U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT
PUBLIC MEETING

Monday, January 12, 2015
7:00 P.M.

Wolf High-Technology Center's Susan H. Johnson Auditorium
Indian River State College Chastain Campus
2400 SE Salerno Road
Stuart, Florida

Re: Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project

PRESENTERS: Mr. Matt Morrison, Project Supervisor
Mr. Andy LoSchiavo, Environmental Lead
Dr. Bradley Foster, Planning Lead

ALSO PRESENT:

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
Colonel Tom Greco
Dr. Orlando Ramos-Gines, Project Manager
Jeff Couch, Project Management Supervisor
Dr. Gina Ralph, Planning Supervisor
Jenn Miller, Corporate Communications

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Beth Kacvinsky, Project Manager
Matt Morrison, Project Supervisor
Scott Thourot, Engineering Lead
Patty Gorman, Environmental Lead

FLORIDA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Inger Hansen

COURT REPORTER: Dianne S. Morris, RPR
Esquire Reporting, Inc.
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I N D E X

LT. COL. GRECO: Ladies and gentlemen, we'll get started in a few minutes.

Good evening, everyone. My name is Colonel Tom Greco of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, and I will be presiding over tonight's public meeting for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. For those of you who do not know me, I'm the Deputy District Commander for South Florida and as such am representing Colonel Alan Dodd, the District Manager.

We're here tonight to provide information, answer questions and ask for your input on the National Environmental Policy Act assessment for the project.

Before we begin, I would like to thank all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules and joining us here tonight and getting involved in the planning process.

I do also want to recognize and thank Deb Drum from Martin County and Scott Kelly from the City of West Palm Beach for coming.

Where are you Mark -- Deb and -- all right. Thanks for coming.

This meeting is being held in accordance with

the National Environmental Policy Act for the sole purpose of listening to you. I would like to remind you of the importance of filling out these cards, the comment cards, because they serve two purposes. First, they let us know that you're interested in this project so that we can keep you informed. Second, they provide me with a list of individuals who speak -- who wish to speak tonight. If you did not fill out a card, they're available on the registration table. Once you fill it out, if you'll provide it to Jenn Miller at the registration table, she'll make sure that it gets to me.

Before we begin the presentation, let me introduce the team with me tonight. And if you can, just raise your hand. They'll obviously be here during the question and answer period.

From the Corps of Engineers, Dr. Orlando Ramos-Gines, Project Manager; Jeff Couch, Project Management Supervisor; Andy LoSchiavo, Environmental Lead; Dr. Brad Foster, Planning Lead; Dr. Gina Ralph, Planning Supervisor, and Jenn Miller, Corporate Communications.

And from the South Florida Water Management District, our south partner, Beth Kacvinsky,

Project Manager; Matt Morrison, Project Supervisor; Scott Thourot, Engineering Lead, Patty Gorman, Environmental Lead.

And from the Florida -- the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Inger Hansen.

And in a few minutes -- in a few moments I'll turn the floor over to Matt Morrison, Andy LoSchiavo and Dr. Brad Foster who will provide you with a brief overview of the project and the planning process.

Once the presentation is complete, I will open -- then open the meeting to public comments after additional questions and answers.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce Mr. Matt Morrison.

MR. MORRISON: Okay, thank you.

Can everybody hear me okay? Good. I'd like to welcome everybody for taking time out of your evening tonight and joining us here for our Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration plan scoping meeting. This is basically an informative meeting tonight to share with stakeholders like yourselves our path moving forward in developing a planning document known at the Project Implementation Report for the implementation of the

Loxahatchee River restoration. And tonight is really kind of a first step in that federal process where we kind of launch our planning efforts through a number of formal meetings where the public will have some input into the planning process as we build the different project components and analyze them against one another to find the most cost effective project that we can implement over time to bring additional flows to the Northwest Fork of the federally designated wild and scenic river.

So with that said, I welcome you. This is really your opportunity to listen in to the presentations that we have today and then spend some time with staff after the meeting if you have specific questions. You know, we would be more than glad to get with you and answer any questions that you may have in addition to filling out the speaker cards where we can address it in a formal public forum at the microphone. So again, welcome.

Can we go to my first slide? Do I need a control?

LT. COL. GRECO: No.

