

**PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING SUMMARY REPORT  
FOR A  
GENERAL REEVALUATION REPORT /  
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (GRR/SEIS)  
ON  
TAMIAMI TRAIL MODIFICATIONS PORTION OF  
MODIFIED WATER DELIVERIES TO  
EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Background**

The congressionally authorized Modified Waters to Everglades National Park Project (MWD) consists of structural modifications and additions to the existing Central & Southern Florida Project required for improvement of water deliveries for ecosystem restoration in Everglades National Park (ENP). The authorized plan calls for only minor modification of Tamiami Trail by increasing the elevation of about 3,000 linear feet of the roadbed. The existing culvert system was thought adequate to pass the maximum desired volume of water, however, additional analysis indicates that the existing culverts are not adequate to effectively do so. Therefore additional water conveyance methods will be analyzed.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently preparing a General Re-evaluation Report and Supplement to the 1992 Final Environmental Impact Statement (GRR/SEIS) on MDW. The focus of the GRR/SEIS will be the proposed modifications to the Tamiami Trail for the purpose of conveying the increased flows and water levels to the Shark River Slough basin of the ENP.

The Draft GRR/EIS will analyze potential impacts to local businesses and residents, ENP, endangered species, wetlands, biological resources, water quality, and recreational fishing, as well as additional issues identified in the Public Scoping Meeting. Impact analysis will be limited to issues associated with the construction of the improvements. All general MWD issues were addressed in the original Environmental Impact Statement.

The alternative plans will be reviewed under provisions of appropriate laws and regulations, including the Endangered Species Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and Clean Water Act. The Draft GRR/SEIS is expected to be available for public review during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of calendar year 2000.

**B. Purpose**

The purpose of the Tamiami Trail modification project is to enable more effective passage of waters from Water Conservation Area 3B and the L-29 Canal north of the Tamiami Trail to the Northeast Shark River Slough south of the Tamiami Trail.

## C. Scoping

Scoping is the phase in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process whereby the initial scope of issues to be analyzed in the EIS are determined. This phase occurs as early in the process as possible and is an open process intended to obtain the views of the public and other interested agencies regarding the scope of the study.

Potentially interested individuals, agencies, and organizations were invited to attend and participate in a scoping meeting held at the Miami-Dade County Extension Office, 18710 SW 288<sup>th</sup> Street, Homestead, Florida, on June 8, 2000, at 6:30 p.m. The format of the meeting was to receive comments and concerns from the public on the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the GRR/SEIS. A copy of the Public Scoping Meeting Announcement, and a list of invitees and meeting participants is included in Appendix A. The meeting was transcribed with a complete transcript included in Appendix B.

On June 9, 2000, at the same location, a Technical Workshop was held to provide an interactive forum to discuss technical aspects of the proposed project. A list of meeting attendees is also included in Appendix A and a summary of the discussions that ensued is included in this document.

The topics discussed during the scoping process are of major importance in determining the pertinent issues to be analyzed in depth in the GRR/SEIS. To complete the scoping process the Corps of Engineers allowed the record to remain open until June 21, 2000, for receipt of written statements. Written statements received during the comment period are included in Appendix B.

## II. ALTERNATIVES

### A. Alternatives Proposed by the Government and Presented at the Scoping Meeting

1. Rebuild the Roadway Along the Existing Alignment and Install Four New Bridges

Under this alternative the surface of the road would be raised one to two feet to comply with Florida Department of Transportation.

During construction, traffic management plans for Alternative 1 would have to be implemented. There is no firm determination yet, but a logical alternative would be to close one lane at a time for construction, and use the other lane and the shoulder for two-way traffic.

2. Build a New Roadway to the South of the Existing Roadway

A completely new roadway would be constructed with bridges on land that is predominantly owned by the National Park Service. This alternative would require that the existing road be breached at the same locations as the new bridges.

Under Alternative 2 traffic would be managed by allowing the use of the old roadway until construction has been completed. An alternative to traffic management would be to close the roadway during construction and provide alternative routes.

3. Build a New Roadway to the North of the Existing Roadway

A northern roadway would be constructed either to the north of the L-29 Canal or incorporated into the L-29 design. Under this alternative, it would be necessary to provide access to the old roadway for commercial and residential traffic. This alternative would require that the existing road be breached at the same locations as the new bridges.

Traffic management under alternative 3 would be similar to that discussed under Alternative 2.

4. Install Four New Bridges Without Rebuilding the Roadway, But Institute an Increased Maintenance Program

Under this alternative the necessary bridges would be constructed, but the increase in elevation required by the Florida Department of Transportation would not be provided. An increased program of road maintenance would be provided in case of damage to the roadbed caused by high water.

Traffic management under Alternative 4 would be similar to that discussed under Alternative 1.

**B. Additional Potential Alternatives Identified During the Meeting**

1. Two representatives of the Miccosukee Tribe expressed a desire that the entire roadway be elevated, thereby removing the Tamiami Trail as a barrier to the movement of water to the south. It was requested that all structures be removed to allow the water to flow unimpeded.
2. A representative of the Florida Biodiversity Project supported an elevated roadway (accompanied by the removal of the L-29 Levee) for the restoration of sheet flow in the area. The Florida Biodiversity Project feels that this action would reduce the amount of wildlife, including the Florida panther, killed on the roadway. This proposal would also include the elevating of the Tamiami Trail through the Big Cypress National Preserve and the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve. To offset the cost of the elevation of the roadway, it was proposed that a toll be instituted.
3. An individual expressed opposition to an elevated roadway that would eliminate access to recreational areas for boating and fishing.

**III. ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

**A. Impacts to the Tigertail Camp**

A representative of the Miccosukee Tribe expressed concerns about the possibility of flooding or the relocation of the Tigertail Camp.

A resident of the Tigertail Camp expressed disapproval of Alternative No. 3, the construction of the roadway to the north, because the camp would experience a lack of privacy with the construction of Alternative No. 3.

**B. Impacts on Structures 355A and 355B**

**C. Impacts on Businesses Along the Roadway**

There are existing businesses along the south side of the roadway that have the potential to be adversely impacted by the proposed project. A necessary feature of Alternative 3, the construction of a new roadway to the north, is to provide access to the old roadway for commercial and residential traffic. A representative of the Miccosukee Tribe expressed concerns about the businesses along the roadway. A Tamiami Trail businessman expressed concern that constructing a new roadway either to the north or south would adversely impact businesses along the existing roadway.

**D. Impacts to Wetlands**

**E. Construction Impacts to Traffic Flow**

A representative of the Miccosukee Tribe expressed concerns that the high volume of traffic on the roadway would result in major disruptions with the implementation of traffic controls and detours. He expressed particular concern about the effects of traffic congestion on the Tigertail and Osceola camps.

**F. Impacts to Hurricane Evacuation**

**G. Effects of the Proposed Project on Loss of Private Land**

A private citizen expressed concern over the condemnation of private land for the purpose of environmental protection. His concern was that the land actually might later be used for commercial purposes. A recreational fisherman expressed concern that the National Park would get additional property and that access to that property by the public would be denied.

**H. Impacts on the Osceola Camp**

A representative of the Miccosukee Tribe expressed concern that the proposed project would adversely affect the Osceola Camp. The site of the camp appears to correspond with the location of Alternative 2, the construction of the road to the south.

**I. Impacts of Changes in Area Hydrology**

1. There was concern expressed by a representative of the Miccosukee Tribe about the levels of water in the L-29 Canal, specifically, what will the water level be under the new modeling scenario. There was also a question of the need for additional culvert capacity to transmit that water to the south.

2. There was concern expressed by an individual that the filling of canals, which he understood would take place, could adversely impact flood control programs in South Florida.
3. A representative of the Florida Biodiversity Project expressed a desire for a full hydrological analysis of the raising of the roadway.
4. A businessman stated that the existing culverts are obstructed on the southern side, and that removal of the obstructions may enable an adequate flow.

**J. Impacts on Recreation**

A recreational fisherman expressed concern about the implementation of the proposed project, as well as other MWD projects, on recreational fishing in the canals of the area. One of his concerns was that canals would be filled in. Points taken included the canals being the only nearby freshwater fishery, the canals serving as a refuge for fishes during droughts, and the economic importance of freshwater fishing in the vicinity.

**K. Impacts on Wildlife**

A representative of the Florida Biodiversity Project requested that historical records be compiled on roadkills along I-75 and U.S. 41. A recreational fisherman expressed concerns that the effects of the project would include a loss of fisheries habitat.

**L. Impacts on the Homestead Agricultural Community**

An individual expressed concerns that the elevation of water in the Shark River Slough would raise ground water levels in the South Dade agricultural areas and adversely impact farming operations.

**M. Environmental Impact Assessment**

1. A representative of the Florida Biodiversity Project requested: that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service be designated as cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EIS; that the analysis of all alternatives include direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; that there should be full coordination with relevant agencies as required by NEPA and the Endangered Species Act; and that a scoping document regarding the scoping alternatives be released to the public.
2. An individual expressed concern that the MWD project had been divided into three separate EISs, thereby possibly masking the combined impacts of the projects. The individual expressed an opinion that the delays in implementing the MWD constituted a denial of justice to the Miccosukee Tribe.

**IV. MWD TECHNICAL WORKSHOP**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, hosted a workshop for agencies, organizations, and individuals interested in the Modified Water Delivery (MWD) Project on July 9, 2000. A list of the meeting attendees is included in Appendix A.

Workshop discussion was organized in accordance with the following agenda:

- Opening Remarks and Administrative Information;
- Modified Waters Delivery (MWD) Project;
  - Conveyance and Seepage Control Project
  - 8.5 Square Mile Area Project
  - Tamiami Trail Project
- C-111 Project;
- Operational Environmental Impact Statement (OP EIS) for MWD and C-111; and
- Interim Operation Plan – CSSS.

This section summarizes points made during the meeting.

**A. Opening Remarks and Administrative Information**

1. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will post all MWD-related correspondence on its Jacksonville District web site.
2. Several of those present raised questions as to how alternatives are proposed and added for consideration.

**B. Modified Waters Delivery (MWD) Project**

1. Coopertown Airboats

Coopertown Airboats stated its understanding of possible benefits gained by an elevated highway but expressed concern over how residents and businesses would access properties currently located along the Tamiami Trail.

2. Everglades National Park (ENP)

ENP expressed concern over wetland loss caused by Tamiami Trail and then called for practices that would provide for a rapid and efficient exchange of technical information among interested agencies.

3. Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)

FDEP stated concerns related to water quality issues in general, and storm water issues in particular, that might arise during implementation of the project.

4. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

FDOT will post a report on its web site presenting an assessment of Tamiami Trail culvert effectiveness.

FDOT stated that FDOT would like to review the Draft EIS before it is officially promulgated.

FDOT stated its desire to participate in all aspects of the EIS and technical design.

5. G.E.C., Inc. (GEC)

GEC will prepare a report summarizing the Tamiami Trail Project Scoping Meeting and Technical Workshop.

It is anticipated that GEC will prepare the General Re-evaluation Report and Supplemental EIS (GRR/SEIS) for the Tamiami Trail Project.

6. Miccosukee Tribe

Representatives reiterated their desire that the portion of the Tamiami Trail located within the proposed project limits be removed and replaced with an elevated highway.

Representatives stated that the Tamiami Trail serves as an ecological barrier and expressed a desire for focused attention on a possible wildlife corridor.

Representatives expressed concerns regarding delays and detours associated with implementation of the project.

Representatives expressed concerns as to how the MWD-recommended flows would be achieved before the required studies are completed.

7. PBS & J, Inc.

PBS & J will provide the technical consulting related to the Tamiami Trail Project.

PBS & J will provide a preliminary design report for Tamiami Trail in August.

8. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)

The Corps stated that a separate EIS will be prepared for each of the three MWD components so that the overall MWD project can advance on all fronts.

The Corps stated that if a Record of Decision is signed for the 8.5 Square Mile EIS by the end of September 2000 then the Conveyance and Seepage Control EIS and Op EIS would probably be merged.

The Corps addressed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures as they relate to the Tamiami Trail Project and asked for all interested parties for input and participation throughout the course of the project.

9. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

USFWS stated current design flow through Structure S333 is inadequate for accomplishing objectives of the Conveyance and Seepage Control Project. The Corps stated that design flow of the structure is adequate.

USFWS would like EIS data as soon as possible in order to ensure Wildlife Protection/Coordination Documents are completed in a timely fashion.

10. C-111 Project

The Corps stated that the Draft GRR and Supplemental EIS were due to be distributed 29 July 2000 and that the final report was due by the end of 2000.

11. Interim Operation Plan – CSSS

ENP representatives asked what alternatives were being considered in the EIS and the Corps replied that alternatives 2, 2A, and 2B were being considered in the EIS.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Issues identified and comments received, both verbally at the meeting and in writing during the public comment period, will be included and addressed in the GRR/SEIS.