>
CBD-3	8/12/16	<p>In response to concerns about Everglades restoration projects’ timing and completion, the Florida Senate authorized an independent technical review of options to reduce the high volume discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries, and to move more water south to the Everglades. The resulting 2015 study from the University of Florida Water Institute (“UF study”) focuses on the exact project objectives the Corps has adopted for the LOWP, and as such the UF study represents the best available science the Corps must employ in its decision-making.</p>	<p>Please see the response to your first comment.</p>

CBD-4	8/12/16	<p>The UF study recommends: accelerated funding and completion of existing approved projects; a substantially revised regulation schedule as allowed by Herbert Hoover levee rehabilitation and evaluated in the Dam Safety Modification Study; and that strategic planning begin for north of lake storage and treatment in addition to south of lake strategic planning for storage, treatment and conveyance already begun under the Central Everglades Planning Project. The UF Study did not recommend north of lake storage and treatment planning instead of or ahead of the next phase in planning for south of lake storage, which requires additional land acquisitions between the lake and the Everglades Protection Area to be used for combinations of deep and shallow storage, flow-ways, stormwater treatment areas, and enhanced conveyance. In fact, the UF study makes clear its priority in timing for south of lake planning by contemplating the U.S. Sugar land purchase option, an option with a rapidly approaching expiration date.</p>	Please see the response to your first comment.
CBD-5	8/12/16	<p>II. New circumstances and information since the 2015 IDS update necessitates a formal re-evaluation of the IDS.</p>	Please see the response to your first comment.
CBD-6	8/12/16	<p>In a letter to Representative Patrick Murphy dated July 26, 2016, Assistant Secretary of the Army Jo-Ellen Darcy expressed the Corps’ willingness to move up the planning study timeline for south of lake storage currently scheduled to begin in 2021. In its response dated August 3, 2016, the South Florida Water Management District (“SFWMD”) vehemently opposed any deviation from the IDS, citing the public process the schedule underwent during its 2015 update. The 2015 update occurred prior to the record rainfall occurring this past dry season, the sustained maximum releases under the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule 2008, and the resulting blue-green algae blooms and state of emergencies declared in four Florida counties. Had the IDS been updated concurrent with or after these events, the public would have had ample opportunity</p>	Please see the response to your first comment.

		then to provide the input now being offered for the LOWP. The SFWMD and the Corps ironically state the need for system-wide operational flexibility, yet the SFWMD remains rigidly inflexible to a now illogical IDS that does not address the emergency conditions in the estuaries in a timely fashion.	
CBD-7	8/12/16	III. Continued CERP implementation delay harms endangered species and their habitats, requiring reinitiation of Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) consultation.	ESA consultation has been initiated for this project.
CBD-8	8/12/16	Additional south of lake storage, treatment and conveyance is critical to CERP implementation and interim system-wide operational flexibility, including the management of water releases from Water Conservation Area 3A governed by the Everglades Restoration Transition Plan (“ERTP”). While evaluating impacts to the Cape Sable seaside sparrow (“CSSS”) in its July 22, 2016 Biological Opinion for the ERTP, the Fish and Wildlife Service expressed concern for project implementation delays and the distant timeframes provided for project completion: Many other components of Everglades CERP restoration such as those included in the most recent CEPP are not scheduled to be completed until as late as 2030. Considering the current status of the CSSS, the timing of these projects and uncertainty of the schedules gives reason for concern. ²	Thank you for your comments
CBD-9	8/12/16	This concern extends to the snail kite, the manatee, and the smalltooth sawfish as well. All four species are either harmed by the continued altered hydroperiods that the currently proposed LOWP maintains by displacing EAA storage on the IDS (snail kite and Cape Sable seaside sparrow) or the reduced salinity and blue-green algae promoting conditions provided by continued maximum sustained releases to the estuaries (manatee and smalltooth sawfish).	Thank you for your comment. The impacts of the LOWP will be evaluated for all endangered species in the study area.
CBD-10	8/12/16	IV. The Corps must conduct additional scoping meetings to facilitate public participation.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. This project has

			met the NEPA scoping requirements. We will ensure that a larger venue is secured for all future public meetings.
CBD-11	8/12/16	The public scoping meeting held July 26, 2016 was inadequate to fulfill the requirements of both the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) and CERP implementation regulations, and the Corps must conduct additional scoping meetings in coastal population centers near the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. NEPA requires the Corps to use scoping “to engage State, local and tribal governments and the public in the early identification of concerns, potential impacts, relevant effects of past actions and possible alternative actions.” ³ CERP implementation regulations require “public meetings and workshops to be held at such times and locations to facilitate participation by the public.” ⁴	This project has met the NEPA scoping requirements. The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
CBD-12	8/12/16	The Corps’ scoping meeting and presentation was noticed for 7:00 pm on July 26, 2016 at the SFWMD office in Okeechobee, Florida. However, the project presentation began prior to the 7:00 pm notice, at approximately 6:15 pm, when according to district staff, the facility reached capacity. Thus, when members of the public arrived at 7:00 pm to participate in the scoping process, the SFWMD and Corps had already presented and were well underway in hearing public comments in an at-capacity facility that the 7:00 pm arrivals were not allowed to enter for safety reasons. These participants had no way of hearing the ongoing public comments even once they arrived, as there was no concurrent broadcast of the meeting facility into an outside waiting area. While the Corps did provide opportunity for the on-time arrivals to hear a second presentation followed by a second round of public comments, this second meeting did not begin until approximately 8:30 pm, by which time many would-be participants left in	Due to the over capacity crowds at the NEPA scoping meeting we started the first presentation early in order to accommodate the large crowd to ensure everyone could hear the presentation and provide a public comment. For all future public meetings a larger venue will be secured so we do not have to have two shifts. Comments from both groups have been posted at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Eco system-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project

		frustration. For those that remained, the second set of public comments did not conclude until nearly 10:00 pm.	
CBD-13	8/12/16	The SFWMD in Okeechobee is located in a remote area of the state, a several-hour drive away from many Floridians affected by the proposed project. Conducting a public scoping meeting on a Tuesday night in such a remote location and late hour does not facilitate public participation as required by law, and in fact discourages it. Lake Okeechobee releases and blue-green algae impacts have made national news. Given the severity of the impacts and the resultant increase in public interest the Corps actions, the Corps should have anticipated a larger number of public participants than projects past, and arranged for an appropriate facility and hour. To correct this wrong, the Corps should schedule at least two additional scoping meetings in easily accessible locations in coastal cities near the affected estuaries. We suggest Naples and Stuart.	This project has met the NEPA scoping requirements. The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL in the evening to allow people to come after work hours.
CBD-14	8/12/16	Conclusion Please expand the scope of the LOWP to include south of lake storage, treatment, and conveyance, or alternatively re-evaluate and reorder the IDS to begin a planning study for the EAA Storage project now.	Please see the response to your first comment.
Government Services Trust, Inc. (Trust)			
Trust-1	7/26/16	Proposal for the neutralization and eradication of cyanobacteria blue green algae spreading unhindered like a plague in south Florida’s waterways. (Full proposal in the appendix)	Thank you for your proposal. Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.
Trust-2	7/26/16	Proposal for the removal – recovery – and harvesting of phosphorous compounds by electrochemical processing. (Full proposal in the appendix)	Thank you for your proposal.
Save Our Creeks, Inc., (SOC)			

<p>SOC-1</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>Save Our Creeks, Inc., (SOC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has been protecting the natural environment in South Central Florida since 1989. A major focus for SOC is protecting Fisheating Creek and the surrounding area. SOC is an "affected party" pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.6(b)(1) as a landowner of property fronting Fisheating Creek and as an active organization within the affected watersheds.</p>	<p>Fisheating Creek is included in the project area and will be evaluated as part of the project.</p>
<p>SOC-2</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>SOC was present at the USACE (Corps) scoping meeting July 26, 2016, in Okeechobee and appreciates this opportunity to put forth concerns about the proposed project. SOC objects to the project as currently drawn, because substantial and unnatural changes would have to be made to the four small watershed basins of Fisheating Creek, Indian Prairie, Nubbin Slough and Taylor Creek to effect any real solution to the Lake Okeechobee (Lake) water quality and discharge problems. Without including the greater watershed areas in Osceola and Orange counties and the outflow areas to the south, the project cannot succeed.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The</p>

			<p>current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>SOC-3</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>SOC believes that there is no “purpose and need” for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project as it is currently proposed (40 CFR1502.13). Therefore the Corps should cease its current NEPA scoping process and conduct additional research to establish an underlying purpose for the Project it is proposing.</p>	<p>During the NEPA scoping period the purpose and need for the project has been further defined. The purpose of the LOWP is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore wetland habitat within the Fisheating Creek, Indian Prairie, and Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough sub-watersheds, S-65D and S-65E basins and Lake Okeechobee; • Improve the quantity and timing of water entering Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries; and • Improve regional water management operational flexibility in context of the overall Everglades ecosystem restoration <p>The need for the LOWP is explained in the statement below: There are numerous operational challenges associated with Lake Okeechobee. Water inflows into Lake Okeechobee greatly exceed outflow capacity, thus many times there is too much water within Lake Okeechobee that needs to be released in order to ensure integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike. Additionally, the outflow capacity to the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie Canal far exceeds the capacity to send water south</p>

			<p>to the conservation areas and the Everglades through the 4 major canals in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), and undesirable high-volume discharges are often made to the northern estuaries.</p> <p>At other times, there may be too little water within Lake Okeechobee. Extreme high and low lake levels combined with unsuitable recession and ascension rates can adversely affect native vegetation and fish and wildlife species that depend upon the lake for foraging and reproduction. The volume and frequency of undesirable freshwater releases to the east and west lowers salinity in the estuaries, severely impacting oysters, sea grasses, and fish. Additionally, high nutrient levels adversely affect in-lake water quality, estuary habitat, and habitat throughout the Greater Everglades.</p> <p>The objectives of the study are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve quantity, timing and distribution of flows into Lake Okeechobee to maintain ecologically desired lake stage ranges 2. Improve estuary discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster, SAV, and other estuarine community habitats in the northern estuaries 3. Increase spatial extent and functionality of aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee and surrounding watershed
<p>SOC-4</p>	<p>8/12/16</p>	<p>Based on the initial scoping meeting held in Okeechobee, SOC believes the Corps has not complied with the most fundamental of the NEPA "Purpose" requirement that:</p> <p>(b) NEPA procedures must insure that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before actions are taken. The information must be of high quality. Accurate scientific analysis, expert agency comments, and public scrutiny are</p>	<p>The purpose of NEPA scoping is to let people know that we are beginning to look at the project and request information from public officials and citizens. As we move forward with the project, information will be provided to the public before any decisions are made.</p>

		essential to implementing NEPA. Most important, NEPA documents must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail. (40 CFR 1500.1)	
SOC-5	8/12/16	<p>The absence from the project of the greater source of water and pollution found in the Kissimmee River Watershed in Orange and Osceola counties, and the areas that control the flow out of the Lake to the south is glaring. The result will likely be partial and piece-meal solutions. Focusing on the relatively minor roles of the four (4) adjacent basins cannot provide a significant impact on the Lake water quality or management without expanding the legacy phosphorus problem and significantly disrupting areas that are currently in a relatively natural state. The goal to restore and re-connecting the wetlands in the four adjacent basins may bring some small benefit, but not on the scale that is needed. Therefore, it is inescapable that these areas will be subjugated in ways that are disproportional and unnatural to control the continued pollution, spoilage and obstruction of the greater Everglades Watershed.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule</p>

			changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
SOC-6	8/12/16	SOC urges the Corps to drop the Fisheating Creek, Taylor Creek, Indian Prairie and Nubbin Slough watersheds from the Everglades Watershed Project. The significantly greater players--the watershed in Osceola and Orange counties and outflow areas to the south--should be added. Alternatively, if the four smaller basins remain in the project, their roles should be reduced to restoration without loss of their current functions, including wildlife habitat and recreational use by local populations.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>
SOC-7	8/12/16	In addition, SOC requests that the USACE comply with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidance and “ensure meaningful public engagement in the decision making process.” This means that all public meetings should be held in venues where all attendees can participate in the full meeting simultaneously, not in shifts.	Due to the over capacity crowds at the NEPA scoping meeting we started the first presentation early in order to accommodate the large crowd to ensure everyone could hear the presentation and provide a public comment. For all future public meetings a larger venue will be secured so we do not have to have two shifts. Comments from both groups have been posted at

			http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Eco system-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project
SOC-8	8/12/16	Finally, SOC should have been invited to participate in the initial scoping process as an interested party (40CFR 1501.7(a)1). SOC is an “affected party” as a landowner and active organization within the Fisheating Creek Watershed and requests, pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.6(b)1, that it receive by mail notices of ALL future meetings with the associated agendas and meeting materials and reports (draft, final, and supplemental) in order to review the documents and submit comments in a timely manner (40 CFR 1506.6).	Save Our Creeks, Inc. has been added to the mailing list as well as the email distribution lists. All meeting agendas and read aheads for Project Delivery Team meetings will be posted at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Eco system-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project prior to each meeting. Public meeting notices and NEPA documents sent out for public review will be mailed to you.
Letters from the Public			
Robert Norton Ecosystem Watch Lake Okeechobee (RN) - 1	7/11/16	Here we all have a problem due to very poor water management by the Corps of Engineers, SFWMD, and FDEP due to no enforcement action by any of the above agencies.	Water management will be improved by creating additional storage within the Lake Okeechobee watershed. This effort is being fully coordinated with enforcement agencies, including FDEP and EPA.
RN - 2	7/11/16	Due to very poor management of water supplies. Too much means poor management of flows, too little due to poor water management of flows.	One of the major purposes of this project is to increase operational flexibility within the watershed, which will help with better managing water levels within the lake and discharges to the northern estuaries.
RN - 3	7/11/16	Please send direction due to new location in Okeechobee of the scoping meeting.	Directions were mailed to Mr. Norton on July 11.
RN - 4	7/11/16	What we have had in the present is the lack of action to improve our water problems. I have been after State people since year 1989 to improve the system. Here we are now, year 2016 and we still have a problem. “Come on Man”	There have been several state and federal efforts implemented or being implemented that improve the timing and distribution of water throughout the system. Currently, both state and federal projects are in various phases of implementation, including construction, design, and planning. The system is constantly being improved with every project that is completed.
Maggy Hurchalla (MH) - 1	7/27/16	CERP is at an impasse. It’s stuck in the mud. If we don’t get unstuck in the next year we’re still going to be in that mud hole twenty years from now.	CERP is moving forward with several projects under construction including Site 1 Impoundment Phase 1, Picayune Strand Restoration Project, IRL-S C-44 Reservoir and STA, C-

			111 Spreader Canal Western Project and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1.
MH - 2	7/27/16	<p>A couple of months ago I went to Clewiston to have lunch with Bubba Wade and ask why we couldn't send water south. Bubba told me we didn't need to. He said the folks at Everglades National Park had told them that after CEPP was complete they didn't need any more water and didn't want any more water.</p> <p>So I went home and called Shannon Estenoz at the Interior Department and asked her if that was true.</p> <p>She said "No."</p>	Additional water is needed after CEPP is complete. CERP identifies that additional water is needed in the natural system after CEPP is complete. The Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP) is currently considering moving additional water to Water Conservation Area 3 (WCA 3), Everglades National Park (ENP), and Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP).
MH - 3	7/27/16	<p>It's not just a difference of opinion between Interior and US Sugar.</p> <p>Last year we tried desperately to get the SFWMD to exercise the smaller option on 40,000 acres of US Sugar land. That was an honest attempt at peaceful coexistence. Sugar could continue in the EAA and CERP would have an end result that saved Everglades National Park, Florida Bay and our coastal estuaries.</p> <p>We were told by the chairman of the water management board that we didn't understand: "The water can't go south. There are constraints."</p> <p>Instead of exercising the option they unilaterally cancelled it.</p> <p>We now get mixed messages and a moving target from state officials:</p>	Thank you for your comment. The EAA is outside of the LOWP planning boundary. Please see Comment MH – 1.

		<p>“You can’t send water south.”</p> <p>“You don’t need to.”</p> <p>“We’ll think about that after the option expires.”</p>	
MH - 4	7/27/16	<p>I understand that this meeting is about a scoping study for storage north of the Lake.</p> <p>We know that storage north of the Lake won’t send water south.</p> <p>We know that fixing the dike won’t save our estuaries from Lake discharges. We got clobbered in 1998 when they weren’t worried about dike safety. In 1932 when the dike was brand new the Martin County Commission sent a resolution to Congress saying “Please stop the discharges!”</p> <p>I’m here tonight to ask you to stop and get out of the mud hole.</p> <p>If the state of Florida gets a 50/50 match from the federal government for a bunch of water supply reservoirs and then walks away and declares victory, they will have pulled off a colossal fraud on the American people. Other states don’t get federal money for water supply projects.</p> <p>We’re getting federal money for CERP because it’s supposed to be about saving the Everglades – the second largest wetland in the world. Until we know that we can buy the land to make that possible, we need to stop pretending</p>	<p>The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP. The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts.</p>

<p>MH - 5</p>	<p>7/27/16</p>	<p>We need to ask Interior and the Corps and our Governor and the SFWMD and US Sugar and Florida Crystals and the Sugar Coop and King Ranch to sit down and identify the land we need and how we Are going to buy it.</p> <p>I'm told that's not how the process works.</p> <p>So, change the process. Go to Congress and ask them to partner with the state in the land purchase and guarantee that the state will get credit for the money it spends to buy the land. Change whatever other rules need to be changed so we can be sure our present investments in CERP will end up doing what CERP was supposed to do.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>MH - 6</p>	<p>7/27/16</p>	<p>Jo Ellen Darcy, Secretary of the Army for Public Works, told Congressman Murphy this week that the Corps will consider moving forward on planning to send the water south from the Lake IF there is a local sponsor.</p> <p>Florida and the SDWMD are supposed to be CERP's local sponsor. If they continue to stonewall against buying land in the EAA to send water south, then we can't make CERP work as planned.</p> <p>If you can't make it work, tell South Florida you can't save the coastal estuaries and Miami's drinking water supply.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS is supported by the SFWMD. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional</p>

		<p>Tell Floridians and tell the world that you can't save the Everglades.</p> <p>We can't keep pretending.</p>	<p>infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
MH - 7	7/27/16	<p>This year's algae blooms make clear that water quality is going to be a problem for CERP beyond what we imagined 15 years ago.</p>	<p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Basin Management Action Plans which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.</p>
MH - 8	7/27/16	<p>1. Analysis of ASR's role will have to consider cyanobacteria. What are the consequences of pumping toxins into an ASR well? If the wells can't be used when toxins are present, how will that affect their cost effectiveness?</p>	<p>There was an unprecedented level of water quality analyses (including cyanobacteria) and toxicity testing conducted at the Kissimmee River ASR pilot site. Toxicity results routinely showed little to no toxicity related to recharge and recovered water in a variety of test organisms. These results are available at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Aquifer-Storage-and-Recovery-ASR-Regional-Study/</p> <p>Cycle test 1 results will serve as an example (1 month recharge, 1 month storage, 6 weeks recovery). Cyanobacteria were measured and detected during recharge week 4 and recovery week 6 at the ASR well and monitoring wells. Concurrently, several types of chronic and acute toxicity tests that are sensitive to cyanobacteria toxins were conducted on</p>

			<p>recharge and recovered water. Two (2) <i>Ceriodaphnia duba</i> static renewal chronic toxicity tests were conducted during cycle 1 recharge. These tests showed no toxicity. The No Observable Effects Concentration (NOEC) was 100% recharge water, when cyanobacteria concentrations >8000 cells/mL were detected in recharge water. Four (4) <i>C. duba</i> static renewal chronic toxicity tests were conducted during cycle 1 recovery. One recovered water sample showed a cyanobacteria concentration of 36 cells/mL. No toxicity was indicated, as the NOEC was 100 percent recovered water. However, there was a slight reduction in <i>C. duba</i> reproduction. The inhibiting concentration that resulted in a 25 percent decrease in <i>C. duba</i> (IC25) was 95 percent recovered water. However, because 95 percent recovered water composition probably does not relate well to the mixtures of surface and recovered water in the receiving water basin, this effect may not be observed during routine operations. The effect of reproduction inhibition in <i>C. duba</i> cannot be attributed to cyanobacteria because there are other stressors in recovered water. In all cycle test results, there was no indication of toxicity related to cyanobacteria, and few toxicity responses overall.</p>
<p>MH - 9</p>	<p>7/27/16</p>	<p>2. With climate change and increasing fertilizer, reservoirs all over the world are facing cyanobacteria blooms. The Corps is not responsible for water quality except in special situations where the project redirects water. CERP preliminary planning did not foresee STAs as part of the CERP projects north of the Lake. If we ignore the problem, the reservoirs may not function. It might be possible to create a partnership with the state to build STAs with the reservoirs. One way or another, the problem needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake</p>

			Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.
Robert Norton (RN) - 1	8/3/16	I was at the meeting and as far as I could see very poor planning site. The Okeechobee Civic Center had more room area the Okeechobee Health Department had more room. The Old school at Elementary Center Auditorium next to Golden Corral had more room. Next time please have meeting at Old School Auditorium next to Golder Corral, at least the TV crews can get a good meal afterwards. There was plenty of room there at Old School Auditorium plenty of seats for all of us people.	Due to the over capacity crowds at the NEPA scoping meeting we started the first presentation early in order to accommodate the large crowd to ensure everyone could hear the presentation and provide a public comment. For all future public meetings a larger venue will be secured so we do not have to have two shifts. Comments from both groups have been posted at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Eco system-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project
RN - 2	8/3/16	Summary – Any time I see or hear the work Assume, it is only guessing people not “fact”	Thank you for your comment.
RN - 3	8/3/16	Have questions for meeting 26 July 2016 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On SFWMD Letter to me, March 11, 2008 (follow up) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Phosphorous control in Lake Okeechobee b. Works of the District Permitting Program c. Rule Update 4DE-61-4DE-63 Enforcement d. TMDL failure to meet EPA compliance (year 2015 compliance) e. BMPs agriculture and non-agricultural (enforcement action) f. FDEP-FSCES- rule update contact agencies g. Enforcement action – 40E-61-40E-63 BMPs, BMAP my point of view no enforcement actions 	Thank you for your comment.
RN - 4	8/3/16	Notes: Elevation drop north to south to Lake Okeechobee is 36 foot run-off water to lake. TMDL 140 mt – 40 ppb to Lake has (State Never Been) in compliance. These locks drop to Lake	While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated

		Okeechobee (S-310) (S-77) (S-131) (S-127) (S-65E) (S-193) must meet TMDL to see any improvement of water quality to Lake Okeechobee.	<p>(ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. Additionally, preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.</p>
RN – 5	8/3/16	Note: Fisheating creek is a discharge to Lake Okeechobee is uncontrolled and flows south for 32 miles. This must be “controlled” to stop excess phosphorous to our Lake Okeechobee. Need monitoring site to stop large phosphorous and nutrients reaching Lake Okeechobee.	Please see response to comment RN – 4 above.
RN – 6	8/3/16	Note: EPA set TMDL and EPA has set date for compliance of State TMDL. Clean-up action set back several times from late 2012 to 2015 for TMDL enforcement action. As of now, 2016another year later no compliance set TMDL to Lake (140mt – 40 ppb).	Please see response to comment RN – 4 above.
RN – 7	8/3/16	Note: Taylor Creek-Nubbin Slough there are 5 culverts in this basin. The C-7 (removed?) and C-9 (??) and TCC (??) culvert are not in use and should be removed.	We will look at the current structures and the use of existing features during plan formulation.

<p>RN – 8</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>Note: All back-pumping from south into Lake Okeechobee needs to be stopped. Release water south. Algae bloom due to poor water quality to Lake Okeechobee. Must enforce TMDL to Lake Okeechobee and must enforce stop uncontrolled release to Lake Okeechobee.</p>	<p>Problems with water quality in the lake, including nutrient loads from the EAA, resulted in the operational changes described in the Interim Action Plan (IAP)(SFWMD, 1979). This plan significantly reduced the volume of water pumped into the lake through the southern structures and redirected it southward. The IAP reduced average annual inflow to Lake Okeechobee by about 190,000 ac-ft.; and the WCAs received an increase of this amount. Today flood control operation of S-2 and S-3 occurs only when southern capacity is not sufficient.</p> <p>Also, please see response to comment RN – 4 above.</p>
<p>RN – 9</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>Note: FDACS- BMP program directed by the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (373.4595 Florida Statutes) which includes Lake Okeechobee.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>RN – 10</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>Note: Lemkin Creek also is uncontrolled and flows from west into Rim Canal under State Road 78 to Taylor Creek locks people - heavy ranch run-off water</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>RN – 11</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>Send me information by mail as I do not own or operate a computer at all, so all response to my questions must come to me by postal mail please.</p>	<p>Responses will be mailed</p>
<p>RN - 12</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>P.S. I have been after enforcement by State Agency since year 1989 up to now (2016, 27 years)</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>RN - 13</p>	<p>8/3/16</p>	<p>Note – Add on Subject Matter</p> <p>South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Restoration Strategies Proj The SFWMD is required to meet a numeric discharge limit, referred to as the V contained in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the stormwater treatment areas (STAs) into the ENP. The WQBEL was developed that such discharges do not cause or contribute to exceedances of the 10 parts per billion (ppb) total phosphorus (TP) criterion (expressed as a long-term geometric mean [LTG] under 62-302.540, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). The TP criterion is measured at stations across the ENP marsh and is intended to prevent imbalances of aquatic life. The WQBEL is measured at the discharge points from each STA and requires that phosphorus concentration in STA discharges shall not exceed: 1) 13 ppb as measured at the discharge point.</p> <p>Subject discharge points are not enforced and discharges do exceed the set limits. Released water must meet the set</p>	<p>Please see response to comment RN – 4 above.</p>

		(TMDL) 140 mt – 40 ppb to Lake Okeechobee. All uncontrolled water flows from creeks must stop or meet the set TMDL 140 mt – 40 ppb. Creeks such as Fisheating Creek, Lemkins Creek must meet set TMDL 140 mt – 40 ppb.	
RN - 14	8/3/16	I do not own or operate a computer so all response to my questions must come by snail mail from all agencies that have to answer my questions. No computer references please, mail only. I do not need a computer for references.	Responses will be mailed
Donald Cook (DC) - 1	7/25/16	I LIVE IN PORT ST LUCIE, FLORIDA ON A WATERWAY. I HAVE BEEN TRAVELING ON RIVERS AND LAKES FROM OHIO TO FLORIDA SINCE 1960, AT TIMES MORE THAN 4000 MILES A YEAR. I NOW HAVE 12 BOATS, 8 OF THEM ARE REGISTERED POWER BOATS AND 1 IS A DOCUMENTED DIESEL OCEAN GOING VESSEL. I BELIEVE I HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WATERWAYS THAN MANY PEOPLE. I AM VERY CONCERNED WITH THE WATERWAYS OF FLORIDA. OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS I HAVE MADE HUNDREDS OF CALLS TO THOSE IN CONTROL OF OUR WATERWAYS. THEY EXPRESSED LITTLE INTEREST IN DISCUSSING THE WATER PROBLEM. THEY NOW TELL US HOW UPSET THEY ARE AND HOW MUCH THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THE PROBLEM.	Thank you for your comments
DC - 2	7/25/16	NO WHERE HAVE I FOUND WATERS MORE POORLY MANAGED THAN THOSE IN SOUTH FLORIDA. WE NOW HAVE A NASTY MANMADE MESS WITH OUR WATERWAYS.	Thank you for your comment
DC - 3	7/25/16	MANY HIGHLY EDUCATED WELL PAID PEOPLE ARE IN CONTROL OF OUR WATERS, AND THEY ARE DOING A WONDERFUL JOB. THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ARE TRYING TO CONTROL THE WATER LEVEL OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE TO PREVENT A DISASTROUS BREAK OF THE DIKE AROUND LAKE OKEECHOBEE, THE POLITICIANS ARE TRYING TO SPEND AS MUCH MONEY AS POSSIBLE ON THIS MESS TO GET PUBLICITY AND A PHOTO OPT FROM IT, THE SCIENTIST, BIOLOGIST AND ENVIRONMENTALIST ARE TRYING TO GET AS MUCH GOVERNMENT GRANT MONEY AS POSSIBLE TO STUDY	Thank you for your comment

		THE PROBLEM AND THE CITIZENS DEMAND SOMETHING BE DONE NOW, BUT THEY ARE DOING IT ALL WRONG.	
DC - 4	7/25/16	TO RESOLVE THIS WATERWAY MESS WE MUST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF IT, AS LISTED BELOW: 1. WATER FALLS FROM THE SKY ONTO THE LAND, IT WANTS TO FLOW TO THE LOWEST LEVEL, THE OCEAN. EITHER WE GIVE IT A WAY TO GET THERE OR IT WILL MAKE IT'S OWN WAY, WE MAY NOT LIKE HOW IT MAKES IT'S OWN WAY TO THE OCEAN.	Thank you for your comments
DC - 5	7/25/16	2. AS WATER FLOWS THROUGH LAKE OKEECHOBEE IT CARRIES MATERIALS WITH IT. THERE IS ABOUT 5 FEET OF MUCK ON THE FLOOR OF THE LAKE. THE WATER ON THE SURFACE HAS SOME CONTAMINATION FROM FLOATING DEBRIS, AS THE DEBRIS ABSORBS WATER IT SINKS TO THE BOTTOM. THE WATER BELOW THE SURFACE IS LESS CONTAMINATED, AS THE SURFACE DEBRIS SINKS THROUGH IT TO THE BOTTOM. THE MOST CONTAMINATION IS IN THE MUCK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WATER.	Thank you for your comments.
DC - 6	7/25/16	3. AS THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS DRAINS LARGE AMOUNTS OF WATER FROM LAKE OKEECHOBEE THEY FLUSH THIS CONTAMINATED MUCK INTO THE ST LUCIE WATERWAY, ST LUCIE RIVER AND CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER. THIS CONTAMINATED WATER AND MUCK DESTROYS THE VEGETATION ON THE FLOOR OF THE RIVERS, PROMOTES ALGAE GROWTH AND KILLS SEA LIFE. THE MUCK SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE LAKE BY A MATERIALS HANDLING COMPANY, ALLOWED TO DRY ON THE BANK AND SOLD AS TOPSOIL AND FILL DIRT. THE SALE OF THIS DIRT COULD PROVIDE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO THE STATE. DIRT SOLD AT HOME DEPOT IS ABOUT 5 DOLLARS FOR A SMALL BAG. YOU CAN NOT HAVE A HEALTHY HOUSE WITH 5 INCHES OF HUMAN WASTE AND ANIMAL WASTE ON THE FLOOR. WE CAN NOT HAVE A HEALTHY LAKE WITH 5 FEET OF MUCK ON THE BOTTOM. DON'T BELIEVE LAKE WATER, FERTILIZER, AGRICULTURE RUN OFF AND SEPTIC WATER IS THE ONLY	<p>Previous studies have shown that sediments in the lake and the tributaries are generally fluid in nature and dredging such sediments would pose substantial practical challenges. Because of the highly fluid nature of the sediment, dredging by dragline will probably not be feasible. It may be necessary to utilize hydraulic dredges. This would enable more complete and precise removal of the sediment, but at a much higher cost.</p> <p>Additionally, the effluent from the disposal areas will have very high concentrations of phosphorus that will preclude discharge of untreated water back to the tributary. The treatment of such large volumes of water with extremely high phosphorus concentrations will require an advanced treatment technology such as chemical treatment.</p>

		CAUSE OF THE CONTAMINATED RIVER WATER AND ALGAE GROWTH. JUST LOOK AT ANY SWIMMING POOL AT A FORECLOSED HOUSE, WHERE THE POOL HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN CARE OF FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, IT WILL LOOK AS BAD AS OUR RIVER WATER.	
DC - 7	7/25/16	4. IT IS VERY DESTRUCTIVE TO DRAIN LARGE AMOUNTS OF WATER IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME FROM LAKE OKEECHOBEE. IF THE LAKE LEVEL SHOULD BE 12 FEET, A SPILLWAY SHOULD BE BUILT AT 12 FEET. WHEN THE WATER LEVEL INCREASES ABOVE 12 FEET WATER SHOULD START TO FLOW OVER THE SPILLWAY ONTO A BED OF ROCKS. WATER SHOULD NOT BE STORED TO A LEVEL OF 15 FEET OR MORE AND THEN DRAINED IN LARGE QUANTITIES.	This study is focused on developing options for storage north of Lake Okeechobee to slow the flow of water into the lake, reduce the release of large quantities of water to the northern estuaries and provide water to the Everglades system during dry times thus restoring a more natural hydrology to the system. This study is not looking at designing new outlets from the lake or at modification of the current LORS08 regulation schedule
DC - 8	7/25/16	5. LARGE ELECTRIC SPRAY PUMPS, 30 OR 40 THOUSAND GALLONS PER MINUTE, SHOULD BE USED TO SPRAY THE WATER UP INTO THE AIR TO PURIFY IT. THE MACERATOR ACTION OF THE PUMPS WILL BREAK UP THE ALGAE SPORES, THE ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT OF THE SUN WILL PURIFY THE WATER AND OXYGEN WILL BE PUT INTO THE WATER. MOST PONDS AND LAKES HAVE SPRAY PUMPS FOR THIS PURPOSE. THESE PUMPS SHOULD BE INSTALLED IN LAKE OKEECHOBEE AND IN THE RIVERS, ESPECIALLY IN THE WIDE WATER WEST OF THE ROOSEVELT BRIDGE IN STUART.	Thank you for your comment, however, the LOW Project is not formulating to specifically address water quality concerns. Solutions for water quality will be passed to the responsible state agency.
DC - 9	7/25/16	6. IT IS VERY DANGEROUS TO STORE WATER IN CANALS AND LAKE OKEECHOBEE. WE ARE IN HURRICANE SEASON, A WET HURRICANE COULD DEVELOP ANY TIME, AND DUMP A FOOT OR MORE OF RAIN WATER OVER FLORIDA. THIS COULD CAUSE OVER TOPPING AND DESTRUCTION OF THE DIKE AROUND LAKE OKEECHOBEE, RESULTING IN DISASTROUS FLOODING AS IT DID IN NEW ORLEANS. THOSE WHO WANT TO STORE WATER MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEATH AND DEVASTATION IT WILL CAUSE. STORING WATER WILL ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SINK HOLE SITUATION WE ALREADY	Providing additional storage options north of Lake Okeechobee will provide more operational flexibility in light of storm events. Although flood risk reduction is not a primary purpose of the project, there may be ancillary flood risk benefits associated with increasing water storage within the watershed. Detailed analysis of each project feature will evaluate the environmental, geotechnical and water management risk. Risk will be used as a means to evaluate the viability of the proposed features and whether features will be carried forward to the selected plan.

		HAVE. SINK HOLE DAMAGE DOES NOT NEED TO BE INCREASED.	
DC - 10	7/25/16	7. BUYING LAND SOUTH OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE IS VERY EXPENSIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE DONE. WE HAVE ALREADY CONTAMINATED THE LAKE AND RIVERS. NOW PEOPLE WANT TO MOVE THE CONTAMINATION INTO THE EVERGLADES. THE CONTAMINATION AND ALGAE WILL DAMAGE THE EVERGLADES THE SAME AS IT HAS IN THE RIVERS. WHEN THE LAND IS SATURATED WITH EXCESSIVE RAIN WATER THE EVERGLADES ARE ALSO FLOODED. THE WILDLIFE IN THE EVERGLADES ALSO NEEDS SOME DRY LAND TO SURVIVE. IF THERE IS NO DRY LAND THE WILDLIFE WILL BE FORCED OUT INTO POPULATED AREAS, CREATING ANOTHER PROBLEM. THIS WATER IN THE EVERGLADES STILL WANTS TO RETURN TO THE OCEAN. IT WILL DRAIN INTO THE SOUTH WATERWAYS, INTO PALM BEACH, BROWARD AND DADE, CREATING PROBLEMS THERE. IF SOMEONE THROWS UP IN THE BATHROOM YOU CLEAN IT UP THERE, YOU DON'T SWEEP IT INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN. THE CONTAMINATION AND ALGAE SHOULD BE CLEANED WHERE IT IS, DO NOT SPREAD IT ALL OVER SOUTH FLORIDA AND WASTE BILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS.	Thank you for your comment, however, the LOW Project is not formulating to specifically address water quality concerns. Solutions for water quality will be passed to the responsible state agency.
DC - 11	7/25/16	8. THEIR SHOULD BE SOME DISCUSSION WITH FPL ABOUT PUMPING COOLING WATER FROM THE INDIAN RIVER TO THE OCEAN. THIS WILL BRING SOME CLEANER OCEAN WATER IN THE ST LUCIE AND FT PIERCE INLETS, AND TAKE SOME OF THE MORE POLLUTED WATER FROM THE INDIAN RIVER OUT TO THE OCEAN.	Thank you for your comment, however, the LOW Project is not formulating to specifically address water quality concerns. Solutions for water quality will be passed to the responsible state agency.
DC - 12	7/25/16	IF THIS INFORMATION IS FOLLOWED WE WILL HAVE CLEAN WATER IN LAKE OKEECHOBEE, THE RIVERS, THE EVERGLADES AND SOUTH FLORIDA. WE WILL NOT NEED TO WASTE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS MAKING A BIGGER MORE WIDESPREAD MESS.	Thank you for your comment, however, the LOW Project is not formulating to specifically address water quality concerns. Solutions for water quality will be passed to the responsible state agency.

DC - 13	7/25/16	IF IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT OF THE WATER QUALITY IS WANTED, FIREBOATS COULD BE OPERATED ON THE WATERWAYS TO SPRAY WATER TO BREAK UP THE ALGAE AND PUT OXYGEN INTO THE WATER.	Thank you for your comment, however, the LOW Project is not formulating to specifically address water quality concerns. Solutions for water quality will be passed to the responsible state agency.
DC - 14	7/25/16	WHY DO WE WANT TO: 1. PUT AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS OUT OF BUSINESS OR FORCE THEM TO MOVE OUT OF THE COUNTRY. 2. PUT PEOPLE OUT OF WORK. 3. REDUCE THE TAX BASE. 4. FLOOD THE EVERGLADES WITH CONTAMINATED WATER AND ALGAE. 5. CREATE OTHER COLLATERAL DAMAGE. 6. SPEND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS. WHEN THERE IS A MUCH BETTER AND IMMEDIATE SOLUTION FOR THE FLORIDA WATER CRISIS.	Thank you for your comments.
Asmussen Engineering (AE) - 1	8/7/16	Our office continues to work with regulating agencies and private agricultural producers to design, permit, install and utilize comprehensive water storage (and treatment) projects, with a dual desire of improving the environment (through water quantity and quality improvements) and allowing as many agricultural producers (as possible) to remain in agricultural. People cause water quantity and quality problems and reducing "people pressure", by retaining agricultural lands, is the primary way to conserve the capability of preserving water (quality and quantity) and the only way to preserve the remaining native Florida habitat/wildlife.	Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
AE-2	8/7/16	Preservation of agricultural lands was the primary reason we agreed to assist World Wildlife Fund (WWF), starting in 2004, to work with the regulatory agencies to develop a program to store water (initially on cow-calf operations). The water storage "service" was designed to be provided in exchange for a payment to the agricultural producer (FRESP). Our office designed, permitting and assisted in the construction of the	Thank you for your comment

		first four (4) projects (as Pilot Projects). One of our initial five (5) conceptual water storage designs (at the time), was not pursued due to the property being purchased for residential development (a reminder of why we agreed to participate in the first place - to help preserve agricultural lands).	
AE-3	8/7/16	Since FRESP, we have designed and permitted a number of additional water storage projects (on agricultural lands) under two (2) separate South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) solicitations (to store water and/or provide phosphorus reduction), as well as, a SFWMD Water Farming Pilot Project (at Bull Hammock Ranch). Most of these projects continue to provide runoff retention (storage) and water quality improvement in their basins.	Thank you for your comment
AE-4	8/7/16	Based on this experience, we have learned many things. We understand these projects provide benefits beyond water storage and water quality improvement (private and public benefit) including: flora and fauna enhancement/restoration/retention; runoff reuse (as irrigation); reduced groundwater use, therefore less pressure on deep water sources (to meet irrigation demands) promoting lower fuel use (cost savings) and reducing the likelihood of increasing gradients prompting chloride movement; better ranch water management capability (as water table control promoting improved flood protection and forage yield) and (as eluded to above); promoting the preservation of agricultural lands (that remain), by providing another income stream to participating agricultural producers.	These projects are beneficial for many purposes and hope we can use some of your lessons learned for portions of this project.
AE-5	8/7/16	Collected data supports pursuing additional water storage projects on private agricultural lands. These water storage projects are much more cost effective than regional projects and are much cheaper to operate and maintain once constructed. The "payment for services" approach promotes these benefits, while promoting the retention of privately held	Public private partnerships are an important component of restoration that are being promoted through several programs in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed (e.g. Dispersed Water Management, National Resources Conservation Service easement programs). However, storing water on

		agricultural lands. People pressure will continue to build and ultimately result in more intensive use of many of these agricultural lands.	private lands through easements and contracts does not fit into the federal planning framework.
AE-6	8/7/16	Guess you can see we are passionate about this approach to help save the remaining agricultural lands from more intensive use. Agricultural lands remain our only hope to meet established water quality and quantity goals for Lake Okeechobee (and downstream water bodies). Equally important is preservation of the native flora and fauna, which is reduced proportionally to the number of people allowed to move to these areas.	Please see response to AE-5 above.
AE-7	8/7/16	Our most recently certified project is a phosphorus reduction project at Buck Island Ranch (Highlands County). Excess water from the primary system (C-41 Canal) is directed into a series of cells (over 189-acres - remnant grove) to produce winter forage (presently imported) for beef cattle use. Forage produced will remove nutrients (from the water directed into the system) and reduce the need to import nutrients to meet beef cattle winter feed demands (as pastures are dormant). We estimate the "service" will be in excess of 5,000-lbs of phosphorus annually (monitoring will be used to determine actual benefits). We have designed, permitted, oversaw construction and certified three (3) separate projects at Buck Island Ranch in an effort to improve water quantity and quality in the basin.	Please see response to AE-5 above.
AE-8	8/7/16	As an engineer, the meeting of July 26, 2016 provided no useful information on how additional water storage will be provided (north of the lake). We hope to use our experience to assist in this effort. We offer the following recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pursue providing storage on private agricultural lands, which has been proven to be effective, in exchange for a "service payment". Payments should cover: engineering design (including an environmental component, as needed); 	Please see response to AE-5 above.

		agency permitting; project construction and; an annual payment to facilitate project operation, maintenance and a "service payment" to the participating agricultural producer.	
AE-9	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try and avoid reducing the coverage of privately held agricultural lands. 	Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation. Please also response to AE-1 above.
AE-10	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might consider looking at past SFWMD solicitation responses (not implemented), in the event SFWMD is not going to pursue these projects. Some are no longer feasible, but some are good projects. 	Please see response to AE-5 above.
AE-11	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at water storage projects implemented on private agricultural lands to date (including collected monitoring data) to determine which projects work best (provide the greatest public/private benefit) considering: site topography; soil types; existing water management facilities; site location and receiving body (including quality). 	Please see response to AE-5 above.
AE-12	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use local engineers (and contractors) who have experience/knowledge in the project, know the agricultural community and; understand the issues we face. We recommend setting up regular meetings with engineers and producers who have participated (in water storage projects) during the last fifteen (15) years. Significant knowledge can be gleaned from those who have designed, permitted, constructed and operated water storage projects to date. Include individuals from FDACS, NRCS and SFWMD who have been involved in water storage on ranchlands_ Discussions can focus of what has (and has not) worked and where (and how) to provide additional storage (on public and private lands). For instance, we have been making a list of water storage project possibilities for the last ten (10) years and have implemented a number of them. Other engineers must have done the same thing. Some of our storage ideas are basin-wide, which require 	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is a key member of the Project Delivery Team. They have also been asked to be a Cooperating Agency in the LOW Project. You and others are welcome to participate in the project through the various public involvement opportunities which include venues, such as Task Force Working Group, Water Resources Advisory Council, and SFWMD Governing Board meetings, Task Force Sponsored public workshops/public meetings at key decision points, NEPA public meetings, Project Delivery Team meetings.

		private landowners to work together with regulating agencies to realize additional storage. Our office could provide a partial list of knowledgeable and informed professionals who would be helpful in this effort.	
AE-13	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss water storage with other relevant agencies (FDACS, NRCS, SFWMD, SJWMD, FDEP, etc.) and determine who proposes to pursue additional water storage on private lands. If the corps wants to focus on water storage on public lands or acquiring private land for public projects, point that out sooner rather than later. 	Pease see responses to AE-5 and AE-9 above.
AE-14	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the upper chain of lakes and all counties who contribute runoff to Lake Okeechobee in the project area. The cumulative effect of many small water storage projects can result in a significant storage. 	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural</p>

			<p>fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
AE-15	8/7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the lake operation schedule and the operation of the primary system, as additional storage may lurk there. Small changes in water elevation, translate to significant water storage. 	<p>Due to the strict schedule and budget in this expedited SMART Planning effort, the PIR/EIS will not involve re-evaluation of regulation schedules. However, if refinement opportunities to regulation schedules are identified in the process, they will be noted and appropriately considered.</p> <p>Per the IDS, the planning process to update the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) will commence in 2022. The current LORS08 regulation schedule will serve as a basis for analysis of the LOW Project alternatives.</p>
AE-16	8/7/16	<p>Generally, agricultural producers do not implement water storage measures (optimizing their ability to manage runoff, as water table management for maximum yield), due to costs (including engineering, permitting, materials and construction). Cost share monies have proven effective at getting these services implemented to the benefit of the agricultural producer and the public.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p>

<p>E. Allen Stewart III, P.E. (AS) - 1</p>	<p>8/9/16</p>	<p>I have been involved with the State and Federal efforts to restore water quality within Lake Okeechobee since the implementation of the Interim Action Plan in 1979-1980 as a consulting professional engineer in the private sector, a biologist, and a Florida citizen. While I provided input over this time, I was never a member the Lake Okeechobee Technical Advisory Committee (LOTAC) or any other institutional group associated with development of a protection or restoration plan for Lake Okeechobee. In 1987 I wrote a letter to Dan Thayer who was I believe at that time working in Aquatic Weed Control for the South Florida Water Management District. This letter was made available to LOTAC. A copy is attached to this correspondence. (Attachment in Appendix)</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments</p>
<p>AS – 2</p>	<p>8/9/16</p>	<p>The general intent of this letter was to draw attention to the importance of sediment born phosphorus within the lake, and the need to address management of this phosphorus as a key component of any protection or restoration plan. This concern regarding sediments stems from a basic understanding of lake ecology and trophic dynamics, as first described by Lindeman in 1942[1].</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p>
<p>AS – 3</p>	<p>8/9/16</p>	<p>Since 1987, there has occurred a general decline in water quality within the lake, with phosphorus concentrations</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments</p>

		<p>increasing from about 40-50 ppb in the early seventies, to about 120 ppb today. It is now recognized that these sediment-held loads, now called legacy phosphorus, amount to more than 32,000 metric tons (mt), and are contributing phosphorus at a rate about equal to or greater than the internal loads, which are presently about 442 mt yr-1 as a 5 year rolling average. Note that in spite of efforts by the District and their cooperators, the external loads have not really decreased significantly since the inception of LOTAC, which has led to the saturation of the sediments and soils, and the consequential increase in internal phosphorus loading.</p>	
AS – 4	8/9/16	<p>A review of basic science must lead to the conclusion that Lake Okeechobee cannot be restored, nor can the impacts of loads diverted to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers be expected to be attenuated, without either the actual removal and recovery of this legacy phosphorus commensurate with actual removal of internal loads, or somehow assuring long term sequestration of this legacy phosphorus. While the institutional position appears to be that dredging or other means of mechanical removal, or possibly in-lake alum treatment are the only options available to remove or sequester legacy phosphorus, and that on a long term basis no-action is recommended, in hopes that once the TMDL is met the sediments will stabilize[2], it is presumptuous to suggest that the no-action alternative will be effective, and the scientific evidence supporting this presumption would need close scrutiny prior to blanket acceptance. In addition, there is considerable concern that in-lake alum treatment would not provide sequestration over the long term, and could be attendant with problems associated with the changes within the impacted sediments. Dredging is long term and very costly.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p>
AS – 5	8/9/16	<p>I suggest sediment stabilization could also be done through a series of kidney type surface water treatment systems around the lake. Such an approach was contemplated for Lake Apopka</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>

		years ago, although the project was never implemented because of engineering issues related to isolation of a test area within the lake. The concept however is scientifically reasonable, and should be actively pursued by the USACOE and SFWMD.	
AS – 6	8/9/16	There are technologies available for removal and recovery of legacy phosphorus, including Managed Aquatic Plant Systems (MAPS), which have been demonstrated on a few occasions within the region, and are presently being used by Indian River County to help meet their TMDL removal allocations. MAPS involves cultivation of aquatic plants which take up phosphorus at rates far exceeding 0.8 g m ⁻² yr ⁻¹ , the rate typically associated with STA's, with cultivation meaning production within an engineered platform; removal of nutrients and general quality enhancement within the water column of the targeted surface water; frequent harvesting and recovery of solids and plant biomass; conversion of the biomass and solids into usable and marketable products; and the subsequent distribution of the product. As this is a form of agriculture, it could be implemented such that it is compatible with many of the farming enterprises within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.	Thank you for your comments
AS – 7	8/9/16	It is uncertain exactly how and what rate the sediments will respond as the nutrients are extracted from them using this approach, and only large-scale demonstration projects would allow this to be determined. Obviously some sediment removal will occur through capture of suspended solids within the MAPS units, and these could be incorporated into products associated with crop harvesting. The remaining sediments within the lake will likely change as nutrient content is reduced. It is reasonable to assume that as highly oxygenated (super saturated) effluent is returned to the lake from these MAPS "kidney" units, some oxidation of organic sediments will occur, and the mineral content and bulk density increased	Thank you for your comments and suggestions.

		<p>accordingly. This would reduce the extent of resuspension, as well as the overall sediment volume, while also reducing labile nutrients within the sediments. Demonstration projects, as mentioned, would facilitate objective quantification of the rate and nature of change within the sediments and the extent of stabilization.</p>	
<p>AS – 8</p>	<p>8/9/16</p>	<p>There are of course other technologies being developed which might also result in removal, recovery and reuse of legacy phosphorus using this “kidney” approach, including chemical precipitation, electrolysis, and managed STA’s. Regardless of the technologies applied, it cannot be emphasized enough that without management of legacy phosphorus through actual removal from the lake itself (or long term sequestration) and reduction of external loads, it is scientifically unreasonable and irrational to expect Lake Okeechobee to ever be restored to an acceptable dynamic equilibrium, and that diversion of the lake’s waters to any receiving water body, whether it is an estuary, a new reservoir/impoundment, or the Everglades will result in water quality degradation, and will increase the chances of damaging cyanobacteria blooms similar to those experienced this summer.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and suggestions.</p>
<p>Emails from the Public</p>			
<p>Kristie and Wilton Anders</p>	<p>7/11/16</p>	<p>Please consider having a second meeting accessible to the public for this important issue. We understand the one scheduled for the east coast is closed to the public. Since the lower west coast is also a stakeholder and Okeechobee is over a three hour drive on a Tuesday night, we respectfully request another meeting in which the public may be informed about future plans.</p>	<p>The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on</p>

			August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
Sheryll	7/11/16	Agriculture, and primarily SUGAR, has determined the policy for the distribution of water from Lake Okeechobee for decades-- as long as I can remember! It seems that the damage these discharges are causing to the ecosystems and economy of the east and west coasts of Florida are finally having enough of an impact to turn a few heads. That water NEEDS to go south! The lack of water flow to the Everglades is killing that ecosystem. The water that should be going south is being dumped along with all its agricultural pollutants into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers and straight into salt water lagoons and oceans. If anyone involved in this decision making process has not seen or lived with the results of this disaster, then you need to talk to someone who has. AND LISTEN. AND DO SOMETHING.	The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
LaMont E. Albertson (LA) - 1	7/11/16	Please, you are aware of the damage the Lake Okeechobee discharge is doing to the estuaries, businesses and property values, not to mention the mental hygiene of our residents and communities. This problem has existed for long enough for the Army Corps of Engineers to realize that it is monied, political interests which are blocking the exercise of an already amply researched common sense solution to this problem.	Thank you for your comment
LA - 2	7/11/16	Again, it is an example in American political history of an influential minority of business interests hurting the interests and health, mental and physical, of individuals, families, businesses, communities, and nature itself. There are workable plans in place to address the challenges obvious from Lake Okeechobee's man made, marginalized natural southern flow of water. Please take steps to implement them.	Thank you for your comment

		Thank you for the role you are playing in putting our concerns forward.	
Michael Walters	7/14/16	With regards to you Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project and the July 26 meeting, what public documents are available for review at this time?	Since it is the NEPA Scoping Meeting on July 26, we will be presenting the scope of the study and asking for comments on the scope of the study. Since the project is just kicking off we do not have any documents for review at this time.
Kristie Anders	7/14/16	Please consider scheduling more than one meeting for this important issue. I understand the one scheduled for the east coast is closed to the public.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
Jean Publiee	7/17/16	<p>After the lousy way the USACE built the work around New Orleans, it's clear to all that they cannot be trusted to work with water.</p> <p>I don't have any confidence in this agency being involved in multi billion dollars work. I think we may as well leave the site alone as get them in to do damage. Their skill level appears to be negative. I have zero confidence as to most who saw what happened to New Orleans. I believe this work should be stopped. No American dollars should be spent on it. I do not think it has a chance at success. This comment is for the public record. I note having followed other activities of the USACE how anti-environmental their actions always are. They give exemptions to enviro laws about 100% of the time for</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The purpose and objectives have been fine-tuned during the scoping process. The objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better manage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster and SAV habitat in the northern estuaries • Increase aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee (attenuate extreme high and low water levels) • Increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetland habitat in the watershed <p>Performance measures with targets are being developed for each objective.</p>

		<p>developers. That doesn't help America or the American people. This comment is for the public record.</p>	
<p>Peter Merritt</p>	<p>7/12/16</p>	<p>I received the notice of the workshop on July 26th concerning the LOW Project. I am wondering why the study area does not include the Lake Istokpoga and all of the Upper and Lower Kissimmee sub-watersheds. Any insights would be appreciated.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of</p>

			such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
Matt Gordon Jr.	7/29/16	As per a public comment request you may want to look at what Indian River County did. http://www.ircgov.com/departments/public_works/Stormwater_Section/fertilizer.htm	We will look into the project.
Steve Edmonds	7/28/16	I am not sure of the solutions. I am, however sure of the source and the problem. After observing the discharges all of my life and then seriously studying them for the last 3 years, I believe the problem to be storm water run-off and the multitude of various pollutants it carries with it. In 2013 over 760 Thousand Acre Feet of water was pushed through the Kissimmee Basin into the Kissimmee River and the ultimately into Lake Okeechobee. This is just one of 6 Basins that Lake O receives water from. The majority of the water has been proven to come from the Central Florida region. We need to capture, clean and redistribute that water. There are a few technologies that can do this. I am aware of one that estimates it can clean 1.2 million acre feet of water on a 1500 acre facility in 365 days. The technology is scalable so perhaps it would be best to have multiple facilities in the areas of the most storm water collection. Once the water is cleaned better than rain water then it could be distributed to several uses throughout the state. While you are building the infrastructure for that transport of clean water the existing deep well injections systems could be utilized to put clean	While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.

		<p>water back into the ground and aquifer system. My goal is to stop the discharges and the only way to do that is to keep the water out of the lake. I have years of research. I am working with a team on the prototype of the technology I just described. And I have a plan to pay for it. I am available at your request.</p>	
<p>Sarah Rogozinski</p>	<p>7/27/17</p>	<p>Scientific studies tell us that to truly restore the Everglades we MUST address the water issues north and south of Lake Okeechobee. Plans for comprehensive and long-term solutions must also include south of the Lake, in the EAA. I demand for SFWMD and USACE to also start NOW the planning of storage, treatment and movement of water south of Lake Okeechobee in the EAA. We need EAA planning NOW, not in 2020.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the</p>

			lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
David Urich	7/19/16	Attached is a map and an email that I sent yesterday to Rep Heather Fitzenhagen regarding the lack of usage of the existing FOUR South Lake "O" water gates. While I know that the Water Conservation Areas are full of water - it seems that somehow there could be significant flow sent to the Everglades, thus allowing MORE water to go SOUTH to the Everglades and thus to salty Florida Bay. Thus some more water could go SOUTH from Lake "O" within existing resources, as I see it. I know that the ACE is in charge of the Dike, but am not sure about the South discharge gates. I know that there is a called ACE meeting next week on the 26th at 7 PM in Okeechobee. I am not at all sure that I can make that meeting, so am sending this, now.	Lake Okeechobee releases to the south are governed by the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule. The decision-making process for Lake Okeechobee water management operations considers all Congressionally-authorized project purposes. The decision-making process to determine quantity, timing, and duration of the potential release from Lake Okeechobee includes consideration of various information related to water management. This information includes, but is not necessarily limited to: C&SF Project conditions, historical lake levels, estuary conditions/needs, lake ecology conditions/needs, WCA water levels, STA available capacity, current climate conditions, climate forecasts, hydrologic outlooks, projected lake level rise/recession, and water supply conditions/needs.
Mary Shabbott	7/27/16	Clean and repair head waters here. Fertilizer run off is a huge culprit. Send water south. Governor needs to help. Big Sugar needs to comply with previous agreement.	The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake. Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated

			<p>to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
Amelia Grant	7/27/16	Thanks for going forward with this project to help our watershed.	Thank you for your comment
Dustin Wood (DW) - 1	7/27/16	Building more storage north of the lake doesn't seem like a long term solution as this would not be a step towards restoring the natural hydrologic landscape that once existed.	<p>Storage north of Lake Okeechobee is essential to support Lake Okeechobee and overall Everglades restoration. It is supported by several agency and independent planning and technical analyses including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) • River of Grass Planning • Lake Okeechobee Watershed Phase II Technical Plan through the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (373.4595 Florida Statutes) • 2014 senate authorized University of Florida Water Institute independent technical review

			<p>Therefore, planning for the LOW Project was prioritized in the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS). The IDS is the tool used to prioritize and sequence South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program Projects which are cost shared between the USACE and the SFWMD. The IDS is developed and updated based on technical input through an open public process.</p>
DW - 2	7/27/16	<p>Please tell me, after all this proposed storage fills up during a 'really' wet season how would this reduce peak discharges east and west from the lake?</p>	<p>We are looking at management measures that include reservoirs, aquifer storage and recovery well and deep injection wells, as well as wetland restoration that will help us address the issue of discharges from the lake during a 'really' wet season.</p>
DW - 3	7/27/16	<p>Stop burying your head in the sand and face the facts, water used to flood south of lake O and now it doesn't. The C&SF planning project has left us with an environmental catastrophe.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts.</p>

			<p>The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
Sean Atkinson	7/26/16	<p>One question: why is it called "water storage", other bodies of water are called "wetlands". Are these deep water storage areas devoid of life like some flooded quarries?</p>	<p>Wetlands have a specific hydrology, inundation patterns and specific vegetation. Reservoirs can vary from shallow to deep, some containing vegetation, but not the hydrology of a wetland.</p>
Hal Wulff (HW) - 1	8/1/16	<p>I am a resident and owner in Jensen Beach, Florida and I am one of those affected by the polluted water coming from Lake O. To be extremely brief and blunt - our state officials are irresponsible with respect to doing what needs to be done - land south of the Lake needs to be purchased , condemned and water allowed to flow south again. That is the way it was before Lake O was created and that is the way it needs to be in the future.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task</p>

			Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
HW - 2	8/1/16	The Army Corps of Engineers should be putting additional pressure on the state leaders (wrong term: non leaders) and maybe even federal lawmakers to make this happen. Under the current parameters the Corps has no choice but to discharge water east and west. However, previous band aid solutions have been discussed and some implemented over past decades and the problem only gets worse. The time has come to implement Plan 6 and get the water headed in the natural direction: south. That needs to be done NOW!	Thank you for your comment.
HW - 3	8/1/16	While it might not matter to you personally or the Corps, but myself and many others I know will not vote for any candidates who are not progressively and aggressively supporting the southern flow of Lake O water. The destruction of our local economies and reduced property values means that the voters need to replace the current lawmakers in order to progress with the only sensible solution. The Army Corps of Engineers needs to play an active role in creating an immediate natural southerly flow of Lake O water.	Thank you for your comment.

HW - 4	8/1/16	Thank you for your anticipated efforts to bring about some relief and a more realistic and permanent solution. We have run out of time and band aids.	Thank you for your comment
Rick Armstrong	7/5/16	In a former life I worked for U.S. Sugar in their research department. All of the farm fields on their property are dug for water conveyance to facilitate irrigation of crops throughout the EAA. Why not purchase lands south of the EAA and work out a deal with the farmers to improve the water conveyance ability through the EAA to the lands south where the water can be cleaned before moving towards the Everglades. Accomplish moving water south by using lots of smaller canals instead of one big one.	The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
James Colgan (JC) - 1	8/5/16	<p>The major water problem for the lake starts at Disney World and the Orlando area.</p> <p>You need to start up there and make that area retain more of their water and stop the fast large volume of water from getting started.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake</p>

			Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.
JC - 2	8/5/16	<p>I know several large landowners in Osceola county who want to be given the opportunity to store water on their land for money but they aren't being given the same offer that the people south of them are.</p> <p>Why isn't the offer being given to everybody along the river?</p>	<p>The project area, approximately 950,000 acres, did not extend that far north because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. 2) Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility. 3) While it is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations, and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) Project to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements, is a complex, time-intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and will be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes that provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefits.

			<p>The LOW Project is one of several restoration efforts in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. Other efforts and opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan and other activities • Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (373.4595 Florida Statutes) • SFWMD’s district-wide Cooperative Funding Program • Kissimmee River Restoration Project is scheduled to be complete in 2020, and will restore more than square miles of river-floodplain ecosystem, including almost 25,000 acres of wetlands and 40 miles of historic river channel.
JC - 3	8/5/16	<p>Again if you can slow the water and store more from the start at Disney all the way to the lake it would do nothing but help.</p> <p>The State needs to use their own property (5.5 million acres) for water retention and filtration before they buy any more land. It hurts the counties when the State buys the land because it is taken off the tax rolls.</p>	<p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a significant consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p>
JC - 4	8/5/16	<p>Lastly, Go to the coast and make them to do more to clean up their own drainage basins. The problem on the coast (west and east) is still there even without the lake water. The lake water just adds to the problem by reducing the salinity but the high level of fecal material and such is still present. I do not want to get near any of that water because the thought of swimming in a septic doesn’t sound too appealing.</p> <p>The algae bloom is a result of several factors combing but the fecal matter is still present with the lake water, that is really disturbing.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage</p>

			<p>and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p>
<p>Audra Corson</p>	<p>8/5/16</p>	<p>I just wanted to contribute my comments on the Army Corps plan for the Lake Okeechobee Restoration. My comments are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water storage needs to be done north of the proposed boundary. Storage options should be looked in the northern chain of lakes (Lower and Upper Kissimmee sub-watersheds). 2. Additionally, no more agriculture land should be purchased to be managed by the government. Producers in this area have been bombarded by SFWMD, FWC, Audubon, etc. to purchase land. Many of the SFWMD properties would be perfect for storage projects due to their proximity to local waterbodies. 	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes</p>

			<p>can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p>
<p>Dowling Waterford</p>	<p>8/5/16</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use lands already owned by SFWMD or ACE. 2. If private land needed, use land conservation easements or "water farming". 3. Accept Osceola County's suggestion of including them in program area. 4. Do not take any resources from CERP or other programs already in the integrated schedule. 5. Be sure to consider effect on agriculture. 	<p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p> <p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

Table 2. NEPA Scoping Comment Response Matrix for comments received during the NEPA Scoping Meeting held July 26, 2016 in Okeechobee, Florida.

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
Tracy Campbell	Stuart businesses are suffering on many levels.	Thank you for your comment
Clarissa Hall	I live on the Kissimmee River and I am very concerned about changes to the river and lake,	Thank you for your comment
Sean Atkinson (SA) - 1	I drove 2 hours to get here. This is an organizational failure.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
SA - 2	I am here to assign blame, Lake Okeechobee is being treated like a sewer.	Thank you for your comment
Rep. Gayle Harrell	Very disappointed that the meeting as not held at a larger location so that all participants could attend.	Due to the over capacity crowds at the NEPA scoping meeting we have posted comments from both sessions at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project . For all future public meetings a larger venue will be secured so we do not have to have two shifts.
Ramon Iglesias, (Roland and Mary Martin Marina, Clewiston, FL)	We're in support of this program, we just wish that 3/3/3 might turn into a 1/1/1. It's been a big issue for many years, it's important that we clean the water before it leaves Lake Okeechobee. Storing it north of the Lake is what we need and what we're looking for, too. So if you can maybe speed up the progress, I don't know how you do that on the political scene, everybody wants to get involved. But it's time to move it forward.	Thank you for your comment. We will be moving this project forward as fast as possible.
Captain Don Boss, One Florida Foundation	I appreciate that we're looking at cleaning the water before it gets to Lake Okeechobee and comes to our estuaries. I appreciate that you're slowing down the water.	Thank you for your comment
Paul Carlisle, County	We're one of the two counties that the Corps is looking at to develop this Watershed. We would ask the Corps	The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
<p>Administration for Glades County, Florida (PC) - 1</p>	<p>a few items. One is can you expand that program further up the Chain of Lakes that captures the water that is coming out of the Orlando area that is affecting the Lake. And if you're going to utilize lands, utilize lands that the State already owns first before you start taking more lands off our tax roll. It's very important to us; when you start taking lands off the tax roll, its jobs. You cannot bankrupt the internal counties because of what's happening in the coastal and the Orlando regions.</p>	<p>scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p>
<p>PC - 2</p>	<p>So work with us, we'll work with you all. We all know that clean water is good for the entire state. So if you're going to take more lands off the tax roll in our counties, please compensate us for it. If it's good for the entire state, we should be compensated and we should look at lands outside of this area and we should look at lands regulating where development goes as they encroach on the urban areas into the agricultural areas and their discharges that they put into the watersheds.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee.</p> <p>Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. Additionally, preliminary results</p>

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		<p>of Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.</p> <p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p> <p>There are development regulations in place, such as the Environmental Resources Permitting and Wetland Resource Permitting under Chapter 62 Florida Administrative Code, that regulate such activities.</p>
<p>Newton Cook (NC) - 1</p>	<p>Number one, we've been through this rodeo once before. The reason we can raise water in the Kissimmee chain is that the District has already purchased the easements and the land. A number of years ago we raised two feet for the very same purpose, to hold it back, keep it out of the Lake and to clean the water. Unfortunately a storm came along called Fay, the Corps decided that if they had had two feet of extra water through the system, downtowns of most cities along the Okeechobee Lake would have flooded. So that has kind of gone away, and now it's</p>	<p>Consequences to storing water (i.e. “holding water back”) will be considered. There are several constraints to the project including the savings clause. Initial modeling results used for screening show that the alternatives being considered for detailed design substantially reduce the months of estuary high discharge events from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries and minimize the annual frequency of events reducing the possibility of sequential event years (i.e. back to back annual events). This will be further evaluated in detailed design.</p>

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	<p>come back. And it's a very good thing, but you have to remember there's consequences when you start holding water. Back in those days ten years ago, Lake Okeechobee racked. We asked the Corps the question "How many acre-feet new would be stored when we raise this system?" And I spoke with Lisa and the folks here today, and the number is right at about the same, its 295,000, let's say 300,000 acre-feet for the new storage. And this is where you folks in the estuaries, because you hear me say all the time "Please tell these people the truth." That's eight inches off the Lake. It's nothing. The Lake today is 20 inches too high. Eight inches would have been gone in January. This is a very good project. It's very important. But it's not going to help the estuaries that much.</p>	
<p>NC - 2</p>	<p>The second problem that's coming up is the Endangered Species Act out there. The snail kite is suddenly becoming much more popular among the endangered species folks. And if the snail kites stops the movement of the water up and down from the KCOL like the Cape Sable seaside sparrow has stopped the movement under the Tamiami Trail, then you folks in the estuaries will be bombed every time there's a rainstorm and the snail kites are nesting and they can't find their nest. There are two very crucial things happening here. There is no way to move water south. The bottom of the Lake, max 4- to 6,000 CFS. That's all that can go out of the bottom. Coming in just this last January, 18,000 CFS. Why do you think it goes out the estuaries? There's only three way it can go; C-43, C-44, south to Florida Bay. You cannot send it south today. There is no structure at the bottom of the Lake</p>	<p>We have begun consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for this project.</p>

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	<p>that will do 18,000 CFS. There's no flow-way to get to the Tamiami Trail, but if you had it, guess what? It's a dead stop because of the Cape Sable seaside sparrow.</p>	
<p>Hugh Haring</p>	<p>And we would like to see the effort moved further to the north so that it includes the area that is draining into the Lake itself. We would also work with the counties and cities that are involved around the Lake. And one of the things that we think would be very helpful would be if the counties and DOT would set up check-downs in their ditch sections so that they would hold the water back and then discharge it. There's – those type of dams are used all over the State of Florida and if you were able to hold six inches of water back in the upland areas over the time period that we're talking about, a lot of the controls that you're looking for would be helped significantly.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and</p>

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		<p>environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p> <p>We are coordinating with DOT on this project.</p>
<p>Maria Bolton-Joubert (MBJ) - 1</p>	<p>I'm up here -- or down here, rather, from Orange County. So I'm here today to demand that now -- now the State, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers start planning of the storage, the treatment and movement of water south of Lake Okeechobee in the EAA. We need the EAA planning now and not in 2020. We have a problem here. This is a Statewide problem. All 67 counties need to be concerned and take ownership of this issue. The Everglades and Lake O belongs to all of us, not just the counties surrounding the Lake. I live in Orange County, Florida, and yeah, a portion of my county, our water flows into Shingle Creek, into the Kissimmee River and down here into the Everglades. We're all connected to what is happening. I still want the State to purchase the land south of Lake Okeechobee.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of</p>

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		<p>the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
(MBJ) - 2	<p>I want that in order for there to be built a deep water reservoir to help restore the Everglades. We need to do this. Big Sugar needs to comply. I also want to incentives created throughout our state in order to help folks update their septic systems, because we all know that is expensive. I am also concerned with what has happened to our Amendment 1 money that 75 percent of the voters voted on. I will say this: Local elections matter. I encourage everyone to look up who is running for their August 30th election, the primary, and who is running on the ballot for the November 8th Presidential ballot. The deadline to register, by the way, is in a couple days for the August 30th election. You can actually get that information, its public record, you can look up who contributed to each and every one of these candidates. And I'm tired of people being bought out by big business in this state. They do not represent the people then.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Please see response to MBJ-1 above.</p>
(MBJ) - 3	<p>And I am talking to some people that are in this room and I do not care. I am tired of what has been happening to our state and we need to take it back. We need representation and we live in a democracy. Again, finally, if you need help, you can Google search</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>

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	<p>it, you just insert your county. For example, where I live, you can Google search "Orange County Supervisor of Elections," there's a list of candidates, and they have to file quarterly and all of these different time periods with their expenditures and their contributions. I encourage everybody, look and see who is bought and paid for. It's public record, share it all over social media. Enough is enough.</p>	
<p>Chris Nolan</p>	<p>I would like to just share something with you, because I'm a proponent of a lot of education. There's a lot of bits and pieces here, a lot of suggestions and recommendations. I'm going to ask, if you have a pen and paper, write this down. I'm going to give you a website: wwwAlgaeWheel.com. As bizarre and counterintuitive as it sounds, one of the things that we absolutely know -- I, by the way, am a consultant for a company called One Water Group, and what I do is I identify the top scientific solutions worldwide for various problems in the environment. The very top solution I contend is at AlgaeWheel.com. It will solve many of the problems outlined here tonight. I would like to share more information, obviously I'm limited on time. Matt, you're on the right track with the reservoirs north of the lake. You got to take it a little step further. And if any of you are interested, we would love to speak with you about it, because you have solutions which are as simple as daylight and green algae. You say "Algae solves algae?" Yes, it does. And we have the system to do it. We created it for Disney ten years ago, we created it for the Brookfield Zoo, now we're doing it all over the world. Florida needs AlgaeWheel.com. I would like you to look at it</p>	<p>Thank you for the information and comments.</p>

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	<p>and then any of you people that are leaders in this particular – in any of these organizations, you're free to come and sit down with our scientists and share with you the solutions that you're looking for.</p>	
<p>Gina Labruno</p>	<p>Hi. I just want to point out that three years ago, August 1st makes three years that Governor Scott and Senator Mark Rubio were here addressing the same issue. He promised -- well, first he blamed the Feds for what has been occurring. He promised 40 million to resolve the issues. Yet here we are today. So I just wonder when the Army Corps and the people running this state are going to heed towards the issues that we continue to have. There's a lot of broken promises going on, being led by our Governor. And I'm not ashamed to say it either, it is embarrassing. And that's pretty much all I have to say. It's a sad situation and we have to keep Florida waters safe. For us, we have to keep it safe.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>
<p>Ron Hamel</p>	<p>I would like to commend the Corps and everybody for coming out for this -- this meeting tonight because I think that storage throughout the system is extremely important, but I think the more we look north, all the statistics are pointing to storage north of the Lake and -- throughout the system, but predominantly north of the Lake to allow for more flexibility. They did a very good factual overview, I believe the South Florida Water Management District did it in conjunction with the Corps, and I would urge all of y'all to pick that up and read it and look at the details. And that's -- we look forward to participating and, you know, I wish you could speed this up. You know, this has been going on, the process, for over twenty years. And some of us</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>

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	<p>were around when you started putting the Everglades Restoration Program together and developed the yellow book. And there's a lot of elements in that yellow book that are -- that obviously technology won't -- won't allow for all of those, but storage, I think everybody agrees storage is really key. And the more we can put north to keep it from moving into the Lake, I think statistically is the way to go.</p>	
<p>Lisa Interlandi (LI) - 1</p>	<p>I want to thank the Corps for providing this opportunity for comment. I would urge you to possibly consider additional scoping meetings closer to the coast, because I think that there's a lot of people, to the extent that this project is intended to provide benefits from Lake Okeechobee discharges, I think there's a lot of people on the coast who might choose to weigh in if there were meetings that were more conveniently located. So I would urge you to perhaps schedule additional meetings in areas that are convenient to the areas that are supposed to be benefited.</p>	<p>The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.</p>
<p>LI - 2</p>	<p>I would like to second the suggestion that this project -- the scope of this project be expanded to include storage south of the Lake. The EAA reservoir project has been languishing and while a Project Implementation Report and an EIS was actually completed back in 2006, the project has not moved forward and in fact has been delayed, with planning not proposed to start until 2021. So we urge you to move that project forward. Our estuaries cannot afford to wait additional time for storage. You know, the University of Florida study did recommend storage north of the Lake. It also recommended storage within</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater</p>

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	<p>the Everglades Agricultural Area. In fact, significant quantities of storage, much more storage than is currently planned in the south. So in order to stop the discharges, we need storage north of the Lake, we need storage south of the Lake. You know, for every bit of water that is stored and treated north of the Lake before it's discharged, it has to be sent south. And once it's sent south and left -- and it leaves the Lake, it has to be cleaned again before it can be sent to the Everglades. So we need a place within the Everglades Agricultural Area where we can store water and treat it so that it can be sent south, clean water to the Everglades.</p>	<p>benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Allen Stewart</p>	<p>Many of you remember the Interim Action Plan in 1979. Well, I've been with it ever since. And one of the things I want to bring out -- by the way, I have no financial interest in any of the technologies I'm going to mention. But one of the things that I've been involved in over the years is the development of systems we call "managed aquatic plants" where we use algae, water hyacinths, other aquatic plants to remove and recover and reuse nutrients in Lake Okeechobee. This is important and we've done several projects with the District and this technology is presently being used in Indian River County to help meet their TMDL requirements. The reason this is</p>	<p>Thank you for the information and comments.</p>

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	<p>important is because we have huge stores of phosphorus in the Lake, in the sediment and in soils, and a lot of the aquatic plants that are sprayed every year and drip down to the bottom. In a recent presentation in Orlando where Dr. David Demoska (phonetic) presented the facts related to this and said that you could remove all of the loads coming into Lake Okeechobee in both phosphorus and sediments, and this legacy phosphorus will continue to send pollution to the estuaries and south. It is important and critical that we not just remove phosphorus and store it in places like STA's or in BMP's, we have to recover that phosphorus, we need to recycle it and we need to reuse it. This would be a new ag. Industry where aquatic plants would be a crop, it could create jobs and over the long term it could remove not only the incoming phosphorus, but also the legacy phosphorus. If you don't remove legacy phosphorus, the disruption to our estuaries is going to continue. I wrote a letter in 1987 that said this, and I would be happy to give y'all a copy of that if you want it, but it continues to be true.</p>	
<p>Gary Ritter (GR) - 1</p>	<p>Number one, the Florida Farm Bureau Federation has been and continues to be very supportive of the Everglades Restoration Project and this Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project. Number two, we are in favor of completing projects within the planning area and looking for opportunities on existing State and Federally-owned lands. We support partnerships with agriculture whenever possible, including conservation easements, disbursed water management, water farming opportunities, in</p>	<p>Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p>

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	<p>addition to addressing BMP's in the Watershed that we've been doing for decades now.</p>	
<p>GR - 2</p>	<p>I would like to also point out that, you know, this planning area -- the map is not up there, but it covers Okeechobee, Highlands and Glades County. One of the things that has really not been discussed is what are the opportunities in the Upper Chain of Lakes. And we would like to see more information, more scoping and planning in the Upper Chain of Lakes to see if there are possible storage opportunities up there. To my knowledge, as long as I've been involved in the process, I have never, you know, seen a plan going on in the Upper Chain of Lakes with the exception of the Kissimmee Restoration Project.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does</p>

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		not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
GR - 3	Lastly, and I know this one is not going to be popular, but I'm going to say it anyways. We do not support additional land acquisition, especially that results in more losses of our state and country's food supply. I think that's very, very critical. It's very important. And we really need to take this into consideration when we're doing this planning process.	Thank you for your comments. Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
Ben Butler	I'm going to echo Gary Ritter's comments. I'm also a member of the Okeechobee County Farm Bureau and we understand the importance of agriculture. And for 30 years, what agriculture has done in the Northern Everglades with our BMP's and the many projects, the many personal dollars, including my family, that have been put into these projects, in addition to public assistance, has taken a toll on agriculture. And I'm thankful that -- thankful that we are still here and still able to produce food for the rest of everybody else in the State of Florida. Again, I'll echo Gary's comments on the importance of agriculture and the importance of farm land, and what good farms can do to help clean the water, especially in the Northern Everglades.	Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
Dr. Hilary Swain	I, first of all, appreciate the fact that there is renewed emphasis on looking at the headwaters of the Northern Everglades. So we're glad to be back in the	Thank you for your comments. The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is

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	<p>eye again, good to be back engaged in the process. I think what I would really encourage you is looking back at the U.S. data, looking back at your own work, you know, looking at this headwaters Watershed is not the 922,000 acres that you've designated, but really the 2.6 million acres that are in this Watershed, you know, including 17 percent of it is the ancient sand ridges on the west of the Watershed, ranches, rivers, ridge-to-ranch-to-river in this Watershed. And I think we're making a mistake thinking of the Watershed again as a five-gallon bucket of water and we're just messing around with the bottom two gallons. We have to look at the whole five gallons. We're not as compartmentalized as south of the Lake. You know, the lines on these maps are at best fuzzy. They're not straight lines that allow easy compartmentalization of the hydrology. And I think the other extraordinary thing about this Watershed is ownership of lands lying south of the lake. Only 22 percent of this Watershed is either in public or conservation private lands. So we're going to have to think very differently about our strategies north of the Lake, because we don't have the same opportunities that we have south of the Lake, with multiple -- many of them agricultural. And I think it's - - it gives us a chance to be very different and very imaginative north of the Lake. So I'm looking forward to the suggestions you have and I'll direct a few of our own.</p>	<p>defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the</p>

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		overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.
Keith Pearce	And I just read a recent report that was released by James Madison Institute. Five and a half million acres already belong to Government agencies in South Florida alone. Another three-quarters of a million acres is under conservation easements. My question would be why are we looking at purchasing more land? We need to be looking at utilizing funds to utilize the existing properties that are already in Government ownership.	Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.
Betty Osceola (BO) - 1	A lot of my statements are going to come in written letter with the organization that I'm a part of. But for myself as an individual who was able to grow up in the Everglades, my family has been here before Florida was Florida, and also it's very sad to hear a lot of people talking about ownership of the land. You do not own this land. Mother Earth does. You created us. You're only leasing it. And it needs to be taken care of by everyone. And remember, our people say "When you point your finger, you have four coming right back at you." It's not just the Corps, it's not just the Government, it's everybody who is counting on that production and who is living here, breathing this air.	Thank you for your comment
BO - 2	Also you need to remember, and the lady -- one of the ladies before me mentioned it -- she kind of got it a little bit. You are dealing with a living system. Just like you breathe, live and die, it does the same thing. The water is not dead. The land is not dead. Your farmers know that. And you should know that. You are not going to control what the Creator does and what this	Thank you for your comment

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>water does. And the better you realize that, the more you can understand it. If you live and breathe it, you understand how this water works, you understand how the environment works. You're not going to learn it out of a book. You have to live it. And right now, a lot of the projects that I see, all you're -- to me, all you're doing is moving your crap to somebody else. That's basically what you're doing. And just like Mr. Stewart said, you have to remove that crap, otherwise it's going to stay there and your septic tank that you're using the environment for is going to get full. That's all I have to say.</p>	
<p>Dowling Watford</p>	<p>I would just like to say I support your projects here. I would like for you to consider a couple things, and Gary touched on them, and Ben touched on them. First of all, you need to consider the economy, and I'm sure you will, and the agricultural land. Agriculture is very important to us, particularly here in Okeechobee. It's important to us all because we all eat. So it's very, very important to us. I would also like for you to strongly consider the conservation easements and water farming. I think that is the way to go rather than purchasing land. So I would appreciate it if you would consider those. Anything you do -- and I'm kind of like Gary, I don't know that I'm in favor of purchasing more land south of the Lake. And Jacqui hates to hear that, but I don't know that I am. I would encourage you, encourage all of us to support the CERP projects that are currently -- what is it called, the Integrated Delivery Schedule? That needs to be done. And we don't need to take the focus off of that. Unfortunately, the recent water quality</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>problems on the coast have kind of taken the focus off that. But we need to stay focused on that. And if we all worked as hard getting those projects funded as we do complaining about everything else, we would be a lot further along in that process. I also want to strongly encourage you to consider the health of the dike, the Herbert Hoover Dike. Very important to all the communities around the Lake. And I know you will, but I want you to strongly consider that.</p>	
<p>Al Perry</p>	<p>And I want you to commend you folks for finally focusing on north of the Lake. You know, I want to remind some of the people in the audience that we hosted a peaceful rally about three years ago in Clewiston about the water releases and we were singing that song loud and clear and didn't get any traction. And whoever is responsible for getting that traction out there, thank you. So the water storage north of the Lake is very important to us. And I just want to say one thing. The quality of the Lake is very important to us, too, maintaining proper Lake levels, and the reason for that is our local economy, our fishing economy is just as important to us as yours is to you on the coast. And it's just at a different level, but it's just as important to us as yours is to you.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>
<p>Paul Seaver</p>	<p>(...) we're distributors of electric chemistry equipment. And we can help clean up the phosphorus before it ever gets into Lake Okeechobee without any chemicals, without any (inaudible) and we can take it out of the soil. So anyway, we can take it out of the water, we can also kill the cyanobacteria at the same time and do it without any chemicals.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
<p>Steve Weir (SW) - 1</p>	<p>Paul Seaver just identified a major problem that you have at this moment with the Lake that seems to be ignored here in this room. And that is there is a major plague of the green algae bloom spreading. It's not only on the Lake, but it's spreading to all the estuaries and its spreading north and its spreading south. If you don't kill off the bacteria and do it soon, the whole Lake will be full of it and you'll be flooded with it. Right now it's a plague. And everyone is talking about storing water here and storing it there. This last gentleman just identified that they have equipment that will kill off that cyanobacteria. If you ever put your hand in it, you'll see the rash that you will get from it. The ability to kill off the bacteria, technology exists, it's being used all over the world except for here. It's a hundred percent organic, it's natural, they just change -- temporarily change the molecular structure of the water which kills off the bacteria. And after the bacteria is killed off, the water is pumped back into the Lake absolutely pure.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
<p>SW - 2</p>	<p>In addition to that, the same equipment with a slight alteration also mines the phosphorus that is in the water, the legacy phosphorus that has been there for years and years and been deposited for a lifetime. And that legacy phosphorus will always plague the Lake unless it's removed. Right now it can be removed by electrolysis. All they do is mount this on big barges, they only take them about a foot of water, and as they go into one foot of water or less even or into the deeper water, they actually mine this phosphorus. Electronically phosphorus has magnetic qualities and those qualities will attach to their equipment by</p>	<p>Thank you for the information.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>magnet. It's a magnetism that they grab whatever is on the bottom, plus they could do it at the headwaters. So you can stop the phosphorus from coming into the Lake to begin with. You can mine and remove the phosphorus and then re-sell it. It will mix in with the soil. It's got phosphate in it, but it's a different kind of technology. When you have phosphorus being mined on a dry open land pit, that's one thing. But when it's in the water, it entails a different aspect of the science of removing phosphorus. This product and the technology is used all over the world except here in the United States for some reason. It was just never introduced, it was never -- never caught on here. But they're now starting to use it in California. And Florida is the ideal place for it. Right here in Florida, you've got to get rid of that plague because it's spreading. You can store all the water you want, but all that water will be contaminated. You can't help it, it will be automatically contaminated. And here they have a product and a piece of equipment and a technology that is a hundred percent organic.</p>	
<p>Shannon Larsen (SL) - 1</p>	<p>I'm neither for or against this project. I'm stating that because I don't think enough details have been given where the land is going to be and all the other questions I have going on in my mind. But I think for this project it's essential that they create a citizens watchdog committee over this entire project so we know where the money comes in and where it goes out and what it's being used for. We've all seen the Everglades restoration money, it ends up on study after study after study after study and nothing ever</p>	<p>The project team did a field visit on July 26, 2016 and will continue to conduct site visits throughout the planning process. The planning process is transparent and all information is available at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Lake-Okeechobee-Watershed-Project</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>happens. I don't want to see that happen again. We need to take control over this and watch it. I think it should involve a lot of local input, people that live in the areas that are going to be affected. I don't want to see -- I think on-site visits must be done by the Corps, not just looking at the computers and saying "Well, this can be here or that can be there or that can be there, that can be there." That's what they do. That's what their studies do. They need to get out there and make sure that this system is going to work before they even try to implement it or we're just going to be another twenty years behind.</p>	
<p>SL - 2</p>	<p>I think this whole thing can go a lot quicker. They have studies. They have material already. It can be shortened down to one-to-one, I think. I also feel that they need to get out of their STA boxes. There are other systems that have been mentioned today that are far better than the STA's. So they need to look at more innovative and systems that really work in times that we're living in today. They're talking about they're going to do scoping more with the people. I certainly hope that they really do this and include the indigenous people also all the way through this. They're notoriously, especially independents, left out of the system and I don't want to see that happen either this time. I think when the citizens are involved, we can identify the problems as they're occurring. You see them, everybody knew in the beginning that that Lake didn't need to be dammed. Many people spoke out about that, yet they did it anyway. People shouldn't be living there in the first place.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.</p>

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Irene Gomes	<p>Ya'll are worried about agriculture, I'm worried about the Florida economy and we're based on tourism. And it's hurting, and it's hurting bad. Over the 4th of July, during that week I lost several thousand dollars. I'm also concerned about the quality of life. I have children and grandchildren, I'm concerned about what we're leaving the next generation. The Everglades needs water, Florida Bay needs water. I mean, we need to get water moved south. I don't understand all this stuff where people are -- I mean, isn't that obvious, the Everglades needs water? It also provides drinking water. You know, I -- I don't know, I get so upset when I talk about this because this has been my whole life, since I was seven years old on the Indian River Lagoon. Like I said, the most biodiverse estuary in North America and it's dying. And you need to care. You need to do something about it. We need to do something to save it before it dies, please.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
Anna Bergalis	<p>I just want to give you this photo. It actually looks like poop, but it's not, it's cyanobacteria. It's coming onto my property and it reduces the value of my property. Not only that, it's a cyanobacteria, you know, this blue-green algae which is really cyano -- it's a bacteria. Forget about the plant, it's more a bacteria. And when I have friends coming down from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, they're going to look at this and they're going to think it's poop, they're not going to think it's blue-green algae. And also, too, you say restore the estuaries? Here, I'll give you this photo, you can give it to the Governor, if you would. When you're -- you're saying "restore," you have to have salt to restore. You can't have fresh water. I don't care if you clean it up a</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water</p>

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	<p>hundred times, you're dumping fresh water on us. What is it doing? It's killing our seagrasses. Why do we say seagrasses? Seagrasses are salty. Salty. And that acts as a little nursery for our fish. And by killing those grasses, what you do is you're going to be putting more phosphates and nitrates in your water and you're going to start it all over. The cycle goes on and on. And how long has this cycle been going on? Forty, 50 years? A hundred? You know. I mean, it's ridiculous. And I always say it's God's -- God's salty water, it's man's hell, Okeechobee. So restore.</p>	<p>north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p>
<p>Kim Streiber</p>	<p>I very much appreciate the agriculture and farming here as much as the coastal estuaries. It is all what makes Florida such an amazing place. I agree that slowing and cleaning water coming into the Lake is necessary, but that is not going to stop the discharges east and west. Only a flow-way south will do that. I want to make one thing very clear to everybody here tonight. The people and organizations taking part in the movement to purchase Everglades agricultural land are not doing it with the intention of putting farmers or ranchers around the Lake out of business. Nor is it our intention to displace the residents of Belle Glade, Clewiston, South Bay, or any other community currently in place south of Lake Okeechobee. What we are fighting for is to restore the natural flow of clean water south to the River of Grass. It needs to replenish the aquifer. We only need a small portion of EAA land to clean and convey water south. A contract was signed in 2008 that allowed the State to purchase land at fair market value. Funds exist due to the passing of</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>Amendment One. The contract expires in 2020. That's why they want to hold off until 2021. What we need is the political will to get that done before the contract is up. We all have to work together and do our part to clean our water, but so do our State leaders and governing boards. Did you know the DEP and ERC, both Governor appointed, approved higher levels of carcinogens in our ground water today? They will now allow higher levels of benzene and other chemicals used in the fracking industry. Is that what you want for your grandchildren? It's not what I want.</p>	
<p>Bobby Billie</p>	<p>It looks so sad to see the people rely on the money, not by life, and you can't eat money. You can't drink money. And you can't create the food. But people manipulate so long and they think it's God now. And we really do need to wake up before it's too late. It's already too late. What things we see, the Mother Earth we call, we understand it, indigenous people understand that God create us and that's why we call it the Mother Earth. When you cut yourself, it bleeds. So when you cut canals, it bleeds. It's simple. It's not difficult. You don't have to be a scientist to understand that. You're killing yourself. You're killing your future generations. We talk about water, we tell them, the Water Management and Army Corps of Engineers and anybody else, developers, all those people, they need to cover up those ditches. You can't live in the wetlands complaining that we're underwater. You have brain. The way that God had gave you, simple: Build your home on the higher land. Simple. Be human. Be human beings. Take care for your future</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>generations, their survival. That's what -- we all need to understand that right now, we're killing our future generations. Wake up. Tell Water Management, Army Corps of Engineers and the Army "Cover all the ditches, plant the grass." It's the reason that God plant the grass in the water. It cleans the water. That's what they're for. It's the reason why that God create the trees, to renew the air. This concrete, it don't create the air. It don't regenerate anything, it just pollute and make pollution. In Florida we don't used to have mountains. But now it's everywhere. Dumps the size 150 feet high now everywhere. Think about all of these. People needs to slow down, if you want to live on God's creation. It's given to us to take care of it so we can pass it on to the next generation. Think about that.</p>	
<p>Ira Cor</p>	<p>We did not expect to have only two minutes, we have brought tangible plans, some to kill the cyanobacteria, some to harvest the phosphorus, some to clean up the environment, as well as -- and all, 100 percent, as Mrs. Osceola was pointing out, 100 percent holistically pure, no chemistry, just good thinking, good brain power, cost effective, and we're hopeful that we can find a way to present this, not in this forum because it's not fair to everyone that wants a chance to speak. But what we -- we have spent the time to do is assemble real programs from real places -- and it's proven, it's not pies in the sky. So we would like to know where we can present this information. Is it Mrs. Ehlinger? --- No, I understand that, I'm just trying -- I'm trying to cut my part short so</p>	<p>Thank you for the information and your comments.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>everyone can speak. But I want to be sure that we want to know where the focal point is. --- That's enough? Then I'll shut up.</p>	
<p>Daniel Andrews</p>	<p>Our estuaries are suffering right now in the Caloosahatchee River, the St. Lucie River, and Florida Bay. It's sad to me; I always try to leave the environment, my office, better than when I found it. But at this point it's dying way faster than I ever imagined it would. The oyster bars and the grass slots where I grew up fishing no longer exist. Massive fresh water discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers have destroyed what I thought was going to be the office for the rest of my career. Going down and seeing Florida Bay where 50,000 acres of seagrass has died, that's an unbelievable amount of biodiversity removed. That takes decades to recover; not weeks, not months, not a season. I have a quote from the University of Florida Water Institute Study that I'm going to leave you with. "The River of Grass planning process demonstrated that there are several possible options involving combinations of deep and shallow storage, wet and dry flow-ways, coupled with STA's and enhanced conveyance that could provide significant benefit for both the estuaries and the Everglades, far beyond the benefits provided by the Kissimmee River Restoration, Indian River Lagoon South, C-43, Restoration Strategies and CEPP projects. Achieving substantial reduction in Lake-triggered discharges to the estuaries and substantial improvement toward the dry season Everglades demand target will require additional land between the Lake and the Everglades Protection Area." I would</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p> <p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and</p>

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	<p>ask the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District to keep that in mind when planning for storage north and south of the Lake.</p>	<p>Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p>
<p>Dr. Julie Bjornson</p>	<p>You're all talking about the water stopping at the Everglades. It doesn't stop at the Everglades. I grew up in the Keys. I walked the sandbars, I snorkeled the reefs, the reefs were beautiful, the fish were beautiful. It was wonderful. The reefs are dying out. The reefs are breached. That means they're dying. The fish are dying. We set up -- I used to -- my mother and I created a Florida Keys shell exhibit. They don't exist anymore. So the shell exhibit exists in Marathon. You can go and see it, it's at the Natural History Museum. But I'm really concerned about water quality. The reefs wouldn't be dying if the chemicals didn't have a half life. If they just were -- they would biodegrade when they tell you they're going to. But they don't. Those chemicals go right out into the ocean and they're destroying our reefs. They're destroying our water, they're destroying our way of life. I'm concerned about water quality. Lisa Aley mentioned low Lake levels increase aquatic and invasive plants. Public records show high quantities of pesticides and</p>	<p>An Invasive and Exotic Species Management Plan will be included as part of the Project Implementation Report for this project. That management plan will include all treatment protocols and substances that will be used if necessary.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>herbicides are introduced into our water system to control these plants. They don't biodegrade, they have half-lives. Long half-lives. With the development of more storage areas, will aquatic and invasive plants be a problem? And if so, will you -- how will you manage these plants and how will you treat them? I would like to know where can I find information on the chemicals used, the amounts used, and your treatment schedule. I am concerned. I am very concerned about what is happening with the amount of chemicals that are going in our water system. You talk about clean water. It doesn't mean-- you might take the phosphates out, but are you taking all the other chemicals out? We need to look at that. It is affecting our health. These chemicals -- I'm involved in restoring citrus groves naturally. They're coming back. We have harvest now, we're reversing citrus greening naturally. These chemicals, we need to stop it. We need to have healthy food for our children so they can grow, develop and learn and become productive citizens.</p>	
<p>Patricia Wallace</p>	<p>I am concerned that enough local people are at the table of decisions. If you don't live where I live, you don't know the impact of what your studies are doing to the residents of City of Pahokee. I know that we live off the farm land and farming is very important to our livelihood. To see a next generation of my children and grandchildren survive, you will impact us when water start flowing. So I heard one young lady say they have no intent of displacing people. Can we get a statement from the Federal Government, from South Florida Management, from the Corps of Engineers</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is planning for storage north of the lake and does not include land in the area of Pahokee, Belle Glade, South Bay, Clewiston, or Moore Haven. Additionally, the Project Delivery team includes a large group of technical experts, including local and county representatives who are very familiar with the project area. Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint.</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>that any land they purchase, any water they release will not replace, displace residents in Pahokee, Belle Glade, South Bay, Okeechobee, Clewiston, Moore Haven, around the Lake? We touch the Lake. I can walk out of my back door across the dike levy and I'm in the Lake. So to get water to a southern part of the land, you mean you have to sweep me away. Don't sweep me away. The Storm of '28 was enough upset for us. We had enough impact from that. So whatever decisions this body make, please bring local people to the table. Bring young people to the table. Take the advice of some of these people who have products that will work. It seems that we have not tried what works. So do it -- if the money is there, use the money on what work and stop researching things that you know are not going to work and going to delay the process. I pray that you will move forward, use research that has been tested, and do not displace people with the releasing of water.</p>	
<p>Mali Soto Gardner</p>	<p>I would like to thank you for that. And also Mr. Collins, I don't know if he's here tonight still or if he's left, but I wanted to thank the Water Management District for sharing the facts, for publishing the facts. I also wanted to thank them for Resolution #2016-0711, which really asks for the Federal Government to complete the work of the Herbert Hoover Dike. It is critical for our community. I'm not sure if -- I know you mentioned it, but my name is Mali Gardner and I am a Clewiston City Commissioner. And I'm concerned. Over the years I've seen our community tossed to and fro by every single statement that's made about Lake Okeechobee, by every single demand for "Flood these</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide</p>

Public Comment	AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENT	CORPS RESPONSE
	<p>communities," every single demand to "Take the land." It has to stop. We're all in this together. We love our communities, we love our farmers, we love living on the tips of Lake Okeechobee. Just like this Reverend just said, I can walk out my door and go up on the levy and see sunrise and sunset on Lake Okeechobee. And you don't think we're proud of our Lake? We are proud of our Lake. And that's why tonight I am here. I want to please, please encourage the Corps of Engineers to continue with this project and look at the land north of Lake Okeechobee. It is important for water quality, it is important for water storage, it is important to save Lake Okeechobee. And it is critical, critical that the funding be used to complete the projects that have already been approved by the State and Federal Government and get the projects done so that we can have a cohesive system in the north, the south, the east and the west. It needs to be done, and it needs to be done quickly. Quit wasting money, and I agree with you, quit wasting money on other things; focus on the projects and get it done.</p>	<p>flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>Karson Turner (KT) - 1</p>	<p>You know, a lot of comments and a lot of things I disagree with being stated here tonight, a handful of things I do agree with. I'll tell you, for me, you know, buying land is not an option. It's something that should be taken off the table, it's asinine, it's going to delay a tremendous amount of projects that are on the books that are going -- that are going to create, you know, the releases, the issues that we have, those deluges that we have. I've gone to D.C. the last four years in a row now with a handful of Commissioners from across the entire state from Orlando south,</p>	<p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p> <p>Due to the strict schedule and budget in this expedited SMART Planning effort, the PIR/EIS will not involve re-evaluation of regulation schedules. However, if refinement opportunities to</p>

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	<p>we've asked our Senators and our Congressional leaders to pass a water bill. We were fortunate enough to get one done three years ago, I believe it was. There was a seven-year gap. I would ask everyone in this room to please reach out to their Congressional and Senatorial leaders and try to get a water bill acted on. We need to revisit LORS right now. The current plan for the Corps of Engineers is to wait until 2020. I don't know what forecast that, you know, they couldn't model with the past few years that we've had, the past ten years. Go back and look. We've had crazy weather. You know, we've been in these rooms where the temperature has been hot, no pun intended, where everybody is pointing fingers, and we've seen this happen time and time again. Corps of Engineers, I challenge you, don't wait until 2020. Move that ball down the field, get it going. Look at LORS right now, there's movement in there to store on the Lake.</p>	<p>regulation schedules are identified in the process, they will be noted and appropriately considered.</p> <p>Per the IDS, the planning process to update the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) will commence in 2022. The current LORS08 regulation schedule will serve as a basis for analysis of the LOW Project alternatives.</p>
<p>KT - 2</p>	<p>You know, Commissioner Grieb from Osceola County, she and I serve on the Lake O Coalition together. You know, she's a champion. I'm excited to hear about looking at possibilities up on the northern end of the Lake -- excuse me, the Chain of Lakes. And I think that Osceola County is a willing partner. Terry Torrens is here tonight and she's going to speak to that as well. But that's a definite option that needs to be vetted. And, you know, I just want to -- I just want to say that revisiting -- excuse me, buying land south, not an option. It takes our eyes off the prize of getting projects done. Economy to scale, y'all - - when you come out to Lake Okeechobee, I challenge</p>	<p>Utilizing lands that are in District ownership is a consideration in the process, but not a constraint. Where the non-Federal sponsor has already acquired lands, formulation of plans using other sites will be minimized if the intended project purposes can be achieved and no more cost effective land sites are identified during the plan formulation.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood</p>

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	<p>you to come to visit with me in Clewiston, America's sweetest town. You know, I was born in Pahokee. You know, come on with it, come down. We'll go on horseback, we'll go on an airboat, we'll go on a flats boat, whatever you want to do, and we'll talk about it until the cows come home literally. And we'll feed the Brahmans the longer you're out there and you'll see what we're about. And we're the best conservationists on the planet. Look at the water that's coming off of our fields, look at what's happening. And I say "we" collective; I don't grow cane, okay? It's not how I make my living, I make my living on bridges that go up and down with the Florida Department of Transportation, but I'm here on my dime tonight and I challenge y'all to come down to Clewiston, Pahokee, Belle Glade, check us out sometime, you'll be amazed at the people and what we're about.</p>	<p>control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>Terry Torrens</p>	<p>I came down tonight with my Commissioner, Cheryl Greib, to talk about looking at the project area and being possibly included in the solution. We're really glad to see that the Corps and the Water Management District are getting together to address the problems that we currently are having with Lake Okeechobee and the water releases. Osceola County and the Upper Chain of Lakes isn't included in the project footprint in terms of the study and scoping. So we're just here saying that we're interested, we're willing partners, we think we have potential options up in the Upper Kissimmee basin and we would just like to be part of the plan.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

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		<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>Cheryl Greib</p>	<p>And I would first like to thank the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management for hosting this public comment opportunity on this most important project. I've already submitted a letter, so I won't bore you through that, but I wanted to say a couple other things. The headwaters, as most of you know, start in Orange County and flow through Osceola County, but these northern areas unfortunately are not included in the project</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades,</p>

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	<p>boundary and planning areas. We understand that the water in our county flows south and its quantity and its quality are part of the overall problem. However, Osceola County is also willing to be part of that solution. Aquifer storage and recovery would be a great fit in the Upper Kissimmee Watershed, it would be seen as favorable in the Central Florida Water Initiative to increase capacity in an area with limited water supply. We have large agricultural tracts that will be suitable in both location and function in our southern portions of our county that could house large storage facilities. We're not asking for priority, we would just like to be included in the feasibility study and the project boundary. The purpose of this project is to improve quality, quantity, timing and delivering of water. It's been stated that we need to have storage north of the Lake as part of the solution, and I could not agree more. It has been stated that this project is a system-wide project, yet it excludes the Upper Kissimmee basin. Osceola County can be part of the solution if we are invited to be part of the process. Please allow us this opportunity.</p>	<p>Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>Heather Fitzenhagen (HF) - 1</p>	<p>I represent Lee County, Fort Myers, and my community is suffering with the water releases and the discharges from Lake Okeechobee and that's why I'm here today. Folks, we are in a crisis. We're in a</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic</p>

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	<p>crisis of economics, we're in an environmental crisis, and now in a health crisis as a result of what's happening with discharges from the Lake. But I am not here to play the blame game. I am here to be open to any kind of solutions, but I have to say that what we're doing now isn't fast enough and it isn't enough. All these things discussed are great ideas and I think we should follow through with them. But it's not happening quickly enough and it is not including a flow-way south through the EAA, which I believe we need and I believe the science supports that from the University of Florida study.</p>	<p>information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>HF - 2</p>	<p>So we need to find a way to do that. Now, people talk about "We can't afford it, we don't have the money." Well, Amendment 1 money was designated for that, number one. And number two, who is to say that the money -- I mean that the land might not be donated? Maybe somebody wants to donate some land that's south of the lake or maybe they would like to swap some land with some other land in another area of Florida to try to find a solution. I don't think we should take any solutions off the table, but we need to resolve this now, because people in this room won't even be alive by the time we get through with some of these projects. We will not be alive to see the results.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
<p>Dennis Duke (DD) - 1</p>	<p>I applaud the efforts of the Water Management District and the Corps of Engineers in hosting this public meeting to start gathering information for this process. We look forward to working with them to address some of those problems that Newton Cook raised earlier regarding endangered species. Yes, we do have those, we don't</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment</p>

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	<p>want to wipe out our species as we try our restoration. But we believe the restoration will lead to the betterment of all those species, as well as the human environment. And just backing up for a moment, I don't want to do this too long, but when somebody said that somebody promised 40 million dollars for this, look at the table that Matt went through a while ago of the projects that are currently underway. I mean, we've got the Kissimmee River Restoration, it's three-quarters of a billion project, billion-dollar project that's going to capture some of the water and slow it down before it gets to the Lake. This project is another piece. Somebody was talking about how small, you know, the effect of this is. Keep in mind that all of these projects are designed and planned to work together. We've got this project coming on to provide storage to help capture and slow the water down coming into Lake Okeechobee and clean it up before it actually gets into the Lake. Because you're right, we have a huge legacy phosphorus problem and nutrient load in the Lake that needs to be addressed. That's in part of the planning down the road someplace.</p>	
<p>DD - 2</p>	<p>On the East and West Coast, we have the C-43 reservoir and the C-44 reservoir, both under construction by the Corps and the Water Management District. Going south, we have the Central Everglades project, 1.9-billion-dollar project that's awaiting authorization in Congress to start moving that water south. We have the Tamiami Trail Next Steps, the Mod. Water project. Each of those nearly half a billion dollars or more to help provide a</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p>

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	<p>flow-way to get the water south. We appreciate this. This is just another piece of that overall puzzle. And we really appreciate adding aquifer storage and recovery to this project. Before, my history with this has been mainly focused on surface storage and STA's. They consume land. With aquifer storage and recovery, we can reduce the footprint of those projects and store the water underground. We need lots of storage. So we strongly support this and look forward to working with you to help improve these issues with endangered species and other issues that crop up as we go.</p>	
<p>Gayle Harrell (GH) - 1</p>	<p>As you know, the releases from Lake Okeechobee has been just devastating to our community, to Martin and St. Lucie Counties, and I can't tell you what we've been experiencing with the blue-green algae. This has been extremely difficult on our community. As far as the Corps' responsibility in this, I have several suggestions I would like to make on that, and then I would like to talk a little bit about the Watershed. First of all, I think we really need about a two-week hiatus from the releases from Lake Okeechobee. We need a little bit of a break. Fortunately, you've reduced some of the releases recently, but we need to make sure that -- if you could give us two weeks at least to flush our estuary, I think that would be extremely helpful for us. Also we want to expedite the planning and the rehabilitation of the dike. That is key. The more -- the faster you can do that, the better it will be. Also I think what we really need to do as well is to re-address the Integrated Delivery Schedule</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake</p>

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	<p>you just put up there. We really need to be able to plan north of the Lake, which is what you're doing now, as well as south of the Lake.</p>	<p>Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>GH - 2</p>	<p>I think the University of Florida study was very clear in that there is a need for additional land north of the Lake, very much so, but also south of the Lake. So as you do that integrated planning, please do that together. Look both north of the Lake -- your study right now, what you're doing now, is only addressing north of the Lake. We need to address south of the Lake as well. I think the study from the University of Florida was very well done. Thank you, Joe Negron, Senator Joe Negron, who really expedited that. But I think it really indicates that we need to look south of</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in</p>

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	<p>the Lake, we need to move the water south and make sure that it gets down to -- gets down to the Everglades. It's a complicated process, I know that. We've been at this for many, many years. And the State of Florida has stepped up to the plate with Legacy Florida. I think the funds are there at the State level. We have over the next 19 years four to five billion dollars. So the Federal Government, the Army Corps needs to do your share. So please, as you move forward with this, look across the whole area, expedite things, restore the dike, let's look at the south side of the Lake as well as the north side of the Lake, so that as you go into that Integrated Delivery Schedule we really address purchasing land south of the Lake.</p>	<p>close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Jennifer Hecker (JH) - 1</p>	<p>First I just wanted to say that the project purpose was described as improving the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee. We would ask that it be expanded to talk about water entering and exiting Lake Okeechobee.</p>	<p>During the scoping process the objectives have been fine-tuned and are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better manage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to improve the salinity regime and the quality of oyster and SAV habitat in the northern estuaries • Increase aquatic and wildlife habitat within Lake Okeechobee (attenuate extreme high and low water levels) • Increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetland habitat in the watershed <p>Performance measures with targets have been developed for each objective.</p>

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<p>JH - 2</p>	<p>The scope should be also expanded to look at both north and south of the Lake concurrently. The UF Water Institute study shows that both are required and they're interrelated to one another, so they should be looked at simultaneously.</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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JH - 3	There should also be a scoping meeting in Fort Myers where those stakeholders can be able to directly give input. Having it here in a remote location hours away on a weekday evening is just not sufficient to allow them to be able to be heard.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
JH - 4	The EAA is the missing piece of the puzzle. Yes, we need CERP. Yes, we need watershed plans -- plans and projects. We need more storage north, west and east of the Lake. But the science shows that we cannot fix the estuaries and the Everglades without the EAA. In the Caloosahatchee, 61 percent of our pollution is coming from Lake O releases. So in order to treat it, we need to have a place to divert that pollution, where it can be captured, cleansed and conveyed back to where it historically flowed and belongs, and that's the Everglades and Florida Bay through what is now the Everglades Agricultural Area. The District's Deputy Director in 2008 said it best when he said that acquiring EAA lands would, quote, "clean the water before it reaches the Everglades and store enough water to minimize harmful discharges," and, quote, "will work to build upon and enhance the Federal/State partnership of CERP." It doesn't detract from CERP, it enhances CERP.	Please see response to JH-2 above.
JH - 5	Also more storage, treatment and conveyance in the EAA is going to allow for continued	Please see the response to JH-2 above.

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	<p>expansive agriculture to continue on surrounding lands, more flood protection, and maintaining safe Lake levels for the communities around the Lake by providing a larger relief outlet and, again, diverting pollution and excess water away from the northern estuaries back to the Everglades and Florida Bay which desperately need this water. Finally, it's a false choice to say it's food or clean water, it's the safety of inland communities or the safety of coastal communities. The bottom line is that EAA storage would improve conditions for all of South Florida's communities and natural systems. Some want to pit us against one another, but we cannot let them. We ask you to move forward with EAA storage planning concurrently with north of the Lake storage planning and so that we can sit down and work with all the other stakeholders to find solutions that benefit us all.</p>	
<p>Donna Melzer</p>	<p>We have a disaster on our hands. You've heard the consequences in terms of environment, our economy and our health. When it rains this summer, the toxic discharges will continue. You're facing an angry, frustrated public, but with lots of knowledge. Fixing the dike won't fix the -- our problem. The water from Lake Okeechobee has to be cleaned up and sent south where it is needed. Yet because of the way the system works, tonight is about north of the Lake. Residents from the coastal estuaries to Florida Bay will tell you that won't work. CERP is supposed to be a partnership of the Federal Government and the State of Florida. The Corps now has a reluctant partner. The State is willing to take Federal money and spend Amendment 1</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

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	<p>money to build storage reservoirs for water supply. Florida officials have made it clear, however, that they are not willing to finish the job and plan for the key piece in the puzzle that sends clean water south. Without that piece, CERP is not comprehensive, CERP will not restore Everglades National Park, and create a functioning water management system for South Florida. We don't know how to tell you to solve this problem, but please find a way. Going forward with blinders on to plan for the north while ignoring what needs to happen next is not rational or defensible. If the State is unwilling to be a full partner in CERP, CERP will become a costly lesson in how to destroy the environment instead of restoring it. The two speakers ahead of me give me hope. Let's move in the right direction. I have now Everglades petitions if anybody hasn't already had them already.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Cara Capp</p>	<p>We 61 members of the Everglades Coalition are dissatisfied and very frustrated with the scope of this project. We have contacted Secretary Darcy and Governor Scott more recently asking very specifically that we move up the IDS program to plan for storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee beginning this year. I understand that as recently as today, Secretary Darcy expressed her willingness for the Corps to begin planning south of Lake Okeechobee in the EAA as soon as a local sponsor becomes available. So I hope that the Water Management District, especially given Rick Scott's declaration of the state of emergency in four of the 16 counties of this region, will work with the Federal partners to</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

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	<p>move forward with EAA planning now. Something has to happen in the EAA. People are afraid. There's an ecological crisis. There's a community crisis. People north, south, east and west don't know what is going to happen. This is the time to pull everybody together, to bring all the stakeholders to look at all the different objectives and take in all of this input and set forth a plan that does the most good for the most people. The Everglades Coalition stands for -- that the most important thing is health and human safety for all of the communities around our region. And we look forward to being an active partner as we move forward planning for our storage south and north of the Lake concurrently this year.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Rae Ann Wessel (RAW) - 1</p>	<p>Basically Everglades restoration depends on two solutions: Storage and a third outlet out of Lake Okeechobee. Storage is needed north as well as south. I think there was a good suggestion here about adding an opportunity for Osceola County to be more involved with that northern storage.</p>	<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does</p>

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		<p>not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
<p>RAW - 2</p>	<p>Simply put, we can do what we can north of the Lake, but any water that falls in the Lake falls in the Lake's Watershed or falls south of the Lake in the EAA isn't going to be stored north of the Lake. There needs to be storage, treatment and conveyance south of the Lake. Our planning efforts of three years are too long, even at -- improvements from ten years, but they're too long. And to think about the fact that you'd do a north planning effort and then sequentially do a south planning effort means we're decades away from getting any kind of resolution. We talk a lot about holistic planning, and that's what we're asking you to do. If you're going to start this planning process for north of the Lake, include south of the Lake because they really can't be parsed apart, they are two parts of a whole. As was mentioned, Jo-Ellen Darcy has indicated her willingness to move the EAA storage project up on the IDS schedule. Now it's up to the local sponsors. So let's see what the State can bring here. The River of Grass planning process gave us a tremendous amount of information. We're not starting from scratch on south of the Lake storage. So there's a tremendous amount of information there, in the CERP plan, and the UF study, all of which document the need for storage, treatment</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage</p>

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	<p>and conveyance south of the Lake. We all want and need the process to be expedited and we can't wait another four years for the process to begin. So we urge you to start that now coincidentally with the north of the Lake planning process to plan for south.</p>	<p>reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Paul Gray (PG) - 1</p>	<p>I actually worked on the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project the first time we did it about ten years ago with some people here. And that took five years. And so three years is a better time frame. And I actually don't joke about that; I think it's good you guys are trying to speed this up and the River of Grass or the CEPP exercise will show that you can do it -- it's hard, but we can do it. But with that in mind, when we did the first Lake Okeechobee Watershed project, they came up with some reservoirs and STA's and it stored about 300,000 acre-feet of water and it cleaned eighty or a hundred tons of phosphorus. But it didn't really meet all the goals for the Lake. And so when they read the models, it wasn't very satisfying; it didn't fix the Lake very much, it didn't fix the estuary releases, and so I complained to the study team, they said "Well, we're going to do an ASR around the Lake and that's going to take care of part of the problem and we're going to have a big reservoir in the EAA and that's going to take care of it. When we're done with all these things, then it will add up." But that's kind of the problem of doing a project in isolation, is you don't really know what else is going to go on. And an ASR no longer is what it used to be, we don't think it can do as much. We don't have the storage reservoir in the EAA right now. And was</p>	<p>We are looking at ASR as a storage option for this project.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>mentioned, Secretary Darcy wrote a letter to Representative Murphy today and said that the Corps is ready to move ahead with planning for an EAA reservoir if they can get a local sponsor. And it's really an opportunity for us -- you know, north and south have to fit together, they're part of the same jigsaw puzzle. So if we can plan those together in this effort, that's really an opportunity to give us a better answer than just what we do up north. Because it kind of gives you an isolated answer and you're not really sure if you've got the right answer if you just model part of the Watershed. So we hope you guys will be able to find a way to link that together.</p>	
<p>PG - 2</p>	<p>And in that same sense, we want to rehydrate this Watershed. This is a very natural watershed. It's got all kinds of branches with wetlands and it's not pristine, but it's semi-natural, has a lot of value for a lot of wildlife. So recovering its big features is kind of a concern to us. What we like to do is ideally wet the Watershed as much as we can and restore as many wetlands, do as many projects like that as we can, and then find out how much that changes the Lake and the estuary response and then when you build a reservoir, you could build one that will be the right size and response as we did in the Watershed. I'm not sure how that would work. I don't envy you guys, because this is going to be hard to figure these questions out. But we hope we can take a stab at it. What else are we going to do with this Watershed is going to add to whatever this project is to see if we're getting the right final answer.</p>	<p>Wetland restoration is one of the management measures for the project. We are using a lot of the wetland sites used in the original project effort as well as looking at land use changes.</p>

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PG - 3	<p>In a similar note, also the study area is the southern part of the Watershed. It's not even half the Watershed. And we hope we can expand it to the whole Watershed. Because there's a lot of stuff upstream of what we're looking at that may go some way to (inaudible). So thank you very much. We're going to submit written comments, you can't get it all in in two minutes.</p>	<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>
Dr. Thomas Van Lent (TVL) - 1	<p>We'll be presenting written comments because I know the time is short here, so I'll just summarize by saying we urge the Corps and District to expand the scope of this project to include storage in the EAA as well as north of Lake Okeechobee. Since Secretary Darcy has indicated her willingness to do so, I guess the comment is really directed to the District and I think -- they were here. --- I think there's a couple really -- very important reasons for that. One, it's very urgent. The turnout at this meeting is unlike anything</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW</p>

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	<p>I've seen in 32 years of Everglades restorations. This is astonishing. Clearly indicating that this is a concern of very high priority to the public. The second thing is storage matters. Where you put the storage matters. You need to look comprehensively at how the storage interacts and what benefits are provided. It is true, for example, a north of Lake Okeechobee reservoir could provide real water supply benefits to Lake Okeechobee, but according to the Florida Legacy Act sponsored by Representative Harrell and Representative Fitzenhagen, who was here earlier, the State has to prioritize those projects that decrease damaging releases to the estuaries. And these -- this project may not be the one that maximizes the discharges -- benefits to the estuaries. So you have other things to think about here. And expanding the scope is the only way to really address that.</p>	<p>Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>TVL - 2</p>	<p>Lastly, I would say you should very -- look very closely to expedite this 3/3/3 planning process to look at the past Lake Okeechobee Watershed PIR, this isn't the first time you've looked at this; there were some really key issues that came out of that, some policy, some technical. For example, a policy question that I think should be answered in the scoping process are things like is the Corps willing to cost share a project that's primarily to benefit the State -- to meet State water quality standards. Other things like what are the habitat effects for the siting. What -- lay those things</p>	<p>There are several major differences in this study and the previous study which was stopped in 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous study formulated for water quality and included management measures such as stormwater treatment areas (STA's). We are no longer formulating for WQ as the State has programs to address WQ standards. Water quality will be evaluated as an ancillary benefit of restoration and storage features included in the array of alternatives. • The previous project did not evaluate Aquifer Storage, Recharge and Recovery (ASRR) as a means of additional storage. Several pilot projects, including the Kissimmee River ASR, have been

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	<p>out clearly so we know what the criteria you're going to use to address these questions. So with that, I'll say we'll submit our written comments.</p>	<p>completed since 2007 and will provide useful scientific data to evaluate the location and effectiveness for implementation of ASR technology with the project area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regulatory schedule for Lake Okeechobee has changed since the previous study. During the previous study the WSE regulation schedule was used to determine regulatory releases from Lake Okeechobee (S-77 and S-80 as well as the structure releasing water to the south). Currently the lake is regulated according to the LORS schedule. This change provides a different downstream boundary condition for the LOW Project that may affect the evaluation of alternative plans. <p>Much of the information from the previous project effort is being used in the reformulation of the project. Wetland restoration is one of the management measures for the project. We are using a lot of the wetland sites used in the original project effort as well as looking at land use changes.</p>
<p>Maggy Hurchalla (MH) - 1</p>	<p>CERP is at an impasse. We're stuck in the mud. If we do not get out of that mud hole in the next year, we'll be in the same mud hole twenty years from now. I -- quite recently I went over to talk to Bubba Wade and I asked him why we couldn't send water south. And he said they don't need it. When CEPP is done, the National Park does not want more water and can't use more water. So I called Shannon Estenoz of the Interior, and I said "Is that true?" And she said "No." Well, this is not just a problem of Interior versus U.S. Sugar, and we went to Water Management District meetings last year and desperately begged them to exercise the 40,000-acre option. And the Chairman of the Water Management District Board told us we didn't understand, there were constraints, and you couldn't move the water</p>	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p>

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	<p>south. I was dismayed to hear that somebody might have misinterpreted the introductory comments to this meeting as meaning that when CEPP was complete and northern storage was complete, we were done. That's not what CERP says. I was there in the beginning. We need to move the water south. If we are not going to move the water south, if a local sponsor is going to get a bunch of reservoirs to make water supply and get 50/50 Federal matching funds for that and then walk away and declare victory, they will have pulled off a colossal fraud on the people of the United States. CERP was about saving the Everglades.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>MH - 2</p>	<p>CERP was about sending the water south from Lake Okeechobee. If we do not get the local sponsor, the Federal Government, and the landowners together in the next year before the option expires, we are not going to be able to finish CERP and we're not going to be able to finish what CERP was supposed to be all about. If we can't do that, if we can't actually sit them down -- and I'm told that's not the process. The Corps can't do that process, life is complicated. Change the process, then. Go to Congress, tell them we want a joint purchase of land now south of the Lake so we can show we can finish CERP. If you're not going to finish it, don't waste money building a lot of water supply things. If you're not going to be able to finish CERP, if you're not going to own the land that will allow you to finish CERP and</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>move the water south, then tell the people on the coastal estuaries that their estuaries are going to die. Tell Miami they're going to lose their water supply. And tell the nation and the world that you're going to kill Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. We can't keep pretending.</p>	
<p>Steve Davis</p>	<p>I don't think I could say it much better than Maggy just spoke to y'all. But I would like to point out that, you know, not to diminish the crisis that we're seeing in Stuart, the situation in the Caloosahatchee with these massive discharge events and the effects that that's had on those communities, but we also have a situation in Florida Bay with a lack of fresh water to the south. We know that when you incorporate consideration of storage to the south of Lake Okeechobee, and we're confident that you view the significance of this and consider that in your planning process, that not only will you see the value of that particular project and reducing the discharges to the east and west, but it also provides that outlet to the south. I agree with Matt Morrison, there's no single project that's going to restore the Everglades ecosystem. So we should be looking at projects that provide the biggest overall benefits, the most bang for the buck. We know Everglades restoration is worth it. We've done the economic studies, we've also seen the impacts of the way water is currently managed in the system and the impacts that that's had on our economies in South Florida. We know that if we can flow this water to the south, we get the benefits to the estuaries, we also get the benefits at the southern end of the system.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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Alisa Coe (AC) - 1	As we all know, there's been some big mistakes made in trying to re-engineer the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and the Everglades and by failing to control the fertilizer, manure and sewage pollution that is fouling our waters. You know, we need to clean the pollution up, not just move it around. We have a system that is in critical condition and Band-Aids are just not going to work anymore. It's time for a comprehensive solution to this problem and that requires planning south. You know, there's an old saying that says "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago and the second best time is today." We can't wait any longer. We need to start looking at the whole problem and including the south.	The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.
AC - 2	And as a last remark, I would just say, you know, we saw today the kind of turnout that happened by the public. And that that should show you guys how important it is to have more of these meetings, to have them around the region and to include as many citizens as possible. These are important voices and we need to make sure that they're all heard.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
Sean Atkinson	Okay. The overall impression -- to summarize a lot of the comments that I saw before, the thing I would like to say is that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. And while the concerns of the local farmers are extremely valid and I would love to be living here, it's great here, nobody I imagine is envisioning taking over anybody's lands without paying for them. That's just not what the U.S. Government does. So I don't see exactly what the	The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north

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	<p>concern is. Everybody that -- makes out pretty well when a road goes by and they need to take your land because they want to widen the road, you make out pretty well with that. Nobody goes to the poor house after that transaction. So I thought that was one thing that was worth mentioning; nobody is being robbed of their lifestyle without due compensation. The other thing that I thought about was it's a well-known legal precedent that upstream communities do not get to unilaterally defile a body of water for downstream communities to suffer. More dramatically, an upstream community does not get to unilaterally dam and divert the river. I realize this was done many, many years ago, but it's still what happened. The river was dammed and diverted. And we need to undo that, it's as simple as that. I'm not sure why the most reasonable thing to do, which is to refresh the Southern Everglades, is resisted so passionately, but it is a fairly straightforward idea. There is just no fresh water in the Southern Everglades and a lot of the fresh water that they're talking about -- I forget what the term is exactly, but containing and in the north part of Lake Okeechobee is water that is going to be very much needed and has been needed now for years in the Southern Everglades where it's completely parched. If the grass, the seagrass is dying in the east and the west side of our state due to too much fresh water, it's also dying in the southern part of the state due to too much salt water. The whole thing is out of whack. That needs to be restored. That's it basically.</p>	<p>of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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Zachariah Cosner (ZC) - 1	First I would like to echo calls to have additional scoping meetings held in places closer to the coastal estuaries, such as Fort Myers. It's impossible to expect that the full range of stakeholders are actually going to have their voices heard here if, you know, they have to go an hour and a half to three hours just to go to a single scoping meeting on a weeknight. I myself had to leave work early just to arrive late to this meeting, but I made the trip anyway because, simply put, this is an issue that affects every citizen of South Florida.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
ZC - 2	Now, if I had a darker sense of humor, I would find it absolutely funny that at the same time that our coastal estuaries are being hammered by an excess of fresh water, the seagrass beds of Florida Bay are facing the greatest die-out they've seen since 1980. The culprit being too little fresh water. It's ridiculous. And simply put, we need to send more water south. It seems like a sick joke, but it's not a joke at all. It's a very sad reality, the legacy of decades of half measures and insufficient solutions. We can't rely on half measures any more. The population of Florida is expected to increase by 22 percent by the year 2030. Just as salt water intrusion driven by sea level rise threatens our - the aquifers upon which 80 percent of us here in South Florida rely, we cannot allow the well to run dry. I've heard it said by wiser men than myself that people don't really appreciate the value of fresh water until the well is dry. Well, right now we're lucky enough to have some water left. We need to make sure that we plan for the future of our state.	<p>The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake.</p> <p>Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades, Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan</p>

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		<p>(CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Mark Perry (MP) - 1</p>	<p>But you know what? We're planning to today -- and I know the project boundary talks about 922,000 acres, but the study area of the whole 2.6 or 3.6 million acres needs to really be in place. And the technical reports and all of them look at the scope of the Upper Chain of Lakes needs to be included in the planning effort as well because it's part of the study area, but also south of the Lake.</p>	<p>It is recognized that there is a need for a comprehensive review of the operations of structures within the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga Basin and that opportunities for additional storage and restoration may exist in the area north of the LOW Project area. Undertaking a comprehensive review of existing operations and developing optimized operational strategies to meet the flood control level of service provided by the C&SF Project, to provide more natural fluctuation of lake levels and flows within the system for environmental benefit and maintain current water supply requirements is a complex time intensive endeavor. The current Kissimmee River - Istokpoga Basin System Operating Manual is anticipated to be updated in the near future and would be able to consider operational/regulation schedule changes which provide flexibility to address the needs for additional storage and environmental benefit. The scope of such an operational study does not fit within the SMART Planning constraints when coupled with the other LOW Project objectives. The Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule was identified in the Yellow Book, however, changes in the regulation schedule must be examined within the context of the overall system operating criteria to ensure that the flood control, environmental and water supply requirements of the entire system continue to be met.</p>

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<p>MP - 2</p>	<p>As we've been mentioning before, the coastal estuaries were never attached, the northern estuaries were never attached to the Everglades, the River of Grass, from the Upper Chain all the way down to the tip of Florida. And that timing is what we have lost. We've lost that timing. And that -- you talk about quality, quantity, timing and distribution. Well, we've lost the timing. The six or eight months that used to meander down the Kissimmee, finally get there, now it's taking two to three days. And we get about 1.6 million acre-feet a year coming down into Lake Okeechobee from the Watershed, including 346 metric tons of phosphorus a year at 172 parts per billion. And we set a total maximum daily load back in August of 2001 for Lake Okeechobee at 105 metric tons a year and 40 parts per billion. And those of us on the East Coast and the West Coast have set our TMDL's and they're dependent on the TMDL for the Lake. So in the Watershed -- the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project, you need to find every bit of storage, attenuation of flow and everything you can, including Lake Okeechobee -- you know, projects all around the Lake. And if you do that through distribution, management, storage or other kinds of storage or restoring wetland storage up in the Upper Kissimmee Valley, that's what needs to be done. Moving more water north. But it has to include the discussion of going south with the water the way the River of Grass flowed. The gentleman that spoke about that river flowing south one mile every four days, it used to take 16 months to get to the tip of Florida. And it doesn't do that now. We shunt it out, we shunt it east and</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>west, and we don't put it south and so the EAA storage has to happen. We have to move that discussion up like Secretary Darcy suggested, to right now in July start discussing north and south of the Lake to move that water south through the EAA storage reservoir. And that needs to happen. That discussion needs to come back on line again. And that's what -- we're not going to put farmers out of business, we don't want people to get out of business. It's not going to flood people south of the Lake either, it's going to really provide that storage and quantity of -- conveyance and storage and treatment of water we need to move south to stop the damaging discharges to the coastal estuaries.</p>	
<p>Martha Musgrove</p>	<p>The Florida Wildlife Federation has taken a great interest in Lake Okeechobee for many, many years and funded much of the research that led to the various Lake Okeechobee protection plans and to the Kissimmee restoration because the Kissimmee restoration was impacting Lake Okeechobee very adversely. So I welcome this Watershed study. Because I think we've reached a point here on -- the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan properly reflects the connections between the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee and Everglades systems. And it is a -- it was historically a flow-through system and it must become another flow-through system, not a flow-out system. The flow-through system, and that requires a good deal of integration, not only between the projects, the separate projects, 68 projects are a lot of projects to deal with, but each one has a function and each one is</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p>

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	<p>integral to another one and they must remain connected. And we have seen the division that happens because of the way we fund it project-by-project and the way we treat them planning project-by-project, we leave out the connection. Such as in South Dade, we have lost the contract -- I mean we were delayed because of the contract, eight was never implemented. It is now being constructed. It will work. All of the tests have shown it will work. And that's the same situation that you reach in the Northern Everglades, in the Kissimmee Valley; that we have the Kissimmee River restoration that is not quite connected, integrally connected to the rest of the Everglades program. So we have too much fresh water here, we have too little fresh water in Florida Bay, integrating the system both project-wise and schedule-wise, the regulatory operation schedules become much more important. We will submit some written comments on your proposal.</p>	
<p>Sarah Mucha</p>	<p>First off, I would like to thank you for allowing public comment tonight. That is very important, that citizens are able to get involved. I think that it's important that we have a voice as well. In Florida we have a very unique and very fragile group of ecosystems ranging from our estuaries, our seagrasses, and all the way out to our sea, our coral reefs. This is very important to us Floridians and to all of the other residents of the United States, and even outside of the country that come here to vacation. We're in a crisis. And we are damaging these valuable resources. And that will affect our health, our livelihood, and also our tourism. We can't wait until 2020 to do something about this. I</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3)</p>

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	<p>support the 200 plus Everglades scientists that believe that increasing the storage, the treatment and the conveyance of the water south of Lake Okeechobee. It's essential to stop these damaging discharges. They're damaging our estuaries and they're also damaging our coral reefs. Not only that, but we need to protect the drinking water of over eight million Floridians. The science is sound. The money is available thanks to 75 percent of Florida voters who, in 2014, voted for Amendment 1. We need to identify and secure the land, clean the water, and then send it south. It's now or never.</p>	<p>completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Roger Butler (RB) - 1</p>	<p>Don't really have any planned talk here. This meeting was to talk about north of Okeechobee. Everything I've heard here so far has been talking about south of Okeechobee. I totally agree, we need to send that water south. Doesn't make sense to send it out the estuaries. But also remember, your estuaries have a lot of water that have gone into those estuaries that didn't come from Lake Okeechobee. I said that I lived on the banks of the Kissimmee River. I've visually seen what the river restoration project that's in progress right now is doing. I told my DEP inspector that inspects my dairy farm four months ago, "Be prepared. You're fixing to see one of the biggest algae blooms you've ever seen." We're sending more silt and more product down that river today than has been done since the last restoration project.</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>RB - 2</p>	<p>This gentleman here gave me a -- Mr. Cook gave me a sheet earlier and I read that. You're talking about getting rid of the sludge in Lake Okeechobee. We talked about north, we talked about south,</p>	<p>The majority of the water control structures on the C-38 Canal (Kissimmee River) are indeed spillway structures. While they do have lift gates that open from the bottom the crest of the spillway is well</p>

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	<p>there's more muck and sludge in Lake Okeechobee that we haven't addressed. It's been talked about before. You're not going to have clean water going anywhere until you get rid of the muck in the Lake. Canfield said years ago you're going to have nutrients in a lake that has a muck bottom. Can't change that. The business, once again, on the river, I don't understand the concept that we use, that the Corps has always used where we flush from the bottom; the gates open from the bottom and we take everything that is on the bottom and send downstream instead of having a spillway type situation.</p>	<p>above the bottom of the canal. So the water being released is coming from the upper portion of the water column.</p>
<p>RB - 3</p>	<p>Another idea on the Kissimmee River, I've always been told it doesn't have enough energy, but we have a lot of storage there that we do not have or we're not going to have when we remove the next structure. Without a structure, there's nothing to keep that water held back in times of need. We're never going to see the river like it was even after restoration because used to, what caused that water to move, what was it, four days to take the movement a mile, was because it was completely clogged up with hyacinths, okay? I can remember a little kid, when we first came here to Okeechobee, they had to dynamite the hyacinths out from underneath the wood bridge across Highway 70 out here across the Kissimmee River to keep from failing the bridge. That's the way the whole system worked. The hyacinths clogged everything up and that kept that water moving slow. What we have today with the river restoration project is we have the ability to put a</p>	<p>Because of the removal of the upstream S-65B and S-65C control structures, the backfilling of C-38 canal and the installation of the S-69 (U-Shaped Weir), the major mode of conveyance within the restored Kissimmee River will move from the highly efficient C-38 canal to the Kissimmee River flood plain. Post-restoration stages in throughout Pool D will in turn be increased for high water episodes due to the less efficient overland flow now conveying the majority of the water. Thus, while the control structures in the central part of the system will no longer be in place, the overall change results in water being stored in the flood plain and moving slowly to Lake Okeechobee rather than rapidly through the canal.</p>

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	<p>bunch more water than ever came in quicker, choke it down through the old channel that what's been done out there right now has washed -- areas that were four feet deep are now twenty feet deep because of the velocity of that water capability coming down the river. Trees are falling in right and left. And all of that sand and silt that's been stirred up from that is in Lake Okeechobee. So until we address taking the silt out of Lake Okeechobee, Lake Okeechobee water, the water going out is not going to get any cleaner.</p>	
<p>Margaret Kremer</p>	<p>In 2003 I bought and was very excited to buy a home on the South Fork of the St. Lucie River. It's a beautiful little nook. It was a beautiful little nook up until January of two thousand -- of this year. We spent almost two million dollars on this home. That was my life's investment. Everyone talks about who is protecting or watching out for the interests of the farmers south of Lake Okeechobee. They're going to be compensated. Everybody knows and the science dictates we need to move that water south. They are going to be compensated. Who is talking about compensating me for a home that was worth two million dollars that today, if I put it on the market, is not worth a penny. It's not even worth a penny to me; I'm scared to live there now. Because it's not even a question of just my financial investment for the rest of my life, it's my health. Who is checking or regulating or watching for what's going to happen to my health with going out on my dock to have a cup of coffee in the morning and breathing that filth twenty years from now? What's going to happen to all of us? This needs to be done now. All of these graphs, all of these tables,</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>all of these charts look fantastic, but the one thing that I'm hearing over and over again is we don't have the time for that. This is a crisis. This is an emergency and something needs to happen now and it does need to be addressed in both directions, not just north, but it has to go south. Compensate the people for their land down south and keep in mind that there's other people living in the State of Florida as well.</p>	
<p>Terry Hamilton</p>	<p>So obviously the work that you're doing -- we know that you're doing and you're trying to make something here happen and make it work and we appreciate that. So don't let that go understated. But everything I'm hearing and from all the rallies and what I'm learning even myself -- yes, I'm a born and raised Floridian, so this is where my entire three generations live -- we have to move it south. And I mean, I know you hear that all night and I know we're talking about the north and I did have some questions about that, but I'll ask off-line. But just my comment is here, and I know we all are already in agreement by hearing everyone, but we need to -- it really starts, to me, with our elected officials. So just -- and I know you're already out there doing it because you're here tonight. But November is coming and there's some petitions out there -- I mean, I'm sorry, but our Governor, and I will say it here and I'm sorry, but he's got to go. But I'm sorry. But please, if you can include, just like everyone is saying, I don't understand why it's beginning to be so hard or has been and continues to be so hard to get that south planning in with the north. I don't understand. I guess I'm going to keep learning and keep learning from all of you. But can you</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>

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	<p>please look at that? There has to be a way. It is a crisis and we cannot wait. We cannot wait.</p>	
<p>Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (J T-L) - 1</p>	<p>I just want to take a few minutes to say thank you to the Army Corps of Engineers for doing this tonight and I really admire your scoping project. I really do. And I admire that it allows people to talk. What I do have to point out here is just the incredible disconnect for those of us who live in Martin County especially and I think also in Lee County. As you know, we have experienced this terrible situation with the blue-green algae. So here we in May had blue-green algae in Lake Okeechobee, 33 square miles, and then it morphed into over 200 square miles and people have been going through -- I can't -- it's hard for me to explain to you. Your adrenaline is pumped up, people have been living truly in a state of emergency for the past months.</p>	<p>While water quality is not a primary objective of plan formulation, there will be opportunities to improve water quality. Many of the management measures being evaluated (ASR, wetland restoration and reservoirs) will have ancillary water quality benefits. For example, storage of water in reservoirs and the associated attenuation of peak flows resulting in increased residence time will lead to a reduction in nutrients and sediments reaching Lake Okeechobee. Storage features could be sited adjacent to existing state water quality treatment facilities, such as Lakeside Ranch STA, so that stored water released could be sent to the water quality facility for treatment before reaching Lake Okeechobee. Restored wetlands will attenuate water and filter pollutants. And preliminary results of Aquifer Storage and Recovery indicate a substantial reduction in nutrients from water recovered from these facilities. Furthermore, holding more water north of the lake may result in improved salinity regimes in the northern estuaries and less nutrient loading from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries.</p> <p>Algae blooms are based on three factors: water quality, temperature and light. As described above, the creation of storage north of Lake Okeechobee will positively affect the quantity of freshwater released to the estuaries which may result in improved salinity and reduced nutrient loading to estuarine waters. Thus, better water quality and a potentially healthier estuarine ecosystem.</p> <p>There are other programs in place in the watershed that are specifically focused on water quality such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Basin Management Action Plans which serve as the overarching water quality restoration plans for the</p>

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		Northern Everglades including Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.
J T-L - 2	And so during this same time, we get information that y'all are holding this meeting and that's great, but there's a huge disconnect here. The connection for us where we live is that we have been working for years to try to get water to move south. And unfortunately, the farm lands in the EAA are blocking that solution. And we really know that it is just -- it's wonderful that you did this, but it is unfair that you only gave us today. It took me 45 minutes, 50 minutes to drive here. I will drive home tonight hoping I don't have a head-on collision on 714. I mean, you guys have got to have more meetings for people from our neck of the woods to express themselves. This is a revolution where we're from. We're not kidding. This is something -- the South Florida Water Management knows it. Ask them about it. And we're not trying to make it up. This is real for us. And we appreciate your going through the motions and having this meeting, but I think you got the message tonight that we need more meetings and we need more opportunities to speak and we need to blend north and south together for a new Florida.	The NEPA scoping meeting was held in the footprint of the project area in Okeechobee, FL and did fulfill the requirements of NEPA and CERP regulations. It is important to note that the budgetary (\$3 million) and schedule (3 years) constraints of the SMART planning process must be considered with all aspects of the project, including the public involvement plan. To meet these constraints while still allowing ample opportunity for public involvement, key project specific face to face meetings/workshops will be rotated throughout the project area. The first public workshop was held on the east coast in Jensen Beach, FL on August 31, 2016. The first face-to-face Project Delivery Team meeting will be held on the west coast.
Rachel Curran	To quote the Fish and Wildlife Service in its recently issued biological opinion for the 2016 Everglades Restoration Transition Plan, "Continued CERP implementation delay is unacceptable." The Corps provided this plan and its stated purpose, seeming to request evaluation in the larger context of future CERP projects with their target dates of implementation. This project's ability to meet its stated goals must be reviewed in its own right because for decades now the	The Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Comprehensive Review Study (1999 Yellow Book) is the CERP guiding document. The scope of the LOW Project is defined in the Yellow Book as including the following locations: Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basins, Okeechobee and Highland Counties, and wetland restoration sites in various wetlands north of the lake. Conceptual storage and restoration features defined in the 1999 Yellow Book were envisioned within three main counties: Glades,

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	<p>Corps has provided timelines that have come and gone with little improvement where it counts. What this plan amounts to is another unacceptable delay and that delay is unacceptable to the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, the Everglades Snail Kite, the crawfish and the Florida manatee. The science tells us we need storage both north and south of the Lake. Please expand this project scope to provide true relief for the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries and begin restoring hydrology where it matters the most. We will be submitting written comments.</p>	<p>Okeechobee and Hendry, which are the focus area for the LOW Project. Furthermore, limiting the project to areas both north and in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee is anticipated to yield greater benefits and lower cost features due to the availability of water and increased operational flexibility.</p> <p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 Reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>
<p>Frank Jackalone</p>	<p>I want to say that what's facing all of us is that this is - - this plan has some merits and we appreciate the hard work that the staff put into it, but the greater need, the greater need is to move water south of Lake Okeechobee. It's a greater need that's what is needed to protect millions of people, their lives, their property, both in the estuaries and ultimately in South Florida as well. We already have seen algae spilling over south as water releases have had to go down to the Lake Worth Lagoon. We know that if we don't</p>	<p>The IDS for implementation of Everglades restoration activities has been developed through an extensive public process utilizing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, its Working Group and consideration of the best science, engineering and economic information available. The IDS serves to guide the projects and maximize benefits of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) efforts. The IDS recognizes the importance of storage south of the lake which is scheduled to begin in 2021 (EAA planning study). Storage south of the lake in combination with 1) new storage north of the lake (being developed as part of the LOW Project); 2) storage</p>

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	<p>restore the Everglades, the impact of climate change is going to destroy more and more property of people in Miami. And we need Everglades restoration for that purpose as well. Ultimately it's the sugar industry that is stopping the protection of all of us and protecting what needs to be done. They're stopping the restoration of the Everglades. We have the right and the responsibility to protect people along the coast, to protect people in South Florida. We don't have the -- we don't have an obligation to protect those sugar farms -- those sugar farms. The sugar farms are needed to restore the Everglades, not all of them, but an important portion of them. We need to move forward. I ask you to combine the planning processes together. But the most important thing, more important than this study, is right now making a determination to move water south, to buy the land and to start the planning process.</p>	<p>reservoirs being constructed east of the lake (C-44 Reservoir and other reservoirs and STAs associated with the approved Indian River Lagoon-South Project) and west of the lake (C-43 Reservoir); and 3) completion of additional infrastructure to allow flow south of the lake, will serve to restore a more natural system wide hydrology within the entire Everglades ecosystem as envisioned by CERP.</p>