MR. MORRISON: Here?

LT. COL. GRECO: No.

MR. MORRISON: Okay. All right. Well, I'll just give a quick overview of our meeting purpose and agenda. We went through the welcomes and introductions. I'm going to take just a little bit of time to give a fairly high level overview of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan to get you familiar with the other projects that the federal government and the nonfederal sponsor, the South Florida Water Management District, has been working on for the last 15 years, and then we'll cover an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act that we have to follow as far as the guidelines from the federal process to actually plan the project. We'll talk a little bit about the planning process, recognizing that the Army Corps of Engineers has recently transformed their planning process so that I think that will be really important as we move forward and plan this project. They have provided a more streamline approach to getting to the finish line in some of these very, very complicated planning projects and we're looking forward to working in this new planning process with the Jacksonville District to expedite the completion of this PIR. We spent a lot of time over the last seven to ten years

studying this area and we've had some starts and some stops and I think this is our opportunity to use the new federal process to actually formulate a plan and actually bring it to completion. We'll talk a little bit about the scope and update you there, and then we'll talk about the problems and the opportunities and the goals and objectives that we'll be formulating during this planning process and then we'll touch briefly on the next steps.

So from an Everglades restoration overview standpoint, I recognize some of the faces in the room. I've worked with them on individual projects or federal projects. I don't recognize some of the faces in the room and I would like to spend a little bit more time afterwards getting to know you personally. But some folks have seen this overhead which really kind of shows a cartoon depiction of how the South Florida peninsula and water flows have changed in the last 100 years.

If you take a look at the graphic on the far left, you can see what is identified as the historic pre-drainage flow patterns that Florida experienced before all of us moved down here to go to school and work and play and enjoy the beautiful weather that we enjoy each and every day that we

live here. And basically what -- what transpired, the center portion of the state was like a funnel where it would collect rainfall north of Lake Okeechobee in the Kissimmee Valley and it would take that rainfall and it took the land and moved it into Lake Okeechobee. And when the levels from the rainfall got high enough in Lake Okeechobee, the water just kind of spilled over in the southern end of the lake system and moved that water as a collected additional rainfall south of the lake delivering that water through the Everglades system on down the Florida Bay. And you'll notice that when levels got high enough, there were some discharges that spilled over to the west into the Caloosahatchee Estuary. Now, the current flow today has been derived over decades' worth of improvements to the natural system to afford an opportunity for all of us to live here. And there was a massive canal network that was put in place to allow us to basically provide agriculture and the municipalities and the urban developments that we have on the landscape in the South Florida peninsula today and that came in the form of drainage network that basically collected the water that hit the landscape and moved that water out to

tide through the Caloosahatchee River system that was built to the west and the St. Lucie River system that was built to the east as well as moving water through the Everglades agricultural area south of the lake and then to the coast. And you'll notice that there's been a very small delivery of water in the current flow system to the Everglades National Park when you compare it to this historic system. So the overarching goal of CERP, and that's the acronym for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, is to try to get us back to where we were with historical photos recognizing that we're never going to be able to go all the way back to where we were, but the storage system will be much different than it was pre-drainage before we all lived here. But the goal is to provide storage and treatment on the landscape to what we call QQTD and that's the quality, the quantity and the timing and the distribution of flows to the natural system. And that's really the overarching goal on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Now, one thing I do want to note is if you look at the pre-drainage characteristics up here on this right slide, you'll see this little finger that

moves up towards the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. That finger needs to actually deliver water to the Northwest Fork naturally when the Everglades system got high enough. So the Loxahatchee River is part of the greater Everglades system so don't forget that as we move forward in this planning process.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan 88. I'm not sure where the 8 and the 88 came from, but the bottom line is it was apprised of 68 components that was documented in the 1999 restudy of the Central and Southern Flood Control Project back in 1999, and it identified a number of different project features that could be put throughout the landscape to improve the quality, the quantity, the timing and distribution flows to the natural system and those included surface storage. And when we talk about the surface storage, we talk about the aboveground reservoir where you collect water from the canal system to the landscape. When it rains real heavy in the summertime, you put it in storage and then you hold it and then you deliver it to the natural system during the dry months when the environment needs it.

Aquifer storage and recovery is another water storage technique. There's been a number of projects that have been used. None of them have really been coupled with an individual project, but there's technology out there that is considered in CERP where you take a well, you collect water from the landscape and you pump it down into the upper portion of the Florida aquifer, a couple thousand feet underground, and you create a freshwater bubble which you can then pull back up when it doesn't rain and deliver that water to the system. And as we move forward with this particular planning effort, we'll most likely be taking a look at aquifer storage and recovery technology as one management that can store water, to carry that water forward into the dry season to improve the timing and the distribution of those flows for this Northwest Fork that we're so interested in restoring.

The other management areas include stormwater treatment areas to improve water quality. We all know that as we work with and grow food here in South Florida, we've somewhat degraded the water quality so there are stormwater treatment areas that actually remove the nutrients from the water

column before they deliver it to the natural system. We often have to consider seepage management. If you're going to be moving water into areas that have been well drained and developed, we need to make sure that if we put water back on that landscape, we're not having any adverse effects to property rights, i.e. people that live there or people that grow food there. To make sure that when we put water, the water stays where it goes and it doesn't cause any problems with the flood protection.

Removing barriers to sheet flow and trying to get water to move through the system. For removing barriers to sheet flow in Loxahatchee, I think it's a good case of a project where the natural system has been bifurcated by roads, it's been bifurcated by embankments, it's been bifurcated by canals. And the water that used to naturally move to the river -- river and feed it, now it's kind of all chopped up in a pattern development here. There's a development there, there's a road here, there's ditches there. And this really provided a number of different barriers to the sheet flow in the river that we're going to try and improve as part of the planning process.

And then last but not least from a project component standpoint, we recognize that you put additional project features on the landscape, whether it be another project with CERP or the Loxahatchee River Watershed. When you have storage facilities on the landscape, you're going to have to modify your operation of the system for that project and sometimes you even have to reach back and manage the system on the operations different because you're changing the timing and the distribution of flows and we've got a system that's out there and built to manage one set of circumstances and we're trying to implement another one when it comes to water management. So operations are key.

And then I can't let this one go without talking about it. You know, we hear a lot of things about how long it takes to restore the environment. And CERP recognized that it was a 30-year plus implementation schedule. The short answer is, yes, it takes a long time to reverse what we have built and created over the last 100 or 120 years. And I always remind folks that it's taken a century to get us where we are today and it's very challenging to get us back to where we

were without taking the necessary time to move things forward in the manner that we need to. So the good news is we're developing a plan for the river. We're going to get that plan finished. Once it's finished, it keys up an opportunity to actually get congress to approve it and appropriate funds for it before we can actually move forward and get some infrastructure in the ground. It's not going to happen overnight. We're talking about a three-year planning process and then some time after that in order to get that infrastructure in place. So I just want to remind everybody, it took 100 plus years to get here, it's going to take 30 to 50 years for us to restore the Everglades system to what it used to run -- used to look like over time.

From an implementation standpoint, these are the big projects that we've been working on with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers as a local sponsor over the last 20 years. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on them. We talk about foundation projects, first and second generation projects and we talk about central Everglades. All I'm going to mention here is the foundation project kind of whittled the landscape and those were the big

projects that predated the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the included projects like Kissimmee River Restoration. North of the lake it is well under construction and that's achieving numerous benefits north of the lake by taking the channelized canal system and converting back to its meandering river. The first generation projects, those are projects that have already been approved by congress and appropriated by congress. When I say appropriate -- appropriate, they received funding and they're being implemented as we speak. They are being constructed. And then the second generation project, those just went through and were approved by congress and the Water Resource Development Act last summer so congress has officially approved those projects but they have not appropriated funds. Planning is complete. Next step will be to appropriate funds and then make a determination through -- deliver a schedule on the sequencing of those projects once the funding comes through.

The Central Everglades Planning Project. Very popular project that was planned during this expedited planning process that the Corps is now developing over the last three years. We just

recently finalized some documentation on that and received authorization from the federal government to move forward and there's been a lot of talk recently about some by parts and sponsorship of a House bill to actually get that particular project approved. The long and short is a lot of the foundation, Gen 1 and Gen 2 project, kind of worked on the periphery of the Greater Everglades system central where it kind focuses right down the heart.

So what's next? The next big plan is for the development activity and the local sponsor and the South Florida Water Management District of the Loxahatchee Watershed Restoration Plan. And it's good to know that we as an agency are committed to working with the federal government to plan this project over the next three years and bringing a new planned document to the completion.

What I've got on the overhead is basically a geographical map that is outlined in red that identifies the study area and there's a bunch of different colors on lands that are currently in public -- predominately in public ownership and these are the lands that we'll really be taking a hard look at from a natural area perspective and seeing if we can improve that

de-compartmentalization or connectivity that I talked about. Water used to flow through these systems and make it to the river and those head waters of that natural river system have been bifurcated and we're going to take a hard look at trying to connect these wildlife areas and these preserve areas and these natural areas so we can collect water, store water and then move that water to the river under the appropriate timing and distribution as well as quantities in the past. And what we're going to try to achieve is making sure that the water that makes it to the river keeps the salinity down in the estuary where it needs to be. I don't know if you've been on the river, but if you've been in Florida long enough and you canoed down the river, or you kayaked down the river, or you fished on the river, you've seen some of the cypress die off over the last 20 years and we're going to try to put the brakes on that saltwater front and actually try to move water a little bit further down in the river to allow the collagen to be stabilized and recover some of the natural characteristics that we were accustomed to with that river back 15, 20, 30, 40 years ago.

So that's really my overview of CERP. I

thought it would be important to share with you all the progress we have made. The slide shows a number of projects that we have worked through. And with that said, as, you know, a representative of a nonfederal sponsor, South Florida Water Management District, what we're really looking forward now to taking the next planning project forward and that property will be the Loxahatchee River Watershed.

So thank you very much.

MR. LOSCHIAVO: Can everybody hear me? All right?

Thank you, Matt, for that excellent overview about the Everglades restoration.

My name is Andy LoSchiavo and I'm the Environmental Technical Lead from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on this project and I'm going to talk to you about the National Environmental Policy Act and why we're here today as part of the scoping meeting, we want to hear from you about environmental issues that we need to consider as part of this restoration project.

Now, just to give you a little background on the National Environmental Policy Act, it's a law that requires all federal agencies to evaluate

environmental consequences before they make any federal decision on an action that they're pursuing and in this case we're looking at restoration as that federal action. What you also want to know about the policy, National Environmental Policy Act, I'm going to all it NEPA for short, is a process that requires that we solicit public opinions and get public comment on the proposed actions and hear about issues that we may not be familiar with yet and need to analyze and that's part of the process tonight.

In addition, it is also a way that as part of the documentation process for this project, the Project Implementation Report that Matt described and the NEPA document, we can document our consultations with federal, state and local agencies on various other issues that we need to address such as coastal resources, water quality issues, water supply, flood control. And another thing that's important, it's a good opportunity to provide agencies the ability to coordinate all these overlapping jurisdictions associated with addressing this project action.

A little more on the NEPA process. Ultimately, it requires us to prepare an analysis of the

environmental effects, a document that describes that. And there's really three different types of NEPA documents that might occur. There's a categorical exclusion for actions that are more routine that are known to either individually or cumulatively not have the significant effect -- effect on the environment. The second type of document is environmental assessment where we're not sure about whether the effect's going to be significant or not. We do an assessment of the alternatives that we're looking at for the restoration action or project action and consider environmental effects to determine whether we're going to have a significant impact or not. And the ultimate outcome from an environmental assessment is a finding of no significant impact and it describes what was considered and what options were considered to avoid, minimize and mitigating impact.

Now, there is a concern about significant impacts to the human environment. Then we prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. And as part of that, it's more a detailed analysis. It's a little more lengthy. We consider a full range of alternatives to help us look at opportunities to

avoid and minimize impacts to environmental issues to get brought up as part of the NEPA process as well as options to mitigate those -- those impacts that we can avoid.

Now, a little bit on the planning process for the Corps for those of you who aren't familiar with it. It involves six steps and it's integrated with the NEPA process here, and I'm going to go over it a little bit with you so you're familiar with what's coming up as part of the different discussions that we're going to have today as well as future project meetings and public meetings on this project.

But step one is where we clearly identify what are the problems and opportunities that could be addressed as part of a restoration project. And what are the right goals and objectives that we should be considering for this project to ultimately achieve those restoration actions in the Loxahatchee River Watershed River and Estuary. This is the same, very similar to what we describe the purpose of the project action is and why we need to undertake that action as part of the NEPA process.

Step two is really describing what are -- what

is the system like today? What are the existing conditions that are out there that we need to be aware of, and that's also important from the NEPA perspective to understand what we might potentially affect with our restoration actions. There's also as part of the planning process, we describe what might happen in the future as additional development might occur or additional need for water supply or also additional restoration actions that aren't part of this project might change the system and that's important so that when we compare our project's actions we can tell what -- what are we actually benefitting with this project compared to what might happen in the future. And as part of that is describing the hydrology that's going on, what's going on with the water, what are the fish and wildlife resources at this time, what natural areas are in place and also what's the demands for water supply, what's -- what areas have been developed so that we consider that as part of all the modeling analysis and planning for this project.

Step three gets into evaluating or forming alternatives, basically alternative restoration plans. What are different ways that we can achieve

those project goals and objectives. And from the environmental standpoint, we want to look at the full range of alternatives so that we can make sure that we can achieve those goals and objectives but also avoid and minimize impacts to the environment as well as have options for mitigation and those impacts that we can.

And once we get those alternatives, we then look at evaluating those alternatives from a standpoint of planning which plans give us the most restoration benefits at the best cost. And from the NEPA process, we're looking at also which plans have the least amount of environmental impacts or seem to do better from an environmental standpoint as well as other issues that we may consider that get brought up from all of you today and in the future as part of the comment process.

We then compare those plans from the step five and analyze really which plans do better from the standpoint of restoration benefits and environmental issues. And ultimately based on coordination with both the public and the federal and state and local agencies, we determine which plan we want to put forward as our recommended plan and document basically the conclusion of all issues

that we're evaluating as part of the NEPA process and how we've addressed those in that document.

I want to comment real quick, Matt went into this, that the federal planning process has gone through a transformation process and back in 2012 in response to public views as well as state Corps as our partners feedback on the Corps and federal planning process, the feedback was it takes too long and it's often very expensive and laborious to get through the planning process. And as part of this, we researched that to look at trying to complete these plans no more than three years. Prior projects sometimes took five, seven years or even longer. We also want to try to keep the planning cost down to no more than $3 million total for the federal cost sharing as well as ensure -- part of the reason things take long is when you have a lot of different levels of review, in the Corps, we have the district here in Jacksonville that looks at what's going on in Florida, there's the division that looks at multiple districts in Atlanta and then headquarters. We want to integrate those reviews at the same time so that we can hear about issues and focus on those issues that were most important to us making the right

decisions from a planning standpoint and ensure that those reviews occur timely and address those most important things as early on as possible. And that's what we changed here. We focused on from the planning process what are those key decisions and looking at risk. What are those decisions that pose the most risk and have the most uncertainty so we can focus in on where do we need to get more information as opposed to addressing everything and putting a lot of detail on things that may not be so important for that decision. We're really focusing on those issues that require some more analysis as part of this process. So it's a faster planning process. And you'll see that in the schedule that -- the tentative schedule that was laid out.

In addition, we're developing this report and documenting those decisions as we go along, not only so the Corps and our local sponsor are certain about what those decisions are, but also to be transparent to the public on those key issues.

And here's the overall NEPA process as it fits within the new Corps planning process. And just to point out here, we're at the scoping phase right now. We have to publish the notice of intent.

That was done back in 2002 originally. We just republished that last week to kick off the scoping process again on this project. And that's part of why we're here tonight, just to hear feedback from you on the potential environmental issues that we consider as part of the planning and NEPA document for this project.

The first decision that will come up, what we're working on is alternative plans for restoration that we want to consider as part of this project. And we're looking to use a lot of that prior planning information that we had on this project and new information that's come from other state planning efforts, from local county planning efforts to help us make the best decision about what are the best restoration alternatives to consider for this project, and we're looking to accomplish that by May 2015. So as you can see, this is a quick process here.

As part of the process here, we're going to be looking at ultimately developing a tentatively selective plan that has evaluated those alternatives, consider the environmental issues that folks have raised here tonight as part of the scoping process, look at the benefits of the plans

and recommended a plan that should be considered as part of the draft environmental assessment that we're going to report -- NEPA Assessment Report that we're going to prepare for this project. That will go up for a public comment period as well. And based on feedback here, we're going to get an agency decision on whether that -- there are tweaks that need to be made to that plan to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts or other things that we might need to do to address some water supply or flood control issues or other issues that might come up as part of this public comment process.

And ultimately as we respond to these comments and make a decision, we're then developing a final report on that final plan that follows more detail on those remaining issues that need to be considered that ultimately gets documented in a final Environmental Impact Statement that then gets released for another state and agency review process here at decision 4 alternative -- or Milestone 4.

And then following that, we develop a Chief's Report and that's really the document that describes the outcome of all the coordination with the public and agencies, what's a recommended

action, what's our 30 percent design, how are we avoiding, minimizing, mitigating those issues and puts that plan forth in a Chief's Report that ultimately will go forward to congress that Matt was describing to be considered for authorization to implement the project.

Now, tonight is not your only opportunity to provide input into this project. There's a lot of information that you're going to consider tonight. There's going to be other opportunities and we'll be putting information up on our website that you'll see in just a moment and you can be involved at other federal public meetings that we're going to have associated with the draft NEPA assessment that we're going to do as well as there's regularly scheduled Project Delivery Team meetings where there are opportunities for public comment to be involved. There's also -- we're also going to use existing forums such as the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board and the Water Resources Advisory Committee as an opportunity for you to provide input on specific issues that may come up on this project. In some cases, there might be specific topics, whether it was ASR that Matt was talking about or other issues that might

come up that a lot of folks have a lot of interest on and they're a little more complex so we may need to get additional feedback on this so we might schedule opportunities for discussing those in the future as well. And there may be other opportunities that we haven't even considered today. There's a Loxahatchee River Coordinating Council I'm aware of that also holds meetings -- holds meetings on issues related to the Loxahatchee River so that might be one place, another venue that you can have your views heard as well.

So I thank you tonight, again, for being here as part of this NEPA scoping meeting. Please, if you have comments after the set of presentations, we're going to open that up for some feedback for you -- for you to take the stage and provide your input as well as comment cards. You can go back out afterward and take it home with you if you want, mail it in and provide your input.

I'm going to turn this presentation over to Dr. Bradley Foster.

Thanks, Brad.

DR. FOSTER: All right.

MR. LOSCHIAVO: Here you go.

DR. FOSTER: Testing the microphone. Working

okay? All right.

You heard a general overview from Matt and you heard specific procedural and legal requirements from Andy. I'm going to take a moment to give you a little bit more of the specifics for Loxahatchee itself, this study, and just give you a little more that you can react to and comment to us upon.

Very broadly, the purposes are to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water as it flows from the head waters to the Loxahatchee River and Estuary and to improve connections between the different natural areas and the watershed. There was -- Matt mentioned the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and in the north beach -- North Palm Beach County area, there were on the order of eight or so in the 68 components. And in the early 2000s, the study team worked on the project called North Palm Beach County Part 1 and did a lot of work, went to the meetings to do a lot of analysis with different alternatives and measures. And in 2011, management from the Water Management District and the Corps said, "Team, you need to stop for a while, there's other things happening." And during that time, one of the things that was happening was that the L-8

Reservoir, which was a key part of those earlier alternatives, was repurposed for water quality purposes and also the Water Management District has purchased Mecca Farms which is another property that has other opportunities for use for restoration.

Also, at the end of '13 to now, we focused instead of just on all features that are in the county to the watershed itself, which is not the same. It's common boundaries. We're really focusing on Loxahatchee River and the waters that flow to it.

This is the first step of the six steps that Andy mentioned. Problems and opportunities, also goals. And we start there so that we know why we're working and what we're trying to do. So we can't get there until we know where we're going.

A list of problems. There's altered timing of flows to the estuary. We have salinity -- increased salinity in the estuary in the fork part of river which is affecting the cypress forest. At times during the wet seasons we have large volumes of freshwater flow into the estuary and dry seasons we often have too little flow.

And the second list of additional problems.

Listed up there, we've got some conversion of natural areas to development and there's a chance of restoring some of those back. And we've lost connectivity that Matt mