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LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED NEPA PUBLIC MEETING

July 26, 2016

6:30 P.M.

3800 NW 16th Boulevard
Okeechobee, Florida

Corps Team Members:

David Tipple, Deputy Chief of Planning & Policy
Jeff Couch, Ecosystem Branch Chief
Tim Gysan, Project Manager
Lisa Aley, Planning Technical Lead
Dr. Gretchen Ehlinger, Environmental Lead
Rick McMillen, Operations Division
Jim Riley, Environmental Engineer
Kim Taplin, Program Manager
David Apple, Watershed Section Chief
Jenn Miller, Corporate Communications
Erica Skolte, Corporate Communications

South Florida Water Management District Team Members:

Matt Morrison, Federal Policy & Coordination Chief
Lesley Bertolotti, Watershed Project Manager
Jennifer Leeds, Restoration Planning Unit Leader
Libby Maxwell, Sr. Regional Representative
Peter Doering, Coastal Ecosystems Section Admin.
Megan Jacoby, Project Manager - Western Everglades
Project
Armando Ramirez - Tribal & Federal Affairs Liaison

1 MR. TIPPLE: Good evening, everyone. May I have
2 your attention, please? Appreciate everybody coming
3 to discuss the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project this
4 evening.

5 We are -- we have a lot of -- I really
6 appreciate y'all being here. And in the interest of
7 the number of you that are here at this time, we have
8 scheduled an open house to run from 6:00 P.M. to
9 7:00 P.M., but given the capacity of the room and the
10 number of people that are already here and those that
11 are still coming in, we intended to start the formal
12 presentation at 7:00 P.M., we're going to retool a
13 little bit and we're going to do two presentations to
14 accommodate everybody that is here and in recognition
15 of the capacity of this room. So we're going to
16 start the first presentation at 6:30, and then
17 that -- we believe it will probably run 30, 35
18 minutes and then we will go into public comment and
19 your input period, depending on those number of
20 people that have expressed interest in making a
21 formal statement with the cards that you could have
22 picked up as you registered. Then we're going to do
23 a second presentation and public comment session at
24 7:30. So we'll start the first one at 6:30 and the
25 second presentation and comment period at 7:30.

1 Thank you very much for your interest.

2 (Brief recess.)

3 MR. TIPPLE: Good evening, everyone. Good
4 evening. Thank you, everyone, for coming this
5 evening to talk about the Lake Okeechobee Watershed
6 Project. My name is David Tipple, I am the Deputy
7 Chief of Planning and Policy Division with the
8 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District,
9 and I will be presiding over tonight's public meeting
10 for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.

11 We're aware that there's a lot of interest in
12 what we're doing with everybody's restoration and how
13 it is being implemented. I would like to assure you
14 that we understand your concerns. Through projects
15 such as the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project, we are
16 working to increase storage and operational
17 flexibility within the system. This will help
18 provide some relief to the estuaries.

19 The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is an
20 Everglades restoration planning effort that aims to
21 improve the quantity, quality, timing and
22 distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee.
23 The objectives of this project are to improve
24 system-wide operational flexibility, reduce
25 undesirable releases to the Caloosahatchee and

1 St. Lucie Estuaries down through the Lake, improve
2 the quality of water entering Lake Okeechobee, and
3 restore isolated wetlands in the Watershed.

4 This is the first of many meetings that will
5 provide the opportunity for public input into the
6 development of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.
7 We are here tonight to provide information and ask
8 for your input on the National Environmental Policy
9 Act Assessment for the project.

10 Before we begin, I would like to thank you for
11 all of you taking time out of your busy schedules to
12 get involved in the planning process.

13 I would also like to recognize and thank the
14 following individuals: Florida State Representative
15 Heather Fitzenhagen; Commissioner Terry Burroughs and
16 Commissioner Ryan Culpepper of Okeechobee County;
17 City Councilman Dowling Watford; Commissioner
18 Mali Soto Gardner of the City of Clewiston;
19 Commissioner Karson Turner from Hendry County; and
20 Sherry McCorkle from Congressman Rooney's office.
21 Thank you very much for attending the meeting
22 tonight.

23 This meeting is being held in accordance with
24 the National Environmental Policy Act with the sole
25 purpose of listening to you. I would like to remind

1 you of the importance of filling out these cards that
2 were available at the check-in office -- check-in
3 table. These cards serve two purposes. First, they
4 let us know that you're interested in this project so
5 we can help keep you informed. And second, to
6 provide me with a list of individuals who wish to
7 speak tonight. If you did not fill out a card, they
8 are available, again, over at the registration table
9 where you came in.

10 So let me see if I can get this to move forward.
11 All right. Let's give that a shot. All right.

12 So before we begin the presentation, let me
13 introduce the Project delivery team that's here with
14 me tonight.

15 From the Corps of Engineers, Jeff Couch, our
16 Ecosystem Branch Chief; Tim Gysan, the Corps Project
17 Manager on this study; Lisa Aley, Planning Technical
18 Lead; Dr. Gretchen Ehlinger, Environmental Lead;
19 Rick McMillen, Operations Division; Jim Riley,
20 Environmental Engineer; Kim Taplin, Program Manager;
21 Dave Apple, Watershed Section Chief in Planning
22 Division; and Jen Miller and Erica Skolte from our
23 Corporate Communications Office.

24 And from the South Florida Water Management
25 District, our cost share partner, Matt Morrison,

1 Federal Policy and Coordination Chief; Lesley
2 Bertolotti, Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project
3 Manager; Jennifer Leeds, Federal Restoration,
4 Planning and Coordinator Unit Leader; Libby Maxwell,
5 Senior Regional Representative for the Okeechobee
6 Region; Peter Doering, Coastal Ecosystem Section
7 Administrator; Megan Jacoby, Project Manager for the
8 Western Everglades Restoration Project; and Armando
9 Ramirez, Tribal and Federal Affairs Liaison.

10 In a few minutes, I'll turn the floor over to
11 Matt Morrison, Lisa Aley, and Dr. Ehlinger, who will
12 provide you with a brief overview of the project and
13 planning process. Once the presentation is complete,
14 I will then open the meeting to public comments.
15 And to ensure everyone gets a chance to provide their
16 comments, I will ask that you all hold your comments
17 and input until the end of the presentation.

18 And again, we're going to run two mirror
19 presentations and public comment periods, this one
20 starting at 6:30 to 7:30 and then a second 7:30 to
21 8:30 due to the wonderful interest that you expressed
22 in this project.

23 So with that, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like
24 to introduce Matt Morrison.

25 MR. MORRISON: I'm not going to use the

1 microphone. Can everybody hear me okay?

2 MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE: No.

3 MR. MORRISON: No? You want me to use the mic?
4 All right. Very good. Just quickly on the overhead,
5 that's the agenda for today's meeting. We just got
6 through the welcome and introductions.

7 I'm Matt Morrison with the South Florida Water
8 Management District. I'm going to provide a quick
9 and brief overview of the Everglades Restoration
10 Program that the South Florida Water Management
11 District works in consultation and coordination with
12 your Army Corps of Engineers out of the Jacksonville
13 District and then we'll take some time to talk about
14 the Lake Okeechobee Watershed itself and kind of a
15 project overview, if you will, and then the Corps
16 will go into the actual National Environmental Policy
17 Act and the requirements that are there and then
18 we'll talk about the schedule for this planning
19 project as we move forward in developing a project
20 plan that at the end of the day we'll put together
21 and send up to Congress for their approval and
22 appropriations for funding so we can actually build
23 storage for the Lake. And then at the end, of
24 course, as mentioned by the previous introductory
25 comments, we will be taking public comment.

1 So with that said, I'm going to jump to this
2 slide real quick and I'm going to talk a little bit
3 about the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration
4 Program.

5 There's an overhead slide here that shows three
6 different cartoon depictions of the 16 counties that
7 the South Florida Water Management District operates
8 and maintains. On the far left is a representation
9 of what the Greater Everglades system really looked
10 like before humans were introduced into the
11 environment. Recognizing that north of the Lake when
12 rainfall hit, it was collected in what we now call
13 the Upper Chain of Lakes. That water moved south
14 through the central part of the state into Lake
15 Okeechobee. And as that water drained and moved into
16 the Lake, those Lake levels came up naturally and
17 then basically overspilled south into what we call
18 the River of Grass or the Greater Everglades system
19 on down to Florida Bay.

20 Now, with that said, over the last hundred years
21 in order for all of us to live and thrive here in
22 South Florida and enjoy the beautiful weather that we
23 have, the system has been modified fairly extensively
24 with a series of canal networks, there is a dike
25 around Lake Okeechobee to protect residents around

1 the Lake and to allow us better management
2 opportunities of water that comes into the system,
3 and there are a series of canal networks that are
4 south of the Lake that provide flood control for
5 agricultural operations and the developed communities
6 and the cities that we live in along the lower East
7 Coast.

8 So the way the system operates today is much
9 different than it was before humans were introduced
10 into South Florida. The rainfall is collected in the
11 Upper Chain of Lakes. It still moves down the system
12 into Lake Okeechobee, but it moves down the system
13 much quicker than it did historically. And since we
14 have a compartmentalized channelized system south of
15 the Lake, we don't have the ability to move water the
16 way it did historically, and today we move some of
17 those flood control releases out to the northern
18 estuaries as undesirable regulatory discharges.

19 So the future flow on the right is really a
20 graphical representation of the implementation of the
21 Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan where we're
22 looking at better managing the Lake, better managing
23 the hydrology in the system, and being able to reduce
24 those undesirable discharges to the northern
25 estuaries, and being able to move more water through

1 the central portion of the Everglades on down to
2 Florida Bay.

3 So CERP in general, the Comprehensive Everglades
4 Restoration Plan, was developed back in 1999 under a
5 comprehensive review study. And in that document,
6 it contained 68 different project components that
7 were identified to improve the environmental
8 conditions in the South Florida ecosystem. And with
9 those 68 components, it acknowledged that it was a
10 pretty big task to implement those projects that were
11 identified and could take as long as thirty years to
12 actually do the planning, do the design, get the
13 funding and then actually construct the projects and
14 make them operational. So in the re-study that I
15 mentioned from back in 1999, that's kind of the
16 framework from which we move forward and plan.
17 The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is one of those
18 68 components in the comprehensive review study.

19 In the review study itself, it included a number
20 of different features that would be placed on the
21 landscape over time to improve ecological conditions
22 and they're listed there. There's Aquifer Storage
23 and Recovery. That is basically utilizing a well
24 system where you capture excess runoff from the
25 landscape, you move that water into the upper portion

1 of the Floridan Aquifer when water is plentiful and
2 then when times are drier, you bring that water back
3 up, you put it back in the regional system for
4 environmental purposes. So that was one mechanism
5 for storage that was identified in the re-study to
6 help improve the South Florida environmental system.

7 In addition to that, there were surface water
8 storage reservoirs. And between the ASR systems and
9 the surface water storage reservoirs, those will
10 really be the two different type of project
11 components that the project team members formulating
12 the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project will be looking
13 at. We really want to be able to place storage
14 reservoirs north of the Lake, probably with ASR
15 technology, aquifer storage technology, to improve
16 the storage that we have north of the Lake for
17 operational flexibility in reducing the undesirable
18 discharges to the northern estuaries.

19 In addition to that, there were a series of
20 other management measures. Stormwater treatment
21 areas for improving water quality. There were some
22 seepage management features, in particular along the
23 lower East Coast of Florida, recognizing that as we
24 move more water into the central portion of the
25 Greater Everglades system, we would have to control

1 seepage to make sure that the developments to the
2 east were protected.

3 And then we have a very compartmentalized system
4 today as a result of the canals and the impoundments
5 and the levies. And really, in order to move more
6 water south the way it did historically, we have to
7 remove those barriers to flow. So those were
8 identified as well.

9 So combining a series of these different
10 management measures or components are really, over
11 the long term, are the solution for improving the
12 hydrologic conditions in the Greater Everglades
13 system. As they come on line over time and they're
14 built and they become operational, there was also an
15 acknowledgment in the last one up there that we would
16 be revising the way that we operate the surface water
17 management system in South Florida because as these
18 additional facilities come on line, they do different
19 things, we revise operations to accommodate those new
20 features and improve the way that we actually operate
21 the system as a whole.

22 So where are we today. I thought it was
23 important just to give a quick overview of the
24 progress that's been made to date in the Everglades
25 Restoration Program, the South Florida Ecosystem

1 Restoration Program that we've all been working on
2 since 1999.

3 Up at the top are what we call the
4 pre-Comprehensive Everglades Restoration projects.
5 They're known as our foundation projects. Those are
6 the ones that predated the Comprehensive Everglades
7 Restoration Plan itself. And they include Kissimmee
8 River restoration where we're working with the Army
9 Corps to eliminate the channelization in a portion of
10 the Kissimmee River and restore the natural oxbows
11 north of the Lake which improve storage and water
12 quality for water that comes from the upper
13 watersheds into Lake Okeechobee. We've made
14 significant progress on that over the last twenty
15 years and that project is expected to be complete in
16 the next four years.

17 In addition to that, down in the southeast part
18 of the system we have what are called modified water
19 deliveries in the C-111 South Dade project. Those
20 are projects along the East Coast protective levy
21 adjacent to Everglades National Park that are also
22 nearing completion and those facilities are really
23 designed to hold the new water, the additional flows
24 that come into the Everglades system in the natural
25 system and prevent that water from seeping out into

1 the developed areas. And in order to move more water
2 through the system in the Everglades National Park,
3 we have to be able to provide those seepage
4 management features. And those two projects are
5 foundation projects, so they need to take place
6 before we move more water south.

7 And then we get into what we call the first and
8 second generation CERP projects. The first
9 generation projects were approved by Congress in
10 2007. We have a Melalucca Eradication facility, I'm
11 not going to spend a lot of time talking about that
12 one or the Picayune Strand project. They're either
13 completed or under construction, but I am going to
14 focus on the IRL-South Project where we have a C-44
15 reservoir and stormwater treatment area that are
16 currently under construction on the St. Lucie River
17 that will provide storage and treatment for water
18 that comes from Lake Okeechobee before it actually
19 enters the estuary in the Indian River Lagoon.

20 And then the second generation projects, that
21 was the last feed of projects and limitation reports
22 that Congress authorized in 2014. They're listed
23 there. Again, I'm going to kind of focus on the
24 C-43 Reservoir. It's very similar to the C-44
25 Reservoir on the Caloosahatchee, but the -- or the

1 St. Lucie. And the C-43 is on the Caloosahatchee
2 River. We just initiated construction of that
3 reservoir this year and that will be a reservoir that
4 will be on the Caloosahatchee River that will help
5 store water that comes from Lake Okeechobee and then
6 return that water to the Caloosahatchee Estuary when
7 it's needed.

8 So again, two big projects on the East Coast and
9 West Coast that are going to help reduce some of the
10 undesirable discharges to the northern estuaries.

11 And then the last set here, really kind of the
12 completed or active planning studies, we have the
13 Central Everglades Planning Project that was finished
14 in 2014 that is now teed up for Congressional
15 authorization. That is a project that took about
16 three and a half years to formulate, and that is the
17 project that provides the additional storage south of
18 the Lake and de-compartmentalizes that system south
19 of the Lake to allow us to actually move water from
20 Lake Okeechobee south into the Greater Everglades
21 system.

22 So in a nutshell, a lot of the foundation
23 projects that are required are nearing completion.
24 The big storage reservoirs to the east and west are
25 under construction and we're really just waiting for

1 Congress to approve and appropriate the Central
2 Everglades Planning Project that has storage features
3 south of the Lake.

4 So really what's next. Oops, what did I do?
5 There we go. So really, to help us identify from a
6 planning perspective what is next on the horizon,
7 we turn to what we call the Integrated Delivery
8 Schedule. And I saw a number of people carrying that
9 around when they walked in the room today.

10 If you look at the color coding here, the color
11 on the top are those foundation projects. The green
12 ones are the Gen 1, the purple ones are the Gen 2
13 projects. And if you go all the way to the bottom,
14 those are the planning projects that we're initiating
15 now, one of which is the Lake Okeechobee Watershed
16 and ASR Project that we're here tonight to kind of
17 kick off.

18 I think it's important to recognize that the
19 sequencing for the implementation of these projects
20 is very important and it's been based on a lot of
21 technical information.

22 And you know, really why are we looking at
23 storage north of the Lake as the next planning
24 effort? There's a number of reasons that we're doing
25 that.

1 One, I mentioned earlier, we have big storage
2 reservoirs on the east and the west and we have the
3 Central Everglades Planning Project that is going to
4 open up the southern end of the system and provide
5 storage south of the Lake. But just as importantly,
6 the Water Institute at the University of Florida did
7 a comprehensive review of our program, the South
8 Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program and made it
9 pretty clear in that report that if you're really
10 going to move forward and reduce the damaging
11 discharges to the northern estuaries, you need to
12 have storage north of the Lake. So with the storage
13 that's being constructed to the east and the west,
14 and the storage that's associated with the Central
15 Everglades Planning Project, acknowledging that if
16 you really want to take a dent out of the undesirable
17 discharges to the northern estuaries, you really need
18 to start focusing on storage north of the Lake. And
19 that's why it's sequenced like that and that's why
20 we're here today to talk to you about this project
21 and expediting the planning effort to completion.

22 So just on this overhead, just a quick overview
23 of the planning boundaries, you'll see this slide
24 again in the presentation, I don't want to spend a
25 lot of time on this, other than to let everybody know

1 that there are a number of tributaries that are north
2 of Lake Okeechobee in these colored sub-basins that
3 bring water into Lake Okeechobee, and as part of this
4 planning project we'll be looking at these individual
5 colored sub-basins and identifying the most cost
6 effective beneficial storage options that will help
7 capture some of that water that moves very quickly
8 down the system from the upper watershed, and
9 intercept it and store it before it makes its way to
10 the Lake. And then when we put that water aside in
11 storage, it will also allow us to take that water
12 that's been stored and return it to the Lake when
13 we're in drought conditions or dry conditions when
14 the Lake is low.

15 So that's kind of an overview of the program.
16 And I would just like to personally thank everybody
17 for coming. We're really looking forward to
18 launching this effort and there will be a lot of
19 public input as we move forward. In addition to the
20 meetings that the Army Corps will be scheduling,
21 we'll be giving regular updates at our Water
22 Resources Advisory Committee at the South Florida
23 Water Management District, as well as our Governing
24 Board. So please stay tuned for our website, the
25 Jacksonville District's website as we move forward

1 during this very important planning effort.

2 So thank you very much.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. ALEY: Hi, everyone. My name is Lisa Aley,
5 I am the Planning Technical Lead for this project,
6 and I'll provide just a brief overview of the study
7 area and what the purpose and objectives of this
8 project are.

9 So the primary purpose of the Lake Okeechobee
10 Watershed Project is to improve the quality,
11 quantity, timing and duration of water entering
12 Lake Okeechobee. We'll also be looking at some
13 ecosystem restoration opportunities within the
14 project area.

15 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Can you use your mic?

16 MS. ALEY: Yes. Everyone can hear me now?

17 So this map here shows an overview of where the
18 project area is within the Lake Okeechobee boundary.
19 The Lake Okeechobee Watershed drains south from
20 Orlando into the Everglades. Water flows into the
21 Lake primarily through the Kissimmee River,
22 Fisheating Creek, and Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough and
23 then flows out to the east through the St. Lucie
24 Canal into the St. Lucie Estuary, and out to the west
25 through the Caloosahatchee River out to the

1 Caloosahatchee Estuary. And then south through four
2 major canals into the Everglades Agricultural Area
3 and then into the water conservation areas.

4 So one of our primary challenges in operating
5 Lake Okeechobee is that it fills up in storm events
6 sometimes six times quicker than we can release the
7 water. So the Corps operates Lake Okeechobee through
8 the LORS, the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule,
9 and we strive to keep the Lake between 12 and a half
10 and 15 and a half feet. But because of this
11 operational challenge, and also because the
12 conveyance capacity to the estuaries is much greater
13 than down south, occasionally we do have to make
14 releases down to the estuaries during flood events.

15 So here is the project area. It consists of
16 Fisheating Creek, Indian Prairie, the S-65D and E,
17 and Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough sub watersheds.
18 When I say "the project boundary," I mean that would
19 be the area that we would potentially place project
20 features. The study boundary where we would look at
21 potential impacts or benefits is within that project
22 boundary, the Lake and the estuaries as well.

23 So there are a lot of problems that we've been
24 going through and working with -- working with other
25 agencies to identify the primary problems.

1 Over time, the spatial extent of wetlands has
2 degraded in the project area due to conversions of
3 land to agricultural, industrial uses and drainage
4 and channelization, which has led to a substantial
5 reduction in the extent of the wetlands and
6 estuaries. Meaning that also the historic
7 water-holding capacity and filtration capacity has
8 been decreased, which has set up a whole slew of
9 other problems in the area. So led to degraded water
10 quality in Lake Okeechobee within the Watershed and
11 also in the estuaries.

12 The inflows to Okeechobee greatly exceed the
13 outflow capacity, making water management
14 challenging. There are extreme high and low water
15 levels in Okeechobee. Those high water levels harm
16 the littoral zone, but the low water levels can lead
17 to the spread of invasives and exotics in the project
18 area.

19 We have undesirable high-volume discharges to
20 the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries.

21 And as I mentioned earlier, there's a
22 substantial reduction in the spatial extent of
23 wetlands, and all of this has damaging effects to
24 wildlife and threatened and endangered species.

25 So we've identified some opportunities that this

1 project can potentially address. So there's an
2 opportunity to improve system-wide operational
3 flexibility if we create additional storage north of
4 the Lake that helps with our flexibility and water
5 management. We could improve the water quality of --
6 the quality of water entering Lake Okeechobee.
7 We would like to reconnect and restore fragmented
8 wetlands. There would be some potential ancillary
9 water supply and flood control benefits. We're
10 hoping to increase or improve existing recreational
11 opportunities. And also we would like to coordinate
12 with other agencies on ongoing restoration activities
13 in the Watershed. So we're not working in a bubble;
14 we're working with other agencies to see what they're
15 doing and how can we add on to the projects they're
16 doing.

17 Our project objectives. So what we would like
18 to do with this project. We would like to reduce the
19 undesirable discharges from the Lake to the
20 estuaries. We would like to improve the quality,
21 quantity, timing and duration of water entering Lake
22 Okeechobee. We want to improve the system-wide
23 operational flexibility. And we would also like to
24 restore wetlands in the project area.

25 So our constraints; what we want to avoid.

1 We do not want to affect existing water supply or
2 flood protection benefits. We want to avoid any sort
3 of impacts to cultural, historical and archeological
4 resources. We will follow applicable laws,
5 regulations and standards. We want to maintain
6 existing navigability throughout the Lake and
7 throughout the Watershed. And we want to work within
8 the existing flexibility of LORS, the Lake Okeechobee
9 Regulation Schedule. So we will not be updating that
10 as part of this study.

11 So with that, I would like to introduce Dr.
12 Gretchen Ehlinger, who will go over the NEPA process.

13 DR. EHLINGER: Thank you. Good evening. I'm
14 going to go over the reason we are here. We are here
15 because this is part of the National Environmental
16 Policy Act Scoping Meetings, NEPA.

17 And so NEPA is a Federal law that requires
18 consultation with the public. It requires us to
19 present to you a NEPA project that is going to have
20 a significant impact on the environment and -- or
21 proposed potential impact to the environment and
22 provide an opportunity for the public, for
23 stakeholders, for agencies, for tribes and local
24 governments to provide input on any project that
25 we're going to be doing.

1 So for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project,
2 we are looking to in the scoping area -- in the
3 scoping meeting hear input on the purpose, objectives
4 and all of this is going to be taken into
5 consideration as the project moves forward.

6 So the NEPA process begins with determining how
7 much of an impact you're going to have. For projects
8 that are going to have a cumulative, no significant
9 impact, you would go to a categorical exclusion.
10 However, when there is more significant effects,
11 you go into an environmental assessment. Or if you
12 know we're going to have significant impacts, either
13 positive or negative, you go through Environmental
14 Impact Statements.

15 So we will be preparing an Environmental Impact
16 Statement for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.
17 And the very first part of this project starts with
18 the scoping process. And through the scoping
19 process, we're going to be getting input from the
20 public and it will factor into the formulation of the
21 project and the array of alternatives and then it
22 will result in the drafting of an Environmental
23 Impact Statement. And this Environmental Impact
24 Statement is going to analyze all of the
25 environmental effects of the project, as well as

1 the no action alternative or -- you know, if we
2 do not do this project.

3 Now, the Corps has a six-step planning process
4 and this coincides with the NEPA process as well.

5 Right now in Step 1, we're at the very start of
6 the study, we are looking at the problems,
7 opportunities, the goals and objectives of this
8 study, and that fits in with the NEPA part of it,
9 which is the purpose and need.

10 And then the second step is looking at your
11 existing conditions and forecasting future conditions
12 of the project. And that looks -- on the NEPA side
13 is your affected environment, as well as your
14 no action; if you don't do the project, what are the
15 effects.

16 And then Step 3 is developing alternatives.
17 Since this is an ecosystem restoration project, we're
18 looking at developing alternatives that provide the
19 best ecosystem restoration benefits for the least
20 cost. So we're looking at developing an array of
21 alternatives, looking to give us the most lift or the
22 most environmental benefits in this project area.
23 And that is equivalent to the range of alternatives
24 in the NEPA process.

25 Then we need to evaluate those plans. We're

1 going to be analyzing everything from water quality,
2 threatened and endangered species, hydrology,
3 cultural resources, air quality, noise, aesthetics,
4 you know, all of those factors, environmental factors
5 will be analyzed in those plans and we'll be
6 comparing those plans and then selecting a final
7 array of alternatives and a preferred plan that gives
8 us the most environmental benefits.

9 Through that full NEPA assessment -- through the
10 six-step planning process, we follow along with the
11 NEPA assessment, which will get us to an
12 Environmental Impact Statement at the end. And the
13 Corps, through the six-step planning process,
14 develops a Project Implementation Report. And so
15 the final product is going to be an integrated
16 Project Implementation Report and Environmental
17 Impact Statement.

18 The Corps planning process has changed recently.
19 We've listened to the -- been hearing that the
20 process for Corps planning takes too long and it
21 costs too much money. So we've instituted a
22 three-by-three-by-three planning process, which means
23 no more than three years to plan a project, no more
24 than three million dollars, and it has to go through
25 three levels of Corps review, which makes it more of

1 an efficient process. And this is a decision-based
2 process. So as the decisions are made, they're
3 approved and the project is moving forward. So
4 hopefully this planning process can be done faster.
5 And it identifies the risks and uncertainty at each
6 step as you go along. So it identifies -- you know,
7 we don't have all the data that we need, but we'll
8 focus our resources on the data that's required to
9 reduce certain risks and then move on. And so
10 through this process, the report is developed as we
11 go through the planning process.

12 So what is important for you in this process is
13 that we are at the very beginning. We are at the
14 NEPA scoping process, the red arrow. And what this
15 means is that we have the scoping period, and we have
16 extended the comment period to August 12th. It's on
17 a future slide. Just wanted to let you know that we
18 have extended that. And so by the 18th of October,
19 we have our first milestone of developing the
20 alternatives. So it's a very fast process, so we
21 want your input as soon as possible so that can be
22 incorporated into alternatives or -- alternatives.
23 What we're proposing will be our group of projects or
24 our group of management measures for this project.

25 So once we have our alternatives, then we're

1 going to select our preferred plan, or our TSP, our
2 Tentatively Selected Plan. And that is where we'll
3 draft the Environmental Impact Statement. And once
4 we have that Draft Environmental Impact Statement,
5 that will go out for public review so you'll have a
6 chance to review that document, it will be integrated
7 with our Project Implementation Report, and that will
8 go out for a 45-day public and agency comment period.
9 We'll then incorporate those changes and then there
10 will be a Final Environmental Impact Statement that
11 will get sent out again for a 30-day review period.
12 And then once that is approved, goes through our
13 agency reviews, and eventually you end up with, you
14 know, a finalized Environmental Impact Statement,
15 Project Implementation Report, and gets sent up
16 through the Corps' chain to get a Record of Decision.
17 And then a signed Record of Decision will be at the
18 end of the process. This is a, you know, 18- to
19 36-month process. So it's a quick one.

20 And so the public participation starts today
21 with the scoping meeting. We have comment cards,
22 we have -- you're able to make public comment here.
23 We do have scoping comment cards that you're more
24 than welcome to draw, you know, where you think you
25 want project features, what you want included, where

1 you think water should flow. Feel free to draw on
2 these, leave them here with us or mail them in.
3 You can send e-mails in. You can make a public
4 comment tonight. There's other meetings. Our
5 project delivery team meetings will be open to the
6 public in terms of providing feedback and providing
7 comments. We have the South Florida Ecosystem
8 Restoration Task Force meetings, there's working
9 group meetings, status coordination group meetings,
10 we'll have additional NEPA meetings when we have the
11 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We have the
12 Water Resources Advisory Commission meetings. You
13 have Governing Board meetings, other CERP meetings.
14 So there's a whole lot of opportunities for the
15 public to be engaged and to provide your input, which
16 we highly value. We value -- we look at every single
17 comment received. They're involved in comment
18 matrices, and you'll get a response for all the
19 comments that we do receive.

20 So as I said, we have extended our scoping
21 comment period to -- until August 12th. So feel free
22 to send e-mails, the e-mail is up there (indicating).
23 You can mail comments to me. And I highly recommend
24 if you have specific things that you want and it's
25 easier to do on a map, to please, you know, write all

1 over this, write on the back, you know, do whatever
2 you want with it and send it to us and we'll enter it
3 into the public record.

4 All of this information, this presentation, as
5 well as the posters are posted on the web page, which
6 is listed down there (indicating). And written
7 comments, e-mailed comments and comments that you say
8 when you are here at these meetings all have the same
9 weight. And we -- you know, we reply to all of
10 those.

11 So with that, I'm going to turn it back over to
12 Dave.

13 MR. TIPPLE: Okay, everyone. I'm probably going
14 to reinforce a few things that Gretchen just laid out
15 to you, but in my opening comments I talked about
16 opportunities for operational flexibility as we're
17 looking at restoration opportunities within the
18 system. So I'm asking you to work with us to have
19 some operational flexibility for our public meeting.
20 We have quite a few people out there waiting, very
21 warm, and we have 44 comment cards asking -- a few
22 that are in the room wanting to express some
23 comments, and that doesn't include people that have
24 expressed that they would like to make comments as
25 well.

1 So I'm going to ask for you to go with me on a
2 little flexibility here that we are not going to do a
3 second formal presentation for the sake of time. And
4 looking at those folks that are in the room that want
5 to make comments and provide that input at the
6 microphone here, as well as allowing -- I'm asking
7 for those folks that are in the room that don't wish
8 to make any comments to consider allowing those that
9 are waiting outside to come in and we can do a little
10 metering; we got some people that are kind of -- as
11 people come out, people be allowed in to give those
12 comments.

13 And as Gretchen mentioned, there's an
14 opportunity, one, to provide comments via e-mail,
15 as well as forward comments through August 12th, but
16 also one of our team members from the Corps is
17 videotaping this public forum and also we're having a
18 transcript. And both of those things, the video, as
19 well as the transcript will be available as well as
20 the PowerPoint presentation. So if you missed
21 anything or the folks, you know, that are out there
22 that didn't see the presentation, they will have an
23 opportunity to view the video, as well as see the
24 presentation, as well as look through the transcript.
25 So I would ask for your consideration there.

1 But at this time, we're going to, again --
2 it's warm in here, I know. It's warmer out there.
3 But you are -- you are extremely important to the
4 process and it's really important for your voices to
5 be heard. And so we're here to listen to your
6 comments, understand your concerns, and to provide
7 you, again, with this opportunity for input with your
8 opinions on the record, should you care to do so.

9 So, again the transcript of this public meeting
10 will be prepared and the record will remain open
11 until August 12th and then written comments may be
12 submitted to the e-mail address here on the slide and
13 the mailing address also shown.

14 So with that said, individuals speaking tonight,
15 again, 44 cards submitted that would like to say
16 something in this room alone, with more outside.
17 You'll be called to the microphone, so I guess we
18 need to make sure that the microphone is in the right
19 spot. Okay? So please come forward to the
20 microphone as I call your name and state your name
21 and, if applicable, what organization you represent.

22 And given the number of cards we have and some
23 more coming our way, I ask that you keep your
24 comments pertinent to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed
25 Project, such as the project area, constraints,

1 management measures. I'm asking -- and you get to
2 say what you want to say in two minutes, if you can,
3 given the fact that you can submit written comments,
4 given the number of cards and opportunities for
5 others to come in and out. Again, ask you to
6 consider if you're not making a comment, would you
7 mind making a spot available, because the capacity of
8 this room is what we're dealing with. And so ebb and
9 flow of people would be much appreciated.

10 So again, also after those formal comments, if
11 y'all are still around and want to have some
12 one-on-one dialogue with some of the team members,
13 talk about a few specific things on the Lake
14 Okeechobee Watershed Project or related things,
15 they will be around, the poster boards that are
16 around, and we would like to engage with you.

17 So again, thank you for your time and commitment
18 to being here. So with that said, I'm going to go to
19 the first individual on the card. So, again, step
20 forward and say your name and if you're with an
21 organization, please state that organization that you
22 represent.

23 Ramon Iglesias.

24 MR. RAMON IGLESIAS: Good evening, Ramon
25 Iglesias, Roland and Mary Martin Marina, Clewiston,

1 Florida. We're in support of this program, we just
2 wish that 3/3/3 might turn into a 1/1/1. It's been a
3 big issue for many years, it's important that we
4 clean the water before it leaves Lake Okeechobee.
5 Storing it north of the Lake is what we need and what
6 we're looking for, too. So if you can maybe speed up
7 the progress, I don't know how you do that on the
8 political scene, everybody wants to get involved.
9 But it's time to move it forward.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you, Ramon.

12 The card says Captain Don Boss. Again, your
13 name and your affiliation if you're with an
14 organization.

15 CAPTAIN DON BOSS: Captain Don Boss, One Florida
16 Foundation.

17 I appreciate that we're looking at cleaning the
18 water before it gets to Lake Okeechobee and comes to
19 our estuaries. I appreciate that you're slowing down
20 the water. Thank you very much.

21 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you.

22 Paul Carlisle.

23 MR. PAUL CARLISLE: Hi, Paul Carlisle, County
24 Administration for Glades County, Florida. We're one
25 of the two counties that the Corps is looking at to

1 develop this Watershed. We would ask the Corps a few
2 items.

3 One is can you expand that program further up
4 the Chain of Lakes that captures the water that is
5 coming out of the Orlando area that is affecting the
6 Lake. And if you're going to utilize lands, utilize
7 lands that the State already owns first before you
8 start taking more lands off our tax roll. It's very
9 important to us; when you start taking lands off the
10 tax roll, it's jobs. You cannot bankrupt the
11 internal counties because of what's happening in the
12 coastal and the Orlando regions.

13 So work with us, we'll work with you all.
14 We all know that clean water is good for the entire
15 state. So if you're going to take more lands off the
16 tax roll in our counties, please compensate us for
17 it. If it's good for the entire state, we should be
18 compensated and we should look at lands outside of
19 this area and we should look at lands regulating
20 where development goes as they encroach on the urban
21 areas into the agricultural areas and their
22 discharges that they put into the watersheds.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you.

25 Newton Cook?

1 MR. NEWTON COOK: Thank you. This is a great
2 presentation and I spoke with a couple people before
3 I got up here and I want to be real quick.

4 Number one, we've been through this rodeo once
5 before. The reason we can raise water in the
6 Kissimmee chain is that the District has already
7 purchased the easements and the land. A number of
8 years ago we raised two feet for the very same
9 purpose, to hold it back, keep it out of the Lake and
10 to clean the water. Unfortunately a storm came along
11 called Fay, the Corps decided that if they had had
12 two feet of extra water through the system, downtowns
13 of most cities along the Okeechobee Lake would have
14 flooded. So that has kind of gone away, and now it's
15 come back. And it's a very good thing, but you have
16 to remember there's consequences when you start
17 holding water. Back in those days ten years ago,
18 Lake Okeechobee racked. We asked the Corps the
19 question "How many acre-feet new would be stored when
20 we raise this system?" And I spoke with Lisa and the
21 folks here today, and the number is right at about
22 the same, it's 295,000, let's say 300,000 acre-feet
23 for the new storage. And this is where you folks in
24 the estuaries, because you hear me say all the time
25 "Please tell these people the truth." That's eight

1 inches off the Lake. It's nothing. The Lake today
2 is 20 inches too high. Eight inches would have been
3 gone in January.

4 This is a very good project. It's very
5 important. But it's not going to help the estuaries
6 that much.

7 The second problem that's coming up is the
8 Endangered Species Act out there. The snail kite is
9 suddenly becoming much more popular among the
10 endangered species folks.

11 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Speak up.

12 MR. NEWTON COOK: And if the snail kites stops
13 the movement of the water up and down from the KCOL
14 like the Cape Sable seaside sparrow has stopped the
15 movement under the Tamiami Trail, then you folks in
16 the estuaries will be bombed every time there's a
17 rainstorm and the snail kites are nesting and they
18 can't find their nest. There are two very crucial
19 things happening here. There is no way to move water
20 south. The bottom of the Lake, max 4- to 6,000 CFS.
21 That's all that can go out of the bottom. Coming in
22 just this last January, 18,000 CFS. Why do you think
23 it goes out the estuaries? There's only three way it
24 can go; C-43, C-44, south to Florida Bay. You cannot
25 send it south today. There is no structure at the

1 bottom of the Lake that will do 18,000 CFS. There's
2 no flow-way to get to the Tamiami Trail, but if you
3 had it, guess what? It's a dead stop because of the
4 Cape Sable seaside sparrow.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. And again, all comments
7 will receive equal consideration. Again, state your
8 name and if you have an affiliation, please state
9 that.

10 The next gentleman is Hugh, and I apologize if I
11 get this wrong, Haring.

12 MR. HUGH HARING: Thank you. My name is Hugh
13 Haring and I'm with the East Central Florida Regional
14 Planning Council. And we would like to see the
15 effort moved further to the north so that it includes
16 the area that is draining into the Lake itself.

17 We would also work with the counties and cities
18 that are involved around the Lake. And one of the
19 things that we think would be very helpful would be
20 if the counties and DOT would set up check-downs in
21 their ditch sections so that they would hold the
22 water back and then discharge it. There's -- those
23 type of dams are used all over the State of Florida
24 and if you were able to hold six inches of water back
25 in the upland areas over the time period that we're

1 talking about, a lot of the controls that you're
2 looking for would be helped significantly.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you.

5 Okay. The next person is Maria Bolton-Joubert.
6 And also, to have in queue, if Chris Nolan could be
7 ready as the next commenter.

8 MS. MARIA BOLTON-JOUBERT: Thank you, Good day.
9 Maria Bolton-Joubert. I'm up here -- or down here,
10 rather, from Orange County. So I'm here today to
11 demand that now -- now the State, the U.S. Army Corps
12 of Engineers start planning of the storage, the
13 treatment and movement of water south of Lake
14 Okeechobee in the EAA. We need the EAA planning now
15 and not in 2020. We have a problem here. This is a
16 Statewide problem. All 67 counties need to be
17 concerned and take ownership of this issue. The
18 Everglades and Lake O belongs to all of us, not just
19 the counties surrounding the Lake. I live in Orange
20 County, Florida, and yeah, a portion of my county,
21 our water flows into Shingle Creek, into the
22 Kissimmee River and down here into the Everglades.
23 We're all connected to what is happening.

24 I still want the State to purchase the land
25 south of Lake Okeechobee.

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. MARIA BOLTON-JOUBERT: I want that in order
3 for there to be built a deep water reservoir to help
4 restore the Everglades. We need to do this. Big
5 Sugar needs to comply.

6 I also want to incentives created throughout our
7 state in order to help folks update their septic
8 systems, because we all know that is expensive.

9 I am also concerned with what has happened to
10 our ES1 money that 75 percent of the voters voted on.

11 I will say this: Local elections matter. I
12 encourage everyone to look up who is running for
13 their August 30th election, the primary, and who is
14 running on the ballot for the November 8th
15 Presidential ballot. The deadline to register, by
16 the way, is in a couple days for the August 30th
17 election. You can actually get that information,
18 it's public record, you can look up who contributed
19 to each and every one of these candidates. And I'm
20 tired of people being bought out by big business in
21 this state. They do not represent the people then.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. MARIA BOLTON-JOUBERT: And I am talking to
24 some people that are in this room and I do not care.
25 I am tired of what has been happening to our state

1 and we need to take it back. We need representation
2 and we live in a democracy.

3 Again, finally, if you need help, you can Google
4 search it, you just insert your county. For example,
5 where I live, you can Google search "Orange County
6 Supervisor of Elections," there's a list of
7 candidates, and they have to file quarterly and all
8 of these different time periods with their
9 expenditures and their contributions. I encourage
10 everybody, look and see who is bought and paid for.
11 It's public record, share it all over social media.
12 Enough is enough. Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Chris Nolan. And the
15 next person up will be Elda Bass.

16 MR. CHRIS NOLAN: Good evening. How are you?
17 Thank you, Dave, I appreciate the opportunity.

18 I would like to just share something with you,
19 because I'm a proponent of a lot of education.
20 There's a lot of bits and pieces here, a lot of
21 suggestions and recommendations. I'm going to ask,
22 if you have a pen and paper, write this down. I'm
23 going to give you a website: [wwwAlgaeWheel.com](http://www.AlgaeWheel.com).
24 AlgaeWheel.com.

25 As bizarre and counterintuitive as it sounds,

1 one of the things that we absolutely know -- I, by
2 the way, am a consultant for a company called One
3 Water Group, and what I do is I identify the top
4 scientific solutions worldwide for various problems
5 in the environment. The very top solution I contend
6 is at AlgaeWheel.com. It will solve many of the
7 problems outlined here tonight.

8 I would like to share more information,
9 obviously I'm limited on time.

10 Matt, you're on the right track with the
11 reservoirs north of the lake. You got to take it a
12 little step further. And if any of you are
13 interested, we would love to speak with you about it,
14 because you have solutions which are as simple as
15 daylight and green algae. You say "Algae solves
16 algae?" Yes, it does. And we have the system to do
17 it. We created it for Disney ten years ago, we
18 created it for the Brookfield Zoo, now we're doing it
19 all over the world. Florida needs AlgaeWheel.com.

20 I would like you to look at it and then any of
21 you people that are leaders in this particular -- in
22 any of these organizations, you're free to come and
23 sit down with our scientists and share with you the
24 solutions that you're looking for.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you very much.
2 Elda Bass?
3 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: She left.
4 MR. TIPPLE: She left? How about J.C. Bass?
5 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: He left.
6 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. So then we have Rebecca
7 Bruner?
8 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: She left.
9 MR. TIPPLE: She left, okay.
10 Robert Miller?
11 MR. ROBERT MILLER: I'm okay, go ahead. I'm
12 okay.
13 MR. TIPPLE: All right. David Bottomley?
14 MR. DAVID BOTTOMLEY: No, I'm not speaking. No,
15 I'm --
16 MR. TIPPLE: I have "yes" checked.
17 MR. DAVID BOTTOMLEY: Oh, no.
18 MR. TIPPLE: All right. Gina LaBruno? Okay.
19 And then after Gina is Ron Hamel? Hamel?
20 MS. GINA LABRUNO: Hi. I just want to point out
21 that three years ago, August 1st makes three years
22 that Governor Scott and Senator Mark Rubio were here
23 addressing the same issue. He promised -- well,
24 first he blamed the Feds for what has been occurring.
25 He promised 40 million to resolve the issues.

1 Yet here we are today. So I just wonder when the
2 Army Corps and the people running this state are
3 going to heed towards the issues that we continue to
4 have. There's a lot of broken promises going on,
5 being led by our Governor. And I'm not ashamed to
6 say it either, it is embarrassing. And that's pretty
7 much all I have to say. It's a sad situation and we
8 have to keep Florida waters safe. For us, we have to
9 keep it safe. So thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. I do appreciate y'all
12 keeping -- trying to keep to two minutes. Thank you
13 very much.

14 Ron Hamel.

15 MR. RON HAMEL: Ron Hamel with Gulf Citrus
16 Growers, and I would like to commend the Corps and
17 everybody for coming out for this -- this meeting
18 tonight because I think that storage throughout the
19 system is extremely important, but I think the more
20 we look north, all the statistics are pointing to
21 storage north of the Lake and -- throughout the
22 system, but predominantly north of the Lake to allow
23 for more flexibility. They did a very good factual
24 overview, I believe the South Florida Water
25 Management District did it in conjunction with the

1 Corps, and I would urge all of y'all to pick that up
2 and read it and look at the details.

3 And that's -- we look forward to participating
4 and, you know, I wish you could speed this up.
5 You know, this has been going on, the process, for
6 over twenty years. And some of us were around when
7 you started putting the Everglades Restoration
8 Program together and developed the yellow book. And
9 there's a lot of elements in that yellow book that
10 are -- that obviously technology won't -- won't allow
11 for all of those, but storage, I think everybody
12 agrees storage is really key. And the more we can
13 put north to keep it from moving into the Lake, I
14 think statistically is the way to go.

15 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you very much. Appreciate
16 that.

17 And state the affiliation that you're with, too,
18 when you come.

19 Lisa Interlandi? And then the next after Lisa
20 is Allen Stewart.

21 MS. LISA INTERLANDI: Lisa Interlandi with the
22 Everglades Law Center.

23 I want to thank the Corps for providing this
24 opportunity for comment. I would urge you to
25 possibly consider additional scoping meetings closer

1 to the coast, because I think that there's a lot of
2 people, to the extent that this project is intended
3 to provide benefits from Lake Okeechobee discharges,
4 I think there's a lot of people on the coast who
5 might choose to weigh in if there were meetings that
6 were more conveniently located. So I would urge you
7 to perhaps schedule additional meetings in areas that
8 are convenient to the areas that are supposed to be
9 benefited.

10 I would like to second the suggestion that this
11 project -- the scope of this project be expanded to
12 include storage south of the Lake. The EAA reservoir
13 project has been languishing and while a Project
14 Implementation Report and an EIS was actually
15 completed back in 2006, the project has not moved
16 forward and in fact has been delayed, with planning
17 not proposed to start until 2021. So we urge you to
18 move that project forward.

19 Our estuaries cannot afford to wait additional
20 time for storage. You know, the University of
21 Florida study did recommend storage north of the
22 Lake. It also recommended storage within the
23 Everglades Agricultural Area. In fact, significant
24 quantities of storage, much more storage than is
25 currently planned in the south. So in order to stop

1 the discharges, we need storage north of the Lake,
2 we need storage south of the Lake. You know, for
3 every bit of water that is stored and treated north
4 of the Lake before it's discharged, it has to be sent
5 south. And once it's sent south and left -- and it
6 leaves the Lake, it has to be cleaned again before it
7 can be sent to the Everglades. So we need a place
8 within the Everglades Agricultural Area where we can
9 store water and treat it so that it can be sent
10 south, clean water to the Everglades.

11 Thank you so much.

12 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Allen. And then after
13 Allen is Gary Ritter.

14 MR. ALLEN STEWART: Hello, my name is Allen
15 Stewart. Among other things, I'm a native Floridian,
16 I was reared on the Indian River in the City of
17 Cocoa. I'm an environmental engineer and a
18 biologist, and I have been actively involved with
19 Lake O projects since 1979.

20 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Speak up.

21 MR. ALLEN STEWART: Sorry. I hate microphones.

22 Many of you remember the Interim Action Plan in
23 1979. Well, I've been with it ever since. And one
24 of the things I want to bring out -- by the way, I
25 have no financial interest in any of the technologies

1 I'm going to mention. But one of the things that
2 I've been involved in over the years is the
3 development of systems we call "managed aquatic
4 plants" where we use algae, water hyacinths, other
5 aquatic plants to remove and recover and reuse
6 nutrients in Lake Okeechobee. This is important and
7 we've done several projects with the District and
8 this technology is presently being used in Indian
9 River County to help meet their TMDL requirements.

10 The reason this is important is because we have
11 huge stores of phosphorus in the Lake, in the
12 sediment and in soils, and a lot of the aquatic
13 plants that are sprayed every year and drip down to
14 the bottom. In a recent presentation in Orlando
15 where Dr. David Demoska (phonetic) presented the
16 facts related to this and said that you could remove
17 all of the loads coming into Lake Okeechobee in both
18 phosphorus and sediments, and this legacy phosphorus
19 will continue to send pollution to the estuaries and
20 south.

21 It is important and critical that we not just
22 remove phosphorus and store it in places like STA's
23 or in BMP's, we have to recover that phosphorus,
24 we need to recycle it and we need to reuse it.
25 This would be a new ag. industry where aquatic plants

1 would be a crop, it could create jobs and over the
2 long term it could remove not only the incoming
3 phosphorus, but also the legacy phosphorus. If you
4 don't remove legacy phosphorus, the disruption to our
5 estuaries is going to continue.

6 I wrote a letter in 1987 that said this, and I
7 would be happy to give y'all a copy of that if you
8 want it, but it continues to be true.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you.

12 Gary Ritter. And next is Ben Butler.

13 MR. GARY RITTER: Good afternoon. Gary Ritter
14 with the Florida Farm Bureau Federation.

15 First of all, I would like to welcome y'all to
16 Okeechobee, and our community here. I live here,
17 long-time resident.

18 Got just a few points that I --

19 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Louder.

20 MR. GARY RITTER: Just a few points I want to
21 bring up.

22 Number one, the Florida Farm Bureau Federation
23 has been and continues to be very supportive of the
24 Everglades Restoration Project and this Lake
25 Okeechobee Watershed Project.

1 Number two, we are in favor of completing
2 projects within the planning area and looking for
3 opportunities on existing State and Federally-owned
4 lands. We support partnerships with agriculture
5 whenever possible, including conservation easements,
6 disbursed water management, water farming
7 opportunities, in addition to addressing BMP's in the
8 Watershed that we've been doing for decades now.

9 I would like to also point out that, you know,
10 this planning area -- the map is not up there, but it
11 covers Okeechobee, Highlands and Glades County. One
12 of the things that has really not been discussed is
13 what are the opportunities in the Upper Chain of
14 Lakes. And we would like to see more information,
15 more scoping and planning in the Upper Chain of Lakes
16 to see if there are possible storage opportunities up
17 there. To my knowledge, as long as I've been
18 involved in the process, I have never, you know, seen
19 a plan going on in the Upper Chain of Lakes with the
20 exception of the Kissimmee Restoration Project.

21 Lastly, and I know this one is not going to be
22 popular, but I'm going to say it anyways. We do not
23 support additional land acquisition, especially that
24 results in more losses of our state and country's
25 food supply. I think that's very, very critical.

1 It's very important.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. GARY RITTER: And we really need to take
4 this into consideration when we're doing this
5 planning process.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Ben Butler? Followed
8 by Hilary Swain.

9 MR. BEN BUTLER: Thank you. Ben Butler, I'm a
10 fourth generation farmer and rancher from Okeechobee
11 County. I've lived here for 30 years of my 37-year
12 life, the other seven years in Gainesville. And I'm
13 going to reserve most of my comments for e-mail. I'm
14 going to echo Gary Ritter's comments. I'm also a
15 member of the Okeechobee County Farm Bureau and we
16 understand the importance of agriculture. And for 30
17 years, what agriculture has done in the Northern
18 Everglades with our BMP's and the many projects, the
19 many personal dollars, including my family, that have
20 been put into these projects, in addition to public
21 assistance, has taken a toll on agriculture. And I'm
22 thankful that -- thankful that we are still here and
23 still able to produce food for the rest of everybody
24 else in the State of Florida.

25 Again, I'll echo Gary's comments on the

1 importance of agriculture and the importance of farm
2 land, and what good farms can do to help clean the
3 water, especially in the Northern Everglades.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Hilary Swain and
7 following Hilary will be Keith Pearce.

8 DR. HILARY SWAIN: Hello, my name is Hilary
9 Swain, I'm the Director of Archbold Biological
10 Station, which is an ecological research center up
11 just north -- just south of Lake Placid. We manage
12 about 20,000 acres in this Watershed.

13 I, first of all, appreciate the fact that there
14 is renewed emphasis on looking at the headwaters of
15 the Northern Everglades. So we're glad to be back in
16 the eye again, good to be back engaged in the
17 process.

18 I think what I would really encourage you is
19 looking back at the U.S. data, looking back at your
20 own work, you know, looking at this headwaters
21 Watershed is not the 922,000 acres that you've
22 designated, but really the 2.6 million acres that are
23 in this Watershed, you know, including 17 percent of
24 it is the ancient sand ridges on the west of the
25 Watershed, ranches, rivers, ridge-to-ranch-to-river

1 in this Watershed. And I think we're making a
2 mistake thinking of the Watershed again as a
3 five-gallon bucket of water and we're just messing
4 around with the bottom two gallons. We have to
5 look at the whole five gallons. We're not as
6 compartmentalized as south of the Lake. You know,
7 the lines on these maps are at best fuzzy.
8 They're not straight lines that allow easy
9 compartmentalization of the hydrology.

10 And I think the other extraordinary thing about
11 this Watershed is ownership of lands lying south of
12 the lake. Only 22 percent of this Watershed is
13 either in public or conservation private lands. So
14 we're going to have to think very differently about
15 our strategies north of the Lake, because we don't
16 have the same opportunities that we have south of the
17 Lake, with multiple -- many of them agricultural.
18 And I think it's -- it gives us a chance to be very
19 different and very imaginative north of the Lake.

20 So I'm looking forward to the suggestions you
21 have and I'll direct a few of our own. Thank you.

22 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Keith Pearce and then
23 Jo Neeson will be next, if you'd like to work your
24 way up to the front.

25 MR. KEITH PEARCE: Hi, I'm Keith Pearce, I'm a

1 fifth generation rancher in Glades County. And I
2 just read a recent report that was released by James
3 Madison Institute. Five and a half million acres
4 already belong to Government agencies in South
5 Florida alone. Another three-quarters of a million
6 acres is under conservation easements. My question
7 would be why are we looking at purchasing more land?
8 We need to be looking at utilizing funds to utilize
9 the existing properties that are already in
10 Government ownership.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. TIPPLE: Jo Neeson? No?

14 Colleen Frost?

15 MS. COLLEEN FROST: I'm all right, thank you.

16 MR. TIPPLE: Pass? Okay.

17 Betty Osceola. And then Dowling Watford.

18 I apologize if I didn't get that name quite right.

19 MS. BETTY OSCEOLA: A lot of my statements are
20 going to come in written letter with the organization
21 that I'm a part of. But for myself as an individual
22 who was able to grow up in the Everglades, my family
23 has been here before Florida was Florida, and also
24 it's very sad to hear a lot of people talking about
25 ownership of the land. You do not own this land.

1 Mother Earth does. You created us. You're only
2 leasing it.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. BETTY OSCEOLA: And it needs to be taken
5 care of by everyone. And remember, our people say
6 "When you point your finger, you have four coming
7 right back at you." It's not just the Corps, it's
8 not just the Government, it's everybody who is
9 counting on that production and who is living here,
10 breathing this air.

11 Also you need to remember, and the lady -- one
12 of the ladies before me mentioned it -- she kind of
13 got it a little bit. You are dealing with a living
14 system. Just like you breathe, live and die, it does
15 the same thing. The water is not dead. The land is
16 not dead. Your farmers know that. And you should
17 know that. You are not going to control what the
18 Creator does and what this water does. And the
19 better you realize that, the more you can understand
20 it. If you live and breathe it, you understand how
21 this water works, you understand how the environment
22 works. You're not going to learn it out of a book.
23 You have to live it. And right now, a lot of the
24 projects that I see, all you're -- to me, all you're
25 doing is moving your crap to somebody else.

1 And you're keeping it.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. BETTY OSCEOLA: That's basically what you're
4 doing. And just like Mr. Stewart said, you have to
5 remove that crap, otherwise it's going to stay there
6 and your septic tank that you're using the
7 environment for is going to get full.

8 That's all I have to say.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. TIPPLE: Dowling Watford and then Al Perry.

11 COUNCILMAN DOWLING WATFORD: I'm Dowling Watford
12 with the Okeechobee City Council. Gary Ritter didn't
13 tell you, but he's also with the Okeechobee City
14 Council. I don't think he wanted to be associated
15 with me, but thank you, Gary.

16 We had a couple other elected officials that
17 came in. I appreciate every elected official that's
18 here, because we catch a lot of flack, sometimes for
19 things we can't do anything about. Representative
20 Gayle Harrell, we appreciate you being here. And
21 Commissioner Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch with Sewall's
22 Point, we appreciate you being here. Jacqui is very
23 passionate on the Indian River and I'm sure we'll
24 hear from her.

25 I would just like to say I support your projects

1 here. I would like for you to consider a couple
2 things, and Gary touched on them, and Ben touched on
3 them. First of all, you need to consider the
4 economy, and I'm sure you will, and the agricultural
5 land. Agriculture is very important to us,
6 particularly here in Okeechobee. It's important to
7 us all because we all eat. So it's very, very
8 important to us.

9 I would also like for you to strongly consider
10 the conservation easements and water farming. I
11 think that is the way to go rather than purchasing
12 land. So I would appreciate it if you would consider
13 those.

14 Anything you do -- and I'm kind of like Gary,
15 I don't know that I'm in favor of purchasing more
16 land south of the Lake. And Jacqui hates to hear
17 that, but I don't know that I am. I would encourage
18 you, encourage all of us to support the CERP projects
19 that are currently -- what is it called, the
20 Integrated Delivery Schedule? That needs to be done.
21 And we don't need to take the focus off of that.
22 Unfortunately, the recent water quality problems on
23 the coast have kind of taken the focus off that.
24 But we need to stay focused on that. And if we all
25 worked as hard getting those projects funded as we do

1 complaining about everything else, we would be a lot
2 further along in that process.

3 I also want to strongly encourage you to
4 consider the health of the dike, the Herbert Hoover
5 Dike. Very important to all the communities around
6 the Lake. And I know you will, but I want you to
7 strongly consider that.

8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. TIPPLE: Al Perry, followed by Rick Hartman.

10 MR. AL PERRY: Good evening. Thanks for hearing
11 out comments tonight. My name is Al Perry, I'm the
12 City Manager of the City of Clewiston. And I want
13 you to commend you folks for finally focusing on
14 north of the Lake. You know, I want to remind some
15 of the people in the audience that we hosted a
16 peaceful rally about three years ago in Clewiston
17 about the water releases and we were singing that
18 song loud and clear and didn't get any traction. And
19 whoever is responsible for getting that traction out
20 there, thank you.

21 So the water storage north of the Lake is very
22 important to us. And I just want to say one thing.
23 The quality of the Lake is very important to us, too,
24 maintaining proper Lake levels, and the reason for
25 that is our local economy, our fishing economy is

1 just as important to us as yours is to you on the
2 coast. And it's just at a different level, but it's
3 just as important to us as yours is to you.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Rick Hartman, followed
7 by Paul Seaver.

8 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I saw Rick leave.

9 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. Paul Seaver, are you still
10 with us?

11 MR. PAUL SEAVER: Yep, I'm here.

12 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. And then Steve Weir, I
13 believe.

14 MR. PAUL SEAVER: I'm Paul from Palm Beach
15 Springs Water Company and we're distributors of
16 electric chemistry equipment. And we can help clean
17 up the phosphorus before it ever gets into Lake
18 Okeechobee without any chemicals, without
19 any (inaudible) and we can take it out of the soil.

20 THE COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, if you'll speak
21 up for me.

22 MR. PAUL SEAVER: So anyway, we can take it out
23 of the water, we can also kill the cyanobacteria at
24 the same time and do it without any chemicals.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. TIPPLE: Steve Weir. Then Shannon Larsen.

2 MR. STEVE WEIR: Paul Seaver just identified a
3 major problem that you have at this moment with the
4 Lake that seems to be ignored here in this room. And
5 that is there is a major plague of the green algae
6 bloom spreading. It's not only on the Lake, but it's
7 spreading to all the estuaries and it's spreading
8 north and it's spreading south. If you don't kill
9 off the bacteria and do it soon, the whole Lake will
10 be full of it and you'll be flooded with it. Right
11 now it's a plague.

12 And everyone is talking about storing water here
13 and storing it there. This last gentleman just
14 identified that they have equipment that will kill
15 off that cyanobacteria. If you ever put your hand in
16 it, you'll see the rash that you will get from it.
17 The ability to kill off the bacteria, technology
18 exists, it's being used all over the world except for
19 here. It's a hundred percent organic, it's natural,
20 they just change -- temporarily change the molecular
21 structure of the water which kills off the bacteria.
22 And after the bacteria is killed off, the water is
23 pumped back into the Lake absolutely pure.

24 In addition to that, the same equipment with a
25 slight alteration also mines the phosphorus that is

1 in the water, the legacy phosphorus that has been
2 there for years and years and been deposited for a
3 lifetime. And that legacy phosphorus will always
4 plague the Lake unless it's removed. Right now it
5 can be removed by electrolysis. All they do is mount
6 this on big barges, they only take them about a foot
7 of water, and as they go into one foot of water or
8 less even or into the deeper water, they actually
9 mine this phosphorus. Electronically phosphorus has
10 magnetic qualities and those qualities will attach to
11 their equipment by magnet. It's a magnetism that
12 they grab whatever is on the bottom, plus they could
13 do it at the headwaters. So you can stop the
14 phosphorus from coming into the Lake to begin with.
15 You can mine and remove the phosphorus and then
16 re-sell it. It will mix in with the soil. It's got
17 phosphate in it, but it's a different kind of
18 technology. When you have phosphorus being mined on
19 a dry open land pit, that's one thing. But when it's
20 in the water, it entails a different aspect of the
21 science of removing phosphorus. This product and the
22 technology is used all over the world except here in
23 the United States for some reason. It was just never
24 introduced, it was never -- never caught on here.
25 But they're now starting to use it in California.

1 And Florida is the ideal place for it. Right here in
2 Florida, you've got to get rid of that plague because
3 it's spreading. You can store all the water you
4 want, but all that water will be contaminated. You
5 can't help it, it will be automatically contaminated.
6 And here they have a product and a piece of equipment
7 and a technology that is a hundred percent organic.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. TIPPLE: Shannon Larsen, followed by Irene
10 Gomes.

11 MS. SHANNON LARSEN: I'm Shannon Larsen with
12 Ancient Trees. I'm neither for or against this
13 project. I'm stating that because I don't think
14 enough details have been given where the land is
15 going to be and all the other questions I have going
16 on in my mind.

17 But I think for this project it's essential that
18 they create a citizens watchdog committee over this
19 entire project so we know where the money comes in
20 and where it goes out and what it's being used for.
21 We've all seen the Everglades restoration money, it
22 ends up on study after study after study after study
23 and nothing ever happens. I don't want to see that
24 happen again. We need to take control over this and
25 watch it. I think it should involve a lot of local

1 input, people that live in the areas that are going
2 to be affected. I don't want to see -- I think
3 on-site visits must be done by the Corps, not just
4 looking at the computers and saying "Well, this can
5 be here or that can be there or that can be there,
6 that can be there." That's what they do. That's
7 what their studies do. They need to get out there
8 and make sure that this system is going to work
9 before they even try to implement it or we're just
10 going to be another twenty years behind.

11 I think this whole thing can go a lot quicker.
12 They have studies. They have material already.
13 It can be shortened down to one-to-one, I think.

14 I also feel that they need to get out of their
15 STA boxes. There are other systems that have been
16 mentioned today that are far better than the STA's.
17 So they need to look at more innovative and systems
18 that really work in times that we're living in today.

19 They're talking about they're going to do
20 scoping more with the people. I certainly hope that
21 they really do do this and include the indigenous
22 people also all the way through this. They're
23 notoriously, especially independents, left out of the
24 system and I don't want to see that happen either
25 this time.

1 I think when the citizens are involved, we can
2 identify the problems as they're occurring. You see
3 them, everybody knew in the beginning that that Lake
4 didn't need to be dammed. Many people spoke out
5 about that, yet they did it anyway. People shouldn't
6 be living there in the first place.

7 So I just -- thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. Irene Gomes. I'd just like
10 to offer that -- real quick, there's -- appreciate
11 y'all trying to stick to the two minutes. Actually
12 there's a little green, yellow, red, and yellow means
13 30 seconds. So I'll start doing that. So we have 15
14 cards from the first go-around. And again, we're
15 really thankful for all the interest expressed and
16 we're doing a little shifting of gears based on some
17 feedback from those that are still waiting out there.
18 We'll actually going to go ahead and do another
19 presentation with these comment cards and bring the
20 next group in, okay? Just want to keep that in mind,
21 we have 15 cards left.

22 MS. IRENE GOMES: My name is Irene Gomes, I own
23 a motel along the Indian River Lagoon that's the
24 most diverse, biodiverse estuary in North America.
25 My family has been there since 1958. Ya'll are

1 worried about agriculture, I'm worried about the
2 Florida economy and we're based on tourism. And it's
3 hurting, and it's hurting bad. Over the 4th of July,
4 during that week I lost several thousand dollars.

5 I'm also concerned about the quality of life.
6 I have children and grandchildren, I'm concerned
7 about what we're leaving the next generation.

8 The Everglades needs water, Florida Bay needs
9 water. I mean, we need to get water moved south.
10 I don't understand all this stuff where people are --
11 I mean, isn't that obvious, the Everglades needs
12 water? It also provides drinking water. You know,
13 I -- I don't know, I get so upset when I talk about
14 this because this has been my whole life, since I was
15 seven years old on the Indian River Lagoon. Like I
16 said, the most biodiverse estuary in North America
17 and it's dying. And you need to care. You need to
18 do something about it. We need to do something to
19 save it before it dies, please.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. TIPPLE: Anna Aergalis (sic), I believe.
22 Apologize if I didn't do your last name justice.
23 Anna? And next will be Kim Streiber, Streiber?

24 MS. ANNA BERGALIS: Yes, my name is Anna
25 Bergalis. I just want to give you this photo.

1 It actually looks like poop, but it's not, it's
2 cyanobacteria. It's coming onto my property and it
3 reduces the value of my property. Not only that,
4 it's a cyanobacteria, you know, this blue-green algae
5 which is really cyano -- it's a bacteria. Forget
6 about the plant, it's more a bacteria.

7 And when I have friends coming down from Ohio,
8 Pennsylvania, New York, they're going to look at this
9 and they're going to think it's poop, they're not
10 going to think it's blue-green algae.

11 And also, too, you say restore the estuaries?
12 Here, I'll give you this photo, you can give it to
13 the Governor, if you would.

14 When you're -- you're saying "restore," you have
15 to have salt to restore. You can't have fresh water.
16 I don't care if you clean it up a hundred times,
17 you're dumping fresh water on us. What is it doing?
18 It's killing our seagrasses. Why do we say
19 seagrasses? Seagrasses are salty. Salty. And that
20 acts as a little nursery for our fish. And by
21 killing those grasses, what you do is you're going to
22 be putting more phosphates and nitrates in your water
23 and you're going to start it all over. The cycle
24 goes on and on. And how long has this cycle been
25 going on? Forty, 50 years? A hundred? You know.

1 I mean, it's ridiculous.

2 And I always say it's God's -- God's salty
3 water, it's man's hell, Okeechobee. So restore.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. TIPPLE: Kim and then Bobby Billie.

6 MS. KIM STREIBER: Good evening, everybody.
7 My name is Kim Streiber, I'm an eighth generation
8 Florida native. Sorry.

9 I very much appreciate the agriculture and
10 farming here as much as the coastal estuaries.
11 It is all what makes Florida such an amazing place.
12 I agree that slowing and cleaning water coming into
13 the Lake is necessary, but that is not going to stop
14 the discharges east and west. Only a flow-way south
15 will do that.

16 I want to make one thing very clear to everybody
17 here tonight. The people and organizations taking
18 part in the movement to purchase Everglades
19 agricultural land are not doing it with the intention
20 of putting farmers or ranchers around the Lake out of
21 business. Nor is it our intention to displace the
22 residents of Belle Glade, Clewiston, South Bay, or
23 any other community currently in place south of Lake
24 Okeechobee. What we are fighting for is to restore
25 the natural flow of clean water south to the River of

1 Grass. It needs to replenish the aquifer. We only
2 need a small portion of EAA land to clean and convey
3 water south.

4 A contract was signed in 2008 that allowed the
5 State to purchase land at fair market value. Funds
6 exist due to the passing of Amendment One. The
7 contract expires in 2020. That's why they want to
8 hold off until 2021.

9 What we need is the political will to get that
10 done before the contract is up. We all have to work
11 together and do our part to clean our water, but so
12 do our State leaders and governing boards.

13 MR. TIPPLE: 30 seconds.

14 MS. KIM STREIBER: Did you know the DEP and ERC,
15 both Governor appointed, approved higher levels of
16 carcinogens in our ground water today? They will now
17 allow higher levels of benzine and other chemicals
18 used in the fracking industry. Is that what you want
19 for your grandchildren? It's not what I want.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. TIPPLE: Bobby Billie?

22 MR. BOBBY BILLIE: Thank you. I'm a 15th
23 generation since the beginning of creation. It looks
24 so sad to see the people rely on the money, not by
25 life, and you can't eat money. You can't drink

1 money. And you can't create the food. But people
2 manipulate so long and they think it's God now.
3 And we really do need to wake up before it's too
4 late. It's already too late. What things we see,
5 the Mother Earth we call, we understand it,
6 indigenous people understand that God create us and
7 that's why we call it the Mother Earth.

8 When you cut yourself, it bleeds. So when you
9 cut canals, it bleeds. It's simple. It's not
10 difficult. You don't have to be a scientist to
11 understand that. You're killing yourself. You're
12 killing your future generations.

13 We talk about water, we tell them, the Water
14 Management and Army Corps of Engineers and anybody
15 else, developers, all those people, they need to
16 cover up those ditches. You can't live in the
17 wetlands complaining that we're underwater. You have
18 brain. The way that God had gave you, simple: Build
19 your home on the higher land. Simple. Be human. Be
20 human beings. Take care for your future generations,
21 their survival. That's what -- we all need to
22 understand that right now, we're killing our future
23 generations. Wake up. Tell Water Management, Army
24 Corps of Engineers and the Army "Cover all the
25 ditches, plant the grass." It's the reason that God

1 plant the grass in the water. It cleans the water.
2 That's what they're for. It's the reason why that
3 God create the trees, to renew the air. This
4 concrete, it don't create the air. It don't
5 regenerate anything, it just pollute and make
6 pollution.

7 In Florida we don't used to have mountains.
8 But now it's everywhere. Dumps the size 150 feet
9 high now everywhere.

10 Think about all of these. People needs to slow
11 down, if you want to live on God's creation. It's
12 given to us to take care of it so we can pass it on
13 to the next generation. Think about that.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Ira Cor. Ira? And
17 Daniel Andrews.

18 MR. IRA COR: Thank you for having this this
19 evening.

20 My name is Ira Cor, I'm the president of
21 Government Services Trust and Biochar Technology.
22 We did not expect to have only two minutes, we have
23 brought tangible plans, some to kill the
24 cyanobacteria, some to harvest the phosphorus, some
25 to clean up the environment, as well as -- and all,

1 100 percent, as Mrs. Osceola was pointing out,
2 100 percent holistically pure, no chemistry, just
3 good thinking, good brain power, cost effective, and
4 we're hopeful that we can find a way to present this,
5 not in this forum because it's not fair to everyone
6 that wants a chance to speak. But what we -- we have
7 spent the time to do is assemble real programs from
8 real places -- and it's proven, it's not pies in the
9 sky. So we would like to know where we can present
10 this information. Is it Mrs. Ehlinger?

11 MR. TIPPLE: Yes, and she's here today.

12 MR. IRA COR: No, I understand that, I'm just
13 trying -- I'm trying to cut my part short so everyone
14 can speak. But I want to be sure that we want to
15 know where the focal point is.

16 MR. TIPPLE: That's the spot.

17 MR. IRA COR: That's enough? Then I'll shut up.

18 MR. TIPPLE: Daniel Andrews. And then Dr.
19 Julie Bjornson.

20 MR. DANIEL ANDREWS: Daniel Andrews from
21 Captains for Clean Water. Thank y'all for having us
22 out here tonight. I'm a native Floridian and a
23 fishing guide. Our estuaries are suffering right now
24 in the Caloosahatchee River, the St. Lucie River, and
25 Florida Bay. It's sad to me; I always try to leave

1 the environment, my office, better than when I found
2 it. But at this point it's dying way faster than I
3 ever imagined it would. The oyster bars and the
4 grass slots where I grew up fishing no longer exist.
5 Massive fresh water discharges to the Caloosahatchee
6 and St. Lucie Rivers have destroyed what I thought
7 was going to be the office for the rest of my career.

8 Going down and seeing Florida Bay where 50,000
9 acres of seagrass has died, that's an unbelievable
10 amount of biodiversity removed. That takes decades
11 to recover; not weeks, not months, not a season.

12 I have a quote from the University of Florida
13 Water Institute Study that I'm going to leave you
14 with.

15 "The River of Grass planning process
16 demonstrated that there are several possible options
17 involving combinations of deep and shallow storage,
18 wet and dry flow-ways, coupled with STA's and
19 enhanced conveyance that could provide significant
20 benefit for both the estuaries and the Everglades,
21 far beyond the benefits provided by the Kissimmee
22 River Restoration, Indian River Lagoon South, C-43,
23 Restoration Strategies and CEPP projects. Achieving
24 substantial reduction in Lake-triggered discharges
25 to the estuaries and substantial improvement toward

1 the dry season Everglades demand target will require
2 additional land between the Lake and the Everglades
3 Protection Area."

4 I would ask the Army Corps of Engineers and the
5 South Florida Water Management District to keep that
6 in mind when planning for storage north and south of
7 the Lake.

8 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you.

9 MR. DANIEL ANDREWS: Thank you.

10 MR. TIPPLE: Julie Bjornson and next is Reverend
11 Patricia Wallace.

12 DR. JULIE BJORNSON: Hi, I'm Dr. Julie Bjornson
13 from Stuart, Florida. I'm involved in brain-based
14 neurology research --

15 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Speak up.

16 DR. JULIE BJORNSON: Okay. Is that better?
17 Okay. My name is Dr. Julie Bjornson and I'm involved
18 in brain-based neurology research.

19 You're all talking about the water stopping at
20 the Everglades. It doesn't stop at the Everglades.
21 I grew up in the Keys. I walked the sandbars, I
22 snorkeled the reefs, the reefs were beautiful, the
23 fish were beautiful. It was wonderful. The reefs
24 are dying out. The reefs are breached. That means
25 they're dying. The fish are dying.

1 We set up -- I used to -- my mother and I
2 created a Florida Keys shell exhibit. They don't
3 exist any more. So the shell exhibit exists in
4 Marathon. You can go and see it, it's at the Natural
5 History Museum.

6 But I'm really concerned about water quality.
7 The reefs wouldn't be dying if the chemicals didn't
8 have a half life. If they just were -- they would
9 biodegrade when they tell you they're going to. But
10 they don't. Those chemicals go right out into the
11 ocean and they're destroying our reefs. They're
12 destroying our water, they're destroying our way of
13 life.

14 I'm concerned about water quality. Lisa Aley
15 mentioned low Lake levels increase aquatic and
16 invasive plants. Public records show high quantities
17 of pesticides and herbicides are introduced into our
18 water system to control these plants. They don't
19 biodegrade, they have half-lives. Long half-lives.

20 With the development of more storage areas, will
21 aquatic and invasive plants be a problem? And if so,
22 will you -- how will you manage these plants and how
23 will you treat them?

24 I would like to know where can I find
25 information on the chemicals used, the amounts used,

1 and your treatment schedule. I am concerned. I am
2 very concerned about what is happening with the
3 amount of chemicals that are going in our water
4 system. You talk about clean water. It doesn't mean
5 -- you might take the phosphates out, but are you
6 taking all the other chemicals out? We need to look
7 at that. It is affecting our health.

8 These chemicals -- I'm involved in restoring
9 citrus groves naturally. They're coming back. We
10 have harvest now, we're reversing citrus greening
11 naturally. These chemicals, we need to stop it.
12 We need to have healthy food for our children so they
13 can grow, develop and learn and become productive
14 citizens.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Patricia Wallace and
18 next is Commissioner Bryant Culpepper.

19 A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: He left.

20 REVEREND PATRICIA WALLACE: Thank you for this
21 opportunity to speak. My name is Reverend Patricia
22 Wallace, I'm from Pahokee. I'm a lifetime resident
23 of the City of Pahokee and the State of Florida.

24 I am concerned that enough local people are at
25 the table of decisions. If you don't live where I

1 live, you don't know the impact of what your studies
2 are doing to the residents of City of Pahokee.
3 I know that we live off the farm land and farming is
4 very important to our livelihood. To see a next
5 generation of my children and grandchildren survive,
6 you will impact us when water start flowing.

7 So I heard one young lady say they have no
8 intent of displacing people. Can we get a statement
9 from the Federal Government, from South Florida
10 Management, from the Corps of Engineers that any land
11 they purchase, any water they release will not
12 replace, displace residents in Pahokee, Belle Glade,
13 South Bay, Okeechobee, Clewiston, Moore Haven, around
14 the Lake? We touch the Lake. I can walk out of my
15 back door across the dike levy and I'm in the Lake.
16 So to get water to a southern part of the land, you
17 mean you have to sweep me away. Don't sweep me away.
18 The Storm of '28 was enough upset for us. We had
19 enough impact from that.

20 So whatever decisions this body make, please
21 bring local people to the table. Bring young people
22 to the table. Take the advice of some of these
23 people who have products that will work. It seems
24 that we have not tried what works. So do it -- if
25 the money is there, use the money on what work and

1 stop researching things that you know are not going
2 to work and going to delay the process.

3 I pray that you will move forward, use research
4 that has been tested, and do not displace people with
5 the releasing of water.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. TIPPLE: Mali Soto Gardner. And then Karson
9 Turner.

10 COMMISSIONER MALI SOTO GARDNER: Mr. Tipple,
11 thank you for the warm welcome tonight.

12 MR. TIPPLE: Warm.

13 COMMISSIONER MALI SOTO GARDNER: I would like to
14 thank you for that. And also Mr. Collins, I don't
15 know if he's here tonight still or if he's left, but
16 I wanted to thank the Water Management District for
17 sharing the facts, for publishing the facts.

18 I also wanted to thank them for Resolution
19 #2016-0711, which really asks for the Federal
20 Government to complete the work of the Herbert Hoover
21 Dike. It is critical for our community. I'm not
22 sure if -- I know you mentioned it, but my name is
23 Mali Gardner and I am a Clewiston City Commissioner.
24 And I'm concerned. Over the years I've seen our
25 community tossed to and fro by every single statement

1 that's made about Lake Okeechobee, by every single
2 demand for "Flood these communities," every single
3 demand to "Take the land." It has to stop. We're
4 all in this together. We love our communities, we
5 love our farmers, we love living on the tips of Lake
6 Okeechobee. Just like this Reverend just said, I can
7 walk out my door and go up on the levy and see
8 sunrise and sunset on Lake Okeechobee. And you don't
9 think we're proud of our Lake? We are proud of our
10 Lake.

11 And that's why tonight I am here. I want to
12 please, please encourage the Corps of Engineers to
13 continue with this project and look at the land north
14 of Lake Okeechobee. It is important for water
15 quality, it is important for water storage, it is
16 important to save Lake Okeechobee. And it is
17 critical, critical that the funding be used to
18 complete the projects that have already been approved
19 by the State and Federal Government and get the
20 projects done so that we can have a cohesive system
21 in the north, the south, the east and the west. It
22 needs to be done, and it needs to be done quickly.
23 Quit wasting money, and I agree with you, quit
24 wasting money on other things; focus on the projects
25 and get it done.

1 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Karson. And then next
2 is Terry Torrens.

3 COMMISSIONER KARSON TURNER: Thank you very
4 much. I'm Commissioner Turner from Hendry County.

5 You know, a lot of comments and a lot of things
6 I disagree with being stated here tonight, a handful
7 of things I do agree with. I'll tell you, for me,
8 you know, buying land is not an option. It's
9 something that should be taken off the table, it's
10 asinine, it's going to delay a tremendous amount of
11 projects that are on the books that are going -- that
12 are going to create, you know, the releases, the
13 issues that we have, those deluges that we have.

14 I've gone to D.C. the last four years in a row
15 now with a handful of Commissioners from across the
16 entire state from Orlando south, we've asked our
17 Senators and our Congressional leaders to pass a
18 water bill. We were fortunate enough to get one done
19 three years ago, I believe it was. There was a
20 seven-year gap.

21 I would ask everyone in this room to please
22 reach out to their Congressional and Senatorial
23 leaders and try to get a water bill acted on.

24 We need to revisit LORS right now. The current
25 plan for the Corps of Engineers is to wait until

1 2020. I don't know what forecast that, you know,
2 they couldn't model with the past few years that
3 we've had, the past ten years. Go back and look.
4 We've had crazy weather. You know, we've been in
5 these rooms where the temperature has been hot, no
6 pun intended, where everybody is pointing fingers,
7 and we've seen this happen time and time again.

8 Corps of Engineers, I challenge you, don't wait
9 until 2020. Move that ball down the field, get it
10 going. Look at LORS right now, there's movement in
11 there to store on the Lake.

12 You know, Commissioner Grieb from Osceola
13 County, she and I serve on the Lake O Coalition
14 together. You know, she's a champion. I'm excited
15 to hear about looking at possibilities up on the
16 northern end of the Lake -- excuse me, the Chain of
17 Lakes. And I think that Osceola County is a willing
18 partner. Terry Torrens is here tonight and she's
19 going to speak to that as well. But that's a
20 definite option that needs to be vetted.

21 And, you know, I just want to -- I just want to
22 say that revisiting -- excuse me, buying land south,
23 not an option. It takes our eyes off the prize of
24 getting projects done. Economy to scale, y'all --
25 when you come out to Lake Okeechobee, I challenge you

1 to come to visit with me in Clewiston, America's
2 sweetest town. You know, I was born in Pahokee.
3 You know, come on with it, come down. We'll go on
4 horseback, we'll go on an airboat, we'll go on a
5 flats boat, whatever you want to do, and we'll talk
6 about it until the cows come home literally. And
7 we'll feed the Brahms the longer you's out there
8 and you'll see what we're about. And we're the best
9 conservationists on the planet. Look at the water
10 that's coming off of our fields, look at what's
11 happening. And I say "we" collective; I don't grow
12 cane, okay? It's not how I make my living, I make my
13 living on bridges that go up and down with the
14 Florida Department of Transportation, but I'm here on
15 my dime tonight and I challenge y'all to come down to
16 Clewiston, Pahokee, Belle Glade, check us out
17 sometime, you'll be amazed at the people and what
18 we're about. Thank you very much.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Terry Torrens and then
21 Cheryl Greiss -- Greib, I'm sorry.

22 MS. TERRY TORRENS: Hi, Terry Torrens, Natural
23 Resources Manager, Osceola County. I came down
24 tonight with my Commissioner, Cheryl Greib, to talk
25 about looking at the project area and being possibly

1 included in the solution. We're really glad to see
2 that the Corps and the Water Management District are
3 getting together to address the problems that we
4 currently are having with Lake Okeechobee and the
5 water releases.

6 Osceola County and the Upper Chain of Lakes
7 isn't included in the project footprint in terms of
8 the study and scoping. So we're just here saying
9 that we're interested, we're willing partners, we
10 think we have potential options up in the Upper
11 Kissimmee basin and we would just like to be part of
12 the plan.

13 So thank you and I'll introduce my Commissioner,
14 Cheryl Greib.

15 MR. TIPPLE: Cheryl Grier (sic), I apologize.
16 And then Representative Heather Fitzenhagen will be
17 next.

18 COMMISSIONER CHERYL GREIB: Hello, Cheryl Greib,
19 I'm the Vice Chairwoman for the Osceola County
20 Commission. And I would first like to thank the
21 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water
22 Management for hosting this public comment
23 opportunity on this most important project.

24 I've already submitted a letter, so I won't bore
25 you through that, but I wanted to say a couple other

1 things.

2 The headwaters, as most of you know, start in
3 Orange County and flow through Osceola County, but
4 these northern areas unfortunately are not included
5 in the project boundary and planning areas. We
6 understand that the water in our county flows south
7 and its quantity and its quality are part of the
8 overall problem. However, Osceola County is also
9 willing to be part of that solution.

10 Aquifer storage and recovery would be a great
11 fit in the Upper Kissimmee Watershed, it would be
12 seen as favorable in the Central Florida Water
13 Initiative to increase capacity in an area with
14 limited water supply. We have large agricultural
15 tracts that will be suitable in both location and
16 function in our southern portions of our county that
17 could house large storage facilities.

18 We're not asking for priority, we would just
19 like to be included in the feasibility study and the
20 project boundary.

21 The purpose of this project is to improve
22 quality, quantity, timing and delivering of water.
23 It's been stated that we need to have storage north
24 of the Lake as part of the solution, and I could not
25 agree more. It has been stated that this project is

1 a system-wide project, yet it excludes the Upper
2 Kissimmee basin.

3 Osceola County can be part of the solution if we
4 are invited to be part of the process. Please allow
5 us this opportunity.

6 I thank you.

7 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Representative
8 Fitzenhagen and then next would be Dennis Duke.

9 REPRESENTATIVE HEATHER FITZENHAGEN: Thank you
10 very much. I'm Representative Heather Fitzenhagen,
11 I represent Lee County, Fort Myers, and my community
12 is suffering with the water releases and the
13 discharges from Lake Okeechobee and that's why I'm
14 here today.

15 Folks, we are in a crisis. We're in a crisis of
16 economics, we're in an environmental crisis, and now
17 in a health crisis as a result of what's happening
18 with discharges from the Lake. But I am not here to
19 play the blame game. I am here to be open to any
20 kind of solutions, but I have to say that what we're
21 doing now isn't fast enough and it isn't enough.
22 All these things discussed are great ideas and I
23 think we should follow through with them. But it's
24 not happening quickly enough and it is not including
25 a flow-way south through the EAA, which I believe we

1 need and I believe the science supports that from the
2 University of Florida study.

3 (Applause.)

4 REPRESENTATIVE HEATHER FITZENHAGEN: Thank you.

5 So we need to find a way to do that. Now,
6 people talk about "We can't afford it, we don't have
7 the money." Well, Amendment 1 money was designated
8 for that, number one. And number two, who is to say
9 that the money -- I mean that the land might not be
10 donated? Maybe somebody wants to donate some land
11 that's south of the lake or maybe they would like to
12 swap some land with some other land in another area
13 of Florida to try to find a solution.

14 I don't think we should take any solutions off
15 the table, but we need to resolve this now, because
16 people in this room won't even be alive by the time
17 we get through with some of these projects. We will
18 not be alive to see the results.

19 So thank you very much, I appreciate your time.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. TIPPLE: Dennis Duke.

22 MR. DENNIS DUKE: Good evening, I'm Dennis Duke,
23 I'm with the United States Department of the
24 Interior. Been in the Everglades for quite a while
25 and I was with the Corps before that working on this

1 project.

2 I applaud the efforts of the Water Management
3 District and the Corps of Engineers in hosting this
4 public meeting to start gathering information for
5 this process. We look forward to working with them
6 to address some of those problems that Newton Cook
7 raised earlier regarding endangered species. Yes, we
8 do have those, we don't want to wipe out our species
9 as we try our restoration. But we believe the
10 restoration will lead to the betterment of all those
11 species, as well as the human environment.

12 And just backing up for a moment, I don't want
13 to do this too long, but when somebody said that
14 somebody promised 40 million dollars for this, look
15 at the table that Matt went through a while ago of
16 the projects that are currently underway. I mean,
17 we've got the Kissimmee River Restoration, it's
18 three-quarters of a billion project, billion-dollar
19 project that's going to capture some of the water and
20 slow it down before it gets to the Lake. This
21 project is another piece.

22 Somebody was talking about how small, you know,
23 the effect of this is. Keep in mind that all of
24 these projects are designed and planned to work
25 together. We've got this project coming on to

1 provide storage to help capture and slow the water
2 down coming into Lake Okeechobee and clean it up
3 before it actually gets into the Lake. Because
4 you're right, we have a huge legacy phosphorus
5 problem and nutrient load in the Lake that needs to
6 be addressed. That's in part of the planning down
7 the road someplace.

8 On the East and West Coast, we have the C-43
9 reservoir and the C-44 reservoir, both under
10 construction by the Corps and the Water Management
11 District.

12 Going south, we have the Central Everglades
13 project, 1.9-billion-dollar project that's awaiting
14 authorization in Congress to start moving that water
15 south.

16 We have the Tamiami Trail Next Steps, the Mod.
17 Water project. Each of those nearly half a billion
18 dollars or more to help provide a flow-way to get the
19 water south.

20 We appreciate this. This is just another piece
21 of that overall puzzle.

22 And we really appreciate adding aquifer storage
23 and recovery to this project. Before, my history
24 with this has been mainly focused on surface storage
25 and STA's. They consume land. With aquifer storage

1 and recovery, we can reduce the footprint of those
2 projects and store the water underground. We need
3 lots of storage.

4 So we strongly support this and look forward to
5 working with you to help improve these issues with
6 endangered species and other issues that crop up as
7 we go.

8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Thank you, Dennis.

10 So before I make a few closing remarks, what
11 we're going to ask everyone to do is to exit from the
12 back door because we have people waiting out in the
13 lobby that they're going to come in through that door
14 over there to fill in as you leave.

15 Appreciate the opportunity to present the
16 information. Thank you for your time that you've
17 given the study team in this project kickoff.

18 Again, all comments will receive equal
19 consideration. If you have any additional
20 information or comments or input, again, those
21 addresses and e-mails by August 12th.

22 Again, thank you everyone and have a safe trip
23 home. Also if you would like information (inaudible
24 due to members of the audience talking and exiting
25 room.)

1 (Whereupon, the Study Team provided a second
2 presentation of the project overview for members of
3 the public joining the proceedings.)

4 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you, Gretchen.

5 Again, thank you for your patience and longevity
6 this evening.

7 So, again, as Gretchen mentioned, you can send
8 her an e-mail with further input as well as -- or
9 mail it to her. Again, we're going to enter the
10 public comment period and this is a very -- extremely
11 important period for your voice to be heard. And
12 we're here to listen to your comments, understand
13 your concerns, and provide you the opportunity to put
14 your opinions on the record, should you care to do
15 so.

16 Again, we had to do basically a double-up
17 presentation, so this has been video recorded as well
18 as -- not only presentation, but the previous
19 comments. And this session will also be recorded and
20 be posted on the website, in addition to a transcript
21 of the information presented and the comments made.
22 So for the portions that you missed earlier, you do
23 have an opportunity to go to the website and look for
24 that information.

25 Again, all comments that we receive will be

1 considered equally.

2 Okay. Individuals speaking tonight, I'll call
3 them up to the microphone and then please come
4 forward, state your name and, if applicable, what
5 organization you represent. I ask you to keep your
6 comments to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project,
7 such as the project area, constraints, management
8 measures. And if you have any comments outside the
9 scope of this meeting, I'd be happy to meet with you
10 immediately following, or some of our study team
11 members that have details will also be available.

12 As well as -- given the amount of comments we
13 had the previous session as well as this time, we're
14 asking you to try to -- I'm asking -- we're good?
15 To keep your comments, try to keep it to two minutes.
16 This is the yellow/green, yellow/red. So the yellow
17 comes on at 30 seconds left.

18 So with that said, we'll get started.

19 The first individual will be Representative
20 Gayle Harrell -- Harrell, excuse me. And then the
21 next person in the queue will be Jennifer Hecker.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GAYLE HARRELL: Thank you very
23 much. And I'm delighted to be here on the second
24 sitting of the evening. So those of you who haven't
25 had dinner yet, we'll do that later.

1 But I want to thank everybody who was here as
2 well. As you know, the releases from Lake Okeechobee
3 has been just devastating to our community, to Martin
4 and St. Lucie Counties, and I can't tell you what
5 we've been experiencing with the blue-green algae.
6 This has been extremely difficult on our community.

7 As far as the Corps' responsibility in this, I
8 have several suggestions I would like to make on
9 that, and then I would like to talk a little bit
10 about the Watershed.

11 First of all, I think we really need about a
12 two-week hiatus from the releases from Lake
13 Okeechobee. We need a little bit of a break.
14 Fortunately, you've reduced some of the releases
15 recently, but we need to make sure that -- if you
16 could give us two weeks at least to flush our
17 estuary, I think that would be extremely helpful
18 for us.

19 Also we want to expedite the planning and the
20 rehabilitation of the dike. That is key. The
21 more -- the faster you can do that, the better it
22 will be.

23 Also I think what we really need to do as well
24 is to re-address the Integrated Delivery Schedule you
25 just put up there. We really need to be able to plan

1 north of the Lake, which is what you're doing now, as
2 well as south of the Lake.

3 I think the University of Florida study was very
4 clear in that there is a need for additional land
5 north of the Lake, very much so, but also south of
6 the Lake. So as you do that integrated planning,
7 please do that together. Look both north of the
8 Lake -- your study right now, what you're doing now,
9 is only addressing north of the Lake. We need to
10 address south of the Lake as well.

11 I think the study from the University of Florida
12 was very well done. Thank you, Joe Negron, Senator
13 Joe Negron, who really expedited that. But I think
14 it really indicates that we need to look south of the
15 Lake, we need to move the water south and make sure
16 that it gets down to -- gets down to the Everglades.
17 It's a complicated process, I know that. We've been
18 at this for many, many years. And the State of
19 Florida has stepped up to the plate with Legacy
20 Florida. I think the funds are there at the State
21 level. We have over the next 19 years four to five
22 billion dollars. So the Federal Government, the Army
23 Corps needs to do your share.

24 So please, as you move forward with this, look
25 across the whole area, expedite things, restore the

1 dike, let's look at the south side of the Lake as
2 well as the north side of the Lake, so that as you go
3 into that Integrated Delivery Schedule we really
4 address purchasing land south of the Lake.

5 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Jennifer Hecker, then
6 Donna Melzer.

7 MS. JENNIFER HECKER: Jennifer Hecker on behalf
8 of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, here
9 representing our 6,000 supporters, many who live
10 along the Caloosahatchee River which has also been
11 greatly impacted by the Lake releases.

12 First I just wanted to say that the project
13 purpose was described as improving the quality,
14 quantity, timing and distribution of water entering
15 Lake Okeechobee. We would ask that it be expanded to
16 talk about water entering and exiting Lake
17 Okeechobee. The scope should be also expanded to
18 look at both north and south of the Lake
19 concurrently. The UF Water Institute study shows
20 that both are required and they're interrelated to
21 one another, so they should be looked at
22 simultaneously.

23 There should also be a scoping meeting in
24 Fort Myers where those stakeholders can be able to
25 directly give input. Having it here in a remote

1 location hours away on a weekday evening is just not
2 sufficient to allow them to be able to be heard.

3 The EAA is the missing piece of the puzzle.
4 Yes, we need CERP. Yes, we need watershed plans --
5 plans and projects. We need more storage north, west
6 and east of the Lake. But the science shows that we
7 cannot fix the estuaries and the Everglades without
8 the EAA. In the Caloosahatchee, 61 percent of our
9 pollution is coming from Lake O releases. So in
10 order to treat it, we need to have a place to divert
11 that pollution, where it can be captured, cleansed
12 and conveyed back to where it historically flowed and
13 belongs, and that's the Everglades and Florida Bay
14 through what is now the Everglades Agricultural Area.

15 The District's Deputy Director in 2008 said it
16 best when he said that acquiring EAA lands would,
17 quote, "clean the water before it reaches the
18 Everglades and store enough water to minimize harmful
19 discharges," and, quote, "will work to build upon and
20 enhance the Federal/State partnership of CERP."
21 It doesn't detract from CERP, it enhances CERP.

22 Also more storage, treatment and conveyance in
23 the EAA is going to allow for continued expansive
24 agriculture to continue on surrounding lands, more
25 flood protection, and maintaining safe Lake levels

1 for the communities around the Lake by providing a
2 larger relief outlet and, again, diverting pollution
3 and excess water away from the northern estuaries
4 back to the Everglades and Florida Bay which
5 desperately need this water.

6 Finally, it's a false choice to say it's food or
7 clean water, it's the safety of inland communities or
8 the safety of coastal communities. The bottom line
9 is that EAA storage would improve conditions for all
10 of South Florida's communities and natural systems.
11 Some want to pit us against one another, but we
12 cannot let them.

13 We ask you to move forward with EAA storage
14 planning concurrently with north of the Lake storage
15 planning and so that we can sit down and work with
16 all the other stakeholders to find solutions that
17 benefit us all.

18 Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Donna and then Tony
21 Khoury.

22 MS. DONNA MELZER: Donna Melzer of Palm City and
23 Martin County.

24 We have a disaster on our hands. You've heard
25 the consequences in terms of environment, our economy

1 and our health. When it rains this summer, the toxic
2 discharges will continue. You're facing an angry,
3 frustrated public, but with lots of knowledge.
4 Fixing the dike won't fix the -- our problem.
5 The water from Lake Okeechobee has to be cleaned up
6 and sent south where it is needed. Yet because of
7 the way the system works, tonight is about north of
8 the Lake. Residents from the coastal estuaries to
9 Florida Bay will tell you that won't work. CERP is
10 supposed to be a partnership of the Federal
11 Government and the State of Florida. The Corps now
12 has a reluctant partner. The State is willing to
13 take Federal money and spend Amendment 1 money to
14 build storage reservoirs for water supply. Florida
15 officials have made it clear, however, that they are
16 not willing to finish the job and plan for the key
17 piece in the puzzle that sends clean water south.
18 Without that piece, CERP is not comprehensive,
19 CERP will not restore Everglades National Park, and
20 create a functioning water management system for
21 South Florida.

22 We don't know how to tell you to solve this
23 problem, but please find a way. Going forward with
24 blinders on to plan for the north while ignoring what
25 needs to happen next is not rational or defensible.

1 If the State is unwilling to be a full partner in
2 CERP, CERP will become a costly lesson in how to
3 destroy the environment instead of restoring it.

4 The two speakers ahead of me give me hope.
5 Let's move in the right direction. I have now
6 Everglades petitions if anybody hasn't already had
7 them already.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Tony Khoury, then Cara
11 Capp. Cara? Then next after Cara will be Rae Ann
12 Wessel.

13 MS. CARA CAPP: Hi, I'm Cara Capp with the
14 National Parks Conservation Association. I'm also
15 proud to serve as National Co-Chair of the Everglades
16 Coalition. We 61 members of the Everglades Coalition
17 are dissatisfied and very frustrated with the scope
18 of this project. We have contacted Secretary Darcy
19 and Governor Scott more recently asking very
20 specifically that we move up the IDS program to plan
21 for storage, treatment and conveyance south of Lake
22 Okeechobee beginning this year.

23 I understand that as recently as today,
24 Secretary Darcy expressed her willingness for the
25 Corps to begin planning south of Lake Okeechobee in

1 the EAA as soon as a local sponsor becomes available.
2 So I hope that the Water Management District,
3 especially given Rick Scott's declaration of the
4 state of emergency in four of the 16 counties of this
5 region, will work with the Federal partners to move
6 forward with EAA planning now.

7 Something has to happen in the EAA. People are
8 afraid. There's an ecological crisis. There's a
9 community crisis. People north, south, east and west
10 don't know what is going to happen. This is the time
11 to pull everybody together, to bring all the
12 stakeholders to look at all the different objectives
13 and take in all of this input and set forth a plan
14 that does the most good for the most people.

15 The Everglades Coalition stands for -- that the
16 most important thing is health and human safety for
17 all of the communities around our region. And we
18 look forward to being an active partner as we move
19 forward planning for our storage south and north of
20 the Lake concurrently this year. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Rae Ann, and then Paul
23 Gray will be next.

24 MS. RAE ANN WESSEL: Good evening, Rae Ann
25 Wessel on behalf of the Sanibel/Captiva Conservation

1 Foundation.

2 Basically Everglades restoration depends on two
3 solutions: Storage and a third outlet out of Lake
4 Okeechobee. Storage is needed north as well as
5 south. I think there was a good suggestion here
6 about adding an opportunity for Osceola County to be
7 more involved with that northern storage.

8 Simply put, we can do what we can north of the
9 Lake, but any water that falls in the Lake falls in
10 the Lake's Watershed or falls south of the Lake in
11 the EAA isn't going to be stored north of the Lake.
12 There needs to be storage, treatment and conveyance
13 south of the Lake.

14 Our planning efforts of three years are too
15 long, even at -- improvements from ten years, but
16 they're too long. And to think about the fact that
17 you'd do a north planning effort and then
18 sequentially do a south planning effort means we're
19 decades away from getting any kind of resolution.

20 We talk a lot about holistic planning, and
21 that's what we're asking you to do. If you're going
22 to start this planning process for north of the Lake,
23 include south of the Lake because they really can't
24 be parsed apart, they are two parts of a whole.

25 As was mentioned, Jo-Ellen Darcy has indicated

1 her willingness to move the EAA storage project up on
2 the IDS schedule. Now it's up to the local sponsors.
3 So let's see what the State can bring here.

4 The River of Grass planning process gave us a
5 tremendous amount of information. We're not starting
6 from scratch on south of the Lake storage. So
7 there's a tremendous amount of information there, in
8 the CERP plan, and the UF study, all of which
9 document the need for storage, treatment and
10 conveyance south of the Lake.

11 We all want and need the process to be expedited
12 and we can't wait another four years for the process
13 to begin. So we urge you to start that now
14 coincidentally with the north of the Lake planning
15 process to plan for south. Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Paul will be followed
18 by Dr. Thomas Van Lent.

19 MR. PAUL GRAY: Thank you for pronouncing my
20 name, Paul Gray, correctly.

21 I work for Audubon of Florida. I've worked in
22 this region for almost thirty years now and I
23 actually worked on the Lake Okeechobee Watershed
24 Project the first time we did it about ten years ago
25 with some people here. And that took five years.

1 And so three years is a better time frame. And I
2 actually don't joke about that; I think it's good you
3 guys are trying to speed this up and the River of
4 Grass or the CEPP exercise will show that you can do
5 it -- it's hard, but we can do it.

6 But with that in mind, when we did the first
7 Lake Okeechobee Watershed project, they came up with
8 some reservoirs and STA's and it stored about 300,000
9 acre-feet of water and it cleaned eighty or a hundred
10 tons of phosphorus. But it didn't really meet all
11 the goals for the Lake. And so when they read the
12 models, it wasn't very satisfying; it didn't fix the
13 Lake very much, it didn't fix the estuary releases,
14 and so I complained to the study team, they said
15 "Well, we're going to do an ASR around the Lake and
16 that's going to take care of part of the problem and
17 we're going to have a big reservoir in the EAA and
18 that's going to take care of it. When we're done
19 with all these things, then it will add up." But
20 that's kind of the problem of doing a project in
21 isolation, is you don't really know what else is
22 going to go on. And an ASR no longer is what it used
23 to be, we don't think it can do as much. We don't
24 have the storage reservoir in the EAA right now. And
25 was mentioned, Secretary Darcy wrote a letter to

1 Representative Murphy today and said that the Corps
2 is ready to move ahead with planning for an EAA
3 reservoir if they can get a local sponsor. And
4 it's really an opportunity for us -- you know, north
5 and south have to fit together, they're part of the
6 same jigsaw puzzle. So if we can plan those together
7 in this effort, that's really an opportunity to give
8 us a better answer than just what we do up north.
9 Because it kind of gives you an isolated answer and
10 you're not really sure if you've got the right answer
11 if you just model part of the Watershed.

12 So we hope you guys will be able to find a way
13 to link that together.

14 And in that same sense, we want to rehydrate
15 this Watershed. This is a very natural watershed.
16 It's got all kinds of branches with wetlands and it's
17 not pristine, but it's semi-natural, has a lot of
18 value for a lot of wildlife. So recovering its big
19 features is kind of a concern to us. What we like to
20 do is ideally wet the Watershed as much as we can and
21 restore as many wetlands, do as many projects like
22 that as we can, and then find out how much that
23 changes the Lake and the estuary response and then
24 when you build a reservoir, you could build one that
25 will be the right size and response as we did in the

1 Watershed. I'm not sure how that would work. I
2 don't envy you guys, because this is going to be hard
3 to figure these questions out. But we hope we can
4 take a stab at it. What else are we going to do with
5 this Watershed is going to add to whatever this
6 project is to see if we're getting the right final
7 answer.

8 In a similar note, also the study area is the
9 southern part of the Watershed. It's not even half
10 the Watershed. And we hope we can expand it to the
11 whole Watershed. Because there's a lot of stuff
12 upstream of what we're looking at that may go some way
13 to (inaudible).

14 So thank you very much. We're going to submit
15 written comments, you can't get it all in in two
16 minutes. So thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Mr. Van Lent?

19 DR. THOMAS VAN LENT: My name is Tom Van Lent,
20 I'm here representing the Everglades Foundation.
21 We'll be presenting written comments because I know
22 the time is short here, so I'll just summarize by
23 saying we urge the Corps and District to expand the
24 scope of this project to include storage in the EAA
25 as well as north of Lake Okeechobee. Since Secretary

1 Darcy has indicated her willingness to do so, I guess
2 the comment is really directed to the District and I
3 think -- they were here.

4 MR. MORRISON: We're here.

5 DR. THOMAS VAN LENT: Matt is here? I guess
6 that comment is for you.

7 I think there's a couple really -- very
8 important reasons for that. One, it's very urgent.
9 The turnout at this meeting is unlike anything I've
10 seen in 32 years of Everglades restorations. This is
11 astonishing. Clearly indicating that this is a
12 concern of very high priority to the public.

13 The second thing is storage matters. Where you
14 put the storage matters. You need to look
15 comprehensively at how the storage interacts and what
16 benefits are provided. It is true, for example, a
17 north of Lake Okeechobee reservoir could provide real
18 water supply benefits to Lake Okeechobee, but
19 according to the Florida Legacy Act sponsored by
20 Representative Harrell and Representative
21 Fitzenhagen, who was here earlier, the State has to
22 prioritize those projects that decrease damaging
23 releases to the estuaries. And these -- this project
24 may not be the one that maximizes the discharges --
25 benefits to the estuaries. So you have other things

1 to think about here. And expanding the scope is the
2 only way to really address that.

3 Lastly, I would say you should very -- look very
4 closely to expedite this 3/3/3 planning process to
5 look at the past Lake Okeechobee Watershed PIR, this
6 isn't the first time you've looked at this; there
7 were some really key issues that came out of that,
8 some policy, some technical. For example, a policy
9 question that I think should be answered in the
10 scoping process are things like is the Corps willing
11 to cost share a project that's primarily to benefit
12 the State -- to meet State water quality standards.

13 Other things like what are the habitat effects
14 for the siting. What -- lay those things out clearly
15 so we know what the criteria you're going to use to
16 address these questions.

17 So with that, I'll say we'll submit our written
18 comments. Thank you.

19 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Maggy Hurchalla? And
20 then after Maggy will be Steve Davis.

21 MS. MAGGY HURCHALLA: CERP is at an impasse.
22 We're stuck in the mud. If we do not get out of that
23 mud hole in the next year, we'll be in the same mud
24 hole twenty years from now.

25 I -- quite recently I went over to talk to Bubba

1 Wade and I asked him why we couldn't send water
2 south. And he said they don't need it. When CEPP is
3 done, the National Park does not want more water and
4 can't use more water. So I called Shannon Estenoz of
5 the Interior, and I said "Is that true?" And she
6 said "No."

7 Well, this is not just a problem of Interior
8 versus U.S. Sugar, and we went to Water Management
9 District meetings last year and desperately begged
10 them to exercise the 40,000-acre option. And the
11 Chairman of the Water Management District Board told
12 us we didn't understand, there were constraints, and
13 you couldn't move the water south.

14 I was dismayed to hear that somebody might have
15 misinterpreted the introductory comments to this
16 meeting as meaning that when CEPP was complete and
17 northern storage was complete, we were done. That's
18 not what CERP says. I was there in the beginning.
19 We need to move the water south. If we are not going
20 to move the water south, if a local sponsor is going
21 to get a bunch of reservoirs to make water supply and
22 get 50/50 Federal matching funds for that and then
23 walk away and declare victory, they will have pulled
24 off a colossal fraud on the people of the United
25 States. CERP was about saving the Everglades.

1 CERP was about sending the water south from Lake
2 Okeechobee. If we do not get the local sponsor,
3 the Federal Government, and the landowners together
4 in the next year before the option expires, we are
5 not going to be able to finish CERP and we're not
6 going to be able to finish what CERP was supposed to
7 be all about.

8 If we can't do that, if we can't actually sit
9 them down -- and I'm told that's not the process.
10 The Corps can't do that process, life is complicated.
11 Change the process, then. Go to Congress, tell them
12 we want a joint purchase of land now south of the
13 Lake so we can show we can finish CERP. If you're
14 not going to finish it, don't waste money building a
15 lot of water supply things.

16 If you're not going to be able to finish CERP,
17 if you're not going to own the land that will allow
18 you to finish CERP and move the water south, then
19 tell the people on the coastal estuaries that their
20 estuaries are going to die. Tell Miami they're going
21 to lose their water supply. And tell the nation and
22 the world that you're going to kill Everglades
23 National Park and Florida Bay. We can't keep
24 pretending.

25 Thank you.

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. TIPPLE: Steve Davis and then Alisa Coe.

3 MR. STEVE DAVIS: Hi, I'm Steve Davis
4 representing the Everglades Foundation. I don't
5 think I could say it much better than Maggy just
6 spoke to y'all. But I would like to point out that,
7 you know, not to diminish the crisis that we're
8 seeing in Stuart, the situation in the Caloosahatchee
9 with these massive discharge events and the effects
10 that that's had on those communities, but we also
11 have a situation in Florida Bay with a lack of fresh
12 water to the south.

13 We know that when you incorporate consideration
14 of storage to the south of Lake Okeechobee, and we're
15 confident that you view the significance of this and
16 consider that in your planning process, that not only
17 will you see the value of that particular project and
18 reducing the discharges to the east and west, but it
19 also provides that outlet to the south.

20 I agree with Matt Morrison, there's no single
21 project that's going to restore the Everglades
22 ecosystem. So we should be looking at projects that
23 provide the biggest overall benefits, the most bang
24 for the buck. We know Everglades restoration is
25 worth it. We've done the economic studies, we've

1 also seen the impacts of the way water is currently
2 managed in the system and the impacts that that's had
3 on our economies in South Florida. We know that if
4 we can flow this water to the south, we get the
5 benefits to the estuaries, we also get the benefits
6 at the southern end of the system.

7 So thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Alisa?

10 MS. ALISA COE: Hi, my name Alisa Coe. I'm an
11 attorney with the Florida Office of Earth Justice.
12 We are a nonprofit environmental law firm. We
13 represent citizens in suits to enforce the Clean
14 Water Act and to enforce other environmental laws
15 and we've worked for decades on trying to clean up
16 Florida's waters and protect the Everglades.

17 As we all know, there's been some big mistakes
18 made in trying to re-engineer the Lake Okeechobee
19 Watershed and the Everglades and by failing to
20 control the fertilizer, manure and sewage pollution
21 that is fouling our waters. You know, we need to
22 clean the pollution up, not just move it around.

23 We have a system that is in critical condition
24 and Band-Aids are just not going to work any more.
25 It's time for a comprehensive solution to this

1 problem and that requires planning south.

2 You know, there's an old saying that says
3 "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago and
4 the second best time is today." We can't wait any
5 longer. We need to start looking at the whole
6 problem and including the south.

7 And as a last remark, I would just say, you
8 know, we saw today the kind of turnout that happened
9 by the public. And that that should show you guys
10 how important it is to have more of these meetings,
11 to have them around the region and to include as many
12 citizens as possible. These are important voices and
13 we need to make sure that they're all heard.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Sean Hansen, I believe?

16 MR. SEAN ATKINSON: Atkinson?

17 MR. TIPPLE: Sorry, I apologize. And then
18 Zachariah Cosner is next.

19 MR. SEAN ATKINSON: Is that good? I hate going
20 after the experts.

21 Okay. The overall impression -- to summarize a
22 lot of the comments that I saw before, the thing I
23 would like to say is that the needs of the many
24 outweigh the needs of the few. And while the
25 concerns of the local farmers are extremely valid

1 and I would love to be living here, it's great here,
2 nobody I imagine is envisioning taking over anybody's
3 lands without paying for them. That's just not what
4 the U.S. Government does. So I don't see exactly
5 what the concern is. Everybody that -- makes out
6 pretty well when a road goes by and they need to take
7 your land because they want to widen the road, you
8 make out pretty well with that. Nobody goes to the
9 poor house after that transaction. So I thought that
10 was one thing that was worth mentioning; nobody is
11 being robbed of their lifestyle without due
12 compensation.

13 The other thing that I thought about was it's a
14 well-known legal precedent that upstream communities
15 do not get to unilaterally defile a body of water for
16 downstream communities to suffer. More dramatically,
17 an upstream community does not get to unilaterally
18 dam and divert the river. I realize this was done
19 many, many years ago, but it's still what happened.
20 The river was dammed and diverted. And we need to
21 undo that, it's as simple as that.

22 I'm not sure why the most reasonable thing to
23 do, which is to refresh the Southern Everglades, is
24 resisted so passionately, but it is a fairly
25 straightforward idea. There is just no fresh water

1 in the Southern Everglades and a lot of the fresh
2 water that they're talking about -- I forget what the
3 term is exactly, but containing and in the north part
4 of Lake Okeechobee is water that is going to be very
5 much needed and has been needed now for years in the
6 Southern Everglades where it's completely parched.
7 If the grass, the seagrass is dying in the east and
8 the west side of our state due to too much fresh
9 water, it's also dying in the southern part of the
10 state due to too much salt water. The whole thing is
11 out of whack. That needs to be restored.

12 That's it basically. Thank you very much for
13 your time.

14 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Zachariah Cosner and
15 next up after him is Mark Perry.

16 MR. ZACHARIAH COSNER: My name is Zach Cosner,
17 I'm from Miami-Dade.

18 First I would like to echo calls to have
19 additional scoping meetings held in places closer to
20 the coastal estuaries, such as Fort Myers. It's
21 impossible to expect that the full range of
22 stakeholders are actually going to have their voices
23 heard here if, you know, they have to go an hour and
24 a half to three hours just to go to a single scoping
25 meeting on a weeknight. I myself had to leave work

1 early just to arrive late to this meeting, but I made
2 the trip anyway because, simply put, this is an issue
3 that affects every citizen of South Florida.

4 Now, if I had a darker sense of humor, I would
5 find it absolutely funny that at the same time that
6 our coastal estuaries are being hammered by an excess
7 of fresh water, the seagrass beds of Florida Bay are
8 facing the greatest die-out they've seen since 1980.
9 The culprit being too little fresh water. It's
10 ridiculous. And simply put, we need to send more
11 water south. It seems like a sick joke, but it's not
12 a joke at all. It's a very sad reality, the legacy
13 of decades of half measures and insufficient
14 solutions. We can't rely on half measures any more.

15 The population of Florida is expected to
16 increase by 22 percent by the year 2030. Just as
17 salt water intrusion driven by sea level rise
18 threatens our -- the aquifers upon which 80 percent
19 of us here in South Florida rely, we cannot allow the
20 well to run dry.

21 I've heard it said by wiser men than myself that
22 people don't really appreciate the value of fresh
23 water until the well is dry. Well, right now we're
24 lucky enough to have some water left. We need to
25 make sure that we plan for the future of our state.

1 Thank you very much.

2 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Mark Perry. And then
3 Erin Willis will be next.

4 MR. MARK PERRY: Mark Perry, Florida
5 Oceanographic Society, also a member of the
6 Everglades Coalition and Water Resource Advisory
7 Commission and others. But you know what? We're
8 planning to today -- and I know the project boundary
9 talks about about 922,000 acres, but the study area
10 of the whole 2.6 or 3.6 million acres needs to really
11 be in place. And the technical reports and all of
12 them look at the scope of the Upper Chain of Lakes
13 needs to be included in the planning effort as well
14 because it's part of the study area, but also south
15 of the Lake. As we've been mentioning before, the
16 coastal estuaries were never attached, the northern
17 estuaries were never attached to the Everglades, the
18 River of Grass, from the Upper Chain all the way down
19 to the tip of Florida. And that timing is what we
20 have lost. We've lost that timing.

21 And that -- you talk about quality, quantity,
22 timing and distribution. Well, we've lost the
23 timing. The six or eight months that used to
24 meander down the Kissimmee, finally get there,
25 now it's taking two to three days. And we get about

1 1.6 million acre-feet a year coming down into Lake
2 Okeechobee from the Watershed, including 346 metric
3 tons of phosphorus a year at 172 parts per billion.
4 And we set a total maximum daily load back in August
5 of 2001 for Lake Okeechobee at 105 metric tons a year
6 and 40 parts per billion. And those of us on the
7 East Coast and the West Coast have set our TMDL's and
8 they're dependent on the TMDL for the Lake. So in
9 the Watershed -- the Lake Okeechobee Watershed
10 project, you need to find every bit of storage,
11 attenuation of flow and everything you can, including
12 Lake Okeechobee -- you know, projects all around the
13 Lake.

14 And if you do that through distribution,
15 management, storage or other kinds of storage or
16 restoring wetland storage up in the Upper Kissimmee
17 Valley, that's what needs to be done. Moving more
18 water north. But it has to include the discussion of
19 going south with the water the way the River of Grass
20 flowed. The gentleman that spoke about that river
21 flowing south one mile every four days, it used to
22 take 16 months to get to the tip of Florida. And it
23 doesn't do that now. We shunt it out, we shunt it
24 east and west, and we don't put it south and so the
25 EAA storage has to happen. We have to move that

1 discussion up like Secretary Darcy suggested, to
2 right now in July start discussing north and south of
3 the Lake to move that water south through the EAA
4 storage reservoir. And that needs to happen. That
5 discussion needs to come back on line again. And
6 that's what -- we're not going to put farmers out of
7 business, we don't want people to get out of
8 business. It's not going to flood people south of
9 the Lake either, it's going to really provide that
10 storage and quantity of -- conveyance and storage and
11 treatment of water we need to move south to stop the
12 damaging discharges to the coastal estuaries.

13 Thanks.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Erin Willis and then
16 Martha Musgrove. Martha? And then Sarah Mucha. And
17 I apologize if I got that wrong.

18 MS. MARTHA MUSGROVE: My name is Martha Musgrove
19 and I represent the Florida Wildlife Federation.

20 The Florida Wildlife Federation has taken a
21 great interest in Lake Okeechobee for many, many
22 years and funded much of the research that led to the
23 various Lake Okeechobee protection plans and to the
24 Kissimmee restoration because the Kissimmee
25 restoration was impacting Lake Okeechobee very

1 adversely. So I welcome this Watershed study.

2 Because I think we've reached a point here on --
3 the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
4 properly reflects the connections between the
5 Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee and Everglades systems.
6 And it is a -- it was historically a flow-through
7 system and it must become another flow-through
8 system, not a flow-out system. The flow-through
9 system, and that requires a good deal of integration,
10 not only between the projects, the separate projects,
11 68 projects are a lot of projects to deal with, but
12 each one has a function and each one is integral to
13 another one and they must remain connected. And we
14 have seen the division that happens because of the
15 way we fund it project-by-project and the way we
16 treat them planning project-by-project, we leave out
17 the connection. Such as in South Dade, we have lost
18 the contract -- I mean we were delayed because of the
19 contract, eight was never implemented. It is now
20 being constructed. It will work. All of the tests
21 have shown it will work. And that's the same
22 situation that you reach in the Northern Everglades,
23 in the Kissimmee Valley; that we have the Kissimmee
24 River restoration that is not quite connected,
25 integrally connected to the rest of the Everglades

1 program.

2 So we have too much fresh water here, we have
3 too little fresh water in Florida Bay, integrating
4 the system both project-wise and schedule-wise, the
5 regulatory operation schedules become much more
6 important.

7 We will submit some written comments on your
8 proposal.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Sarah?

12 And Martha mentioning the written comments, so I
13 recognize that quite a few folks have more lengthy
14 comments. So again, I point to the mailing address
15 or e-mail address.

16 MS. MARTHA MUSGROVE: And thank you for
17 extending the deadline to August 12th, because
18 tomorrow was going to be hell.

19 MS. SARAH MUCHA: Hi, my name is Sarah Mucha.

20 First off, I would like to thank you for
21 allowing public comment tonight. That is very
22 important, that citizens are able to get involved.
23 I think that it's important that we have a voice as
24 well.

25 In Florida we have a very unique and very

1 fragile group of ecosystems ranging from our
2 estuaries, our seagrasses, and all the way out to our
3 sea, our coral reefs. This is very important to us
4 Floridians and to all of the other residents of the
5 United States, and even outside of the country that
6 come here to vacation.

7 We're in a crisis. And we are damaging these
8 valuable resources. And that will affect our health,
9 our livelihood, and also our tourism. We can't wait
10 until 2020 to do something about this.

11 I support the 200 plus Everglades scientists
12 that believe that increasing the storage, the
13 treatment and the conveyance of the water south of
14 Lake Okeechobee. It's essential to stop these
15 damaging discharges. They're damaging our estuaries
16 and they're also damaging our coral reefs. Not only
17 that, but we need to protect the drinking water of
18 over eight million Floridians.

19 The science is sound. The money is available
20 thanks to 75 percent of Florida voters who, in 2014,
21 voted for Amendment 1. We need to identify and
22 secure the land, clean the water, and then send it
23 south. It's now or never.

24 Thank you very much.

25 (Applause.)

1 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Eliza Butler, followed
2 by Bob Butler. And appreciate --

3 MR. ROGER BUTLER: If she's not here, do I get
4 four?

5 MR. TIPPLE: No. But mention your name and if
6 you're with an organization, who you represent.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. ROGER BUTLER: My name is Roger Butler, I'm
9 a resident of Highlands County. I live on the banks
10 of the Kissimmee River. I was born in Hollywood
11 where a dairy farm originally was. Have a beautiful
12 place today called Kieway (phonetic) Park, if any of
13 you are familiar with that, that was once our dairy.

14 Don't really have any planned talk here. This
15 meeting was to talk about north of Okeechobee.
16 Everything I've heard here so far has been talking
17 about south of Okeechobee. I totally agree, we need
18 to send that water south. Doesn't make sense to send
19 it out the estuaries. But also remember, your
20 estuaries have a lot of water that have gone into
21 those estuaries that didn't come from Lake
22 Okeechobee.

23 I said that I lived on the banks of the
24 Kissimmee River. I've visually seen what the river
25 restoration project that's in progress right now is

1 doing. I told my DEP inspector that inspects my
2 dairy farm four months ago, "Be prepared. You're
3 fixing to see one of the biggest algae blooms you've
4 ever seen." We're sending more silt and more product
5 down that river today than has been done since the
6 last restoration project.

7 This gentleman here gave me a -- Mr. Cook gave
8 me a sheet earlier and I read that. You're talking
9 about getting rid of the sludge in Lake Okeechobee.
10 We talked about north, we talked about south, there's
11 more muck and sludge in Lake Okeechobee that we
12 haven't addressed. It's been talked about before.
13 You're not going to have clean water going anywhere
14 until you get rid of the muck in the Lake. Canfield
15 said years ago you're going to have nutrients in a
16 lake that has a muck bottom. Can't change that.

17 The business, once again, on the river, I don't
18 understand the concept that we use, that the Corps
19 has always used where we flush from the bottom; the
20 gates open from the bottom and we take everything
21 that is on the bottom and send downstream instead of
22 having a spillway type situation.

23 Another idea on the Kissimmee River, I've always
24 been told it doesn't have enough energy, but we have
25 a lot of storage there that we do not have or we're

1 not going to have when we remove the next structure.
2 Without a structure, there's nothing to keep that
3 water held back in times of need. We're never going
4 to see the river like it was even after restoration
5 because used to, what caused that water to move, what
6 was it, four days to take the movement a mile, was
7 because it was completely clogged up with hyacinths,
8 okay? I can remember a little kid, when we first
9 came here to Okeechobee, they had to dynamite the
10 hyacinths out from underneath the wood bridge across
11 Highway 70 out here across the Kissimmee River to
12 keep from failing the bridge. That's the way the
13 whole system worked. The hyacinths clogged
14 everything up and that kept that water moving slow.

15 What we have today with the river restoration
16 project is we have the ability to put a bunch more
17 water than ever came in quicker, choke it down
18 through the old channel that what's been done out
19 there right now has washed -- areas that were four
20 feet deep are now twenty feet deep because of the
21 velocity of that water capability coming down the
22 river. Trees are falling in right and left. And all
23 of that sand and silt that's been stirred up from
24 that is in Lake Okeechobee. So until we address
25 taking the silt out of Lake Okeechobee, Lake

1 Okeechobee water, the water going out is not going to
2 get any cleaner.

3 My time is up, I've been told. Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Bob -- or Kimberly
6 Mitchell, please, followed by LaVita Holmes. Either
7 one of those -- are either of you here?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. We'll move on to Margaret
10 Kremer. And then after Margaret, we'll have Terry
11 Hamilton.

12 MS. MARGARET KREMER: Hi, everyone. It's been
13 quite an experience for me to be here. I'm not a
14 heavy hitter from a group. I strongly support all of
15 you in your efforts and what you're doing here.
16 You're trying to protect my interests. I'm just a
17 homeowner here in Florida.

18 In 2003 I bought and was very excited to buy a
19 home on the South Fork of the St. Lucie River. It's
20 a beautiful little nook. It was a beautiful little
21 nook up until January of two thousand -- of this
22 year. We spent almost two million dollars on this
23 home. That was my life's investment.

24 Everyone talks about who is protecting or
25 watching out for the interests of the farmers south

1 of Lake Okeechobee. They're going to be compensated.
2 Everybody knows and the science dictates we need to
3 move that water south. They are going to be
4 compensated. Who is talking about compensating me
5 for a home that was worth two million dollars that
6 today, if I put it on the market, is not worth a
7 penny. It's not even worth a penny to me; I'm scared
8 to live there now. Because it's not even a question
9 of just my financial investment for the rest of my
10 life, it's my health. Who is checking or regulating
11 or watching for what's going to happen to my health
12 with going out on my dock to have a cup of coffee in
13 the morning and breathing that filth twenty years
14 from now? What's going to happen to all of us? This
15 needs to be done now.

16 All of these graphs, all of these tables, all of
17 these charts look fantastic, but the one thing that
18 I'm hearing over and over again is we don't have the
19 time for that. This is a crisis. This is an
20 emergency and something needs to happen now and it
21 does need to be addressed in both directions, not
22 just north, but it has to go south. Compensate the
23 people for their land down south and keep in mind
24 that there's other people living in the State of
25 Florida as well.

1 Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. TIPPLE: Terry Hamilton, followed by Jacqui
4 Thurlow-Lippisch. I apologize.

5 MS. TERRY HAMILTON: Hi, good evening, my name
6 is Terry Hamilton, I'm with the Surfrider Foundation
7 for the Palm Beach County Chapter.

8 Of course, I'm definitely not an expert, we're a
9 grassroots organization, all volunteer based. But I
10 hear the experts and I continue to go to the rallies
11 and go to these meetings so that I can continue to be
12 educated on different things.

13 So obviously the work that you're doing -- we
14 know that you're doing and you're trying to make
15 something here happen and make it work and we
16 appreciate that. So don't let that go understated.
17 But everything I'm hearing and from all the rallies
18 and what I'm learning even myself -- yes, I'm a born
19 and raised Floridian, so this is where my entire
20 three generations live -- we have to move it south.

21 And I mean, I know you hear that all night and
22 I know we're talking about the north and I did have
23 some questions about that, but I'll ask off-line.
24 But just my comment is here, and I know we all are
25 already in agreement by hearing everyone, but we need

1 to -- it really starts, to me, with our elected
2 officials. So just -- and I know you're already out
3 there doing it because you're here tonight. But
4 November is coming and there's some petitions out
5 there -- I mean, I'm sorry, but our Governor, and I
6 will say it here and I'm sorry, but he's got to go.
7 But I'm sorry.

8 But please, if you can include, just like
9 everyone is saying, I don't understand why it's
10 beginning to be so hard or has been and continues to
11 be so hard to get that south planning in with the
12 north. I don't understand. I guess I'm going to
13 keep learning and keep learning from all of you.

14 But can you please look at that? There has to
15 be a way. It is a crisis and we cannot wait. We
16 cannot wait.

17 So again, I thank everyone for being here.
18 I know everyone is tired. And thank you for staying,
19 everyone.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Jacqui, and then the
22 next person is Rachel Curran -- Curran.

23 COMMISSIONER JACQUI THURLOW-LIPPISCH: Hello,
24 everybody. I just want to take a few minutes to say
25 thank you to the Army Corps of Engineers for doing

1 this tonight and I really admire your scoping
2 project. I really do. And I admire that it allows
3 people to talk.

4 What I do have to point out here is just the
5 incredible disconnect for those of us who live in
6 Martin County especially and I think also in Lee
7 County.

8 As you know, we have experienced this terrible
9 situation with the blue-green algae. So here we in
10 May had blue-green algae in Lake Okeechobee, 33
11 square miles, and then it morphed into over 200
12 square miles and people have been going through --
13 I can't -- it's hard for me to explain to you.
14 Your adrenaline is pumped up, people have been living
15 truly in a state of emergency for the past months.
16 And so during this same time, we get information that
17 y'all are holding this meeting and that's great, but
18 there's a huge disconnect here.

19 The connection for us where we live is that we
20 have been working for years to try to get water to
21 move south. And unfortunately, the farm lands in the
22 EAA are blocking that solution. And we really know
23 that it is just -- it's wonderful that you did this,
24 but it is unfair that you only gave us today. It
25 took me 45 minutes, 50 minutes to drive here. I will

1 drive home tonight hoping I don't have a head-on
2 collision on 714. I mean, you guys have got to have
3 more meetings for people from our neck of the woods
4 to express themselves. This is a revolution where
5 we're from. We're not kidding. This is something --
6 the South Florida Water Management knows it. Ask
7 them about it. And we're not trying to make it up.
8 This is real for us. And we appreciate your going
9 through the motions and having this meeting, but I
10 think you got the message tonight that we need more
11 meetings and we need more opportunities to speak and
12 we need to blend north and south together for a new
13 Florida.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. Frank -- Frank
17 Jackalone and then Mike Conner.

18 MS. RACHEL CURRAN: Hi, my name is Rachel
19 Curran, I'm a law clerk with the Center for
20 Biological Diversity. We advocate for endangered
21 species across the country and right here in Florida.

22 To quote the Fish and Wildlife Service in its
23 recently issued biological opinion for the 2016
24 Everglades Restoration Transition Plan, "Continued
25 CERP implementation delay is unacceptable."

1 The Corps provided this plan and its stated
2 purpose, seeming to request evaluation in the larger
3 context of future CERP projects with their target
4 dates of implementation. This project's ability to
5 meet its stated goals must be reviewed in its own
6 right because for decades now the Corps has provided
7 timelines that have come and gone with little
8 improvement where it counts.

9 What this plan amounts to is another
10 unacceptable delay and that delay is unacceptable to
11 the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, the Everglades Snail
12 Kite, the samaltude (phonetic) crawfish and the
13 Florida manatee. The science tells us we need
14 storage both north and south of the Lake. Please
15 expand this project scope to provide true relief
16 for the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries and
17 begin restoring hydrology where it matters the most.

18 We will be submitting written comments.

19 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you, Rachel. Frank
20 Jackalone.

21 MR. FRANK JACKALONE: Thank you. I'm Frank
22 Jackalone. I'm the Florida Director of the Sierra
23 Club.

24 I want to say that what's facing all of us is
25 that this is -- this plan has some merits and we

1 appreciate the hard work that the staff put into it,
2 but the greater need, the greater need is to move
3 water south of Lake Okeechobee. It's a greater need
4 that's what is needed to protect millions of people,
5 their lives, their property, both in the estuaries
6 and ultimately in South Florida as well. We already
7 have seen algae spilling over south as water releases
8 have had to go down to the Lake Worth Lagoon. We
9 know that if we don't restore the Everglades, the
10 impact of climate change is going to destroy more and
11 more property of people in Miami. And we need
12 Everglades restoration for that purpose as well.

13 Ultimately it's the sugar industry that is
14 stopping the protection of all of us and protecting
15 what needs to be done. They're stopping the
16 restoration of the Everglades. We have the right and
17 the responsibility to protect people along the coast,
18 to protect people in South Florida. We don't have
19 the -- we don't have an obligation to protect those
20 sugar farms -- those sugar farms. The sugar farms
21 are needed to restore the Everglades, not all of
22 them, but an important portion of them. We need to
23 move forward.

24 I ask you to combine the planning processes
25 together. But the most important thing, more

1 important than this study, is right now making a
2 determination to move water south, to buy the land
3 and to start the planning process.

4 Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. TIPPLE: Thank you. And Mike Conner, are
7 you still here?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. TIPPLE: Okay. That completes the cards.
10 Again, all comments that we receive both tonight, as
11 well as those that are submitted by August 12th to
12 Dr. Ehlinger or at the -- at the mailing address or
13 the e-mail will have equal consideration.

14 I would like to thank everyone for taking time
15 out and being very patient for a long evening, but we
16 certainly value your input and comments.

17 Again, if you have any additional questions, you
18 would like to discuss any aspect of tonight's
19 presentation, there is still our Corps of Engineers
20 and Water Management District team here that could
21 meet with you, view the posters.

22 Again, I thank you for your time and hope y'all
23 have a safe ride home. Thank you.

24 (PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED AT 10:00 P.M.)

25

1 STATE OF FLORIDA)

2 COUNTY OF MARTIN)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

6

7 I, KATHY CABRE ENLOE, Registered Professional
8 Reporter, do certify that in the matter of the LAKE
9 OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED PUBLIC MEETING, a Public Meeting was
10 held beginning at the hour of 6:30 P.M. on the 26th day
11 of July, 2016; that I was authorized to and did
12 stenographically report the proceedings in that Public
13 Meeting, and that the foregoing pages, numbered 2 through
14 131, comprise a true and correct transcript of those
15 proceedings.

16 DATED this _____ day of _____,
17 2016.

18

19

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KATHY CABRE ENLOE

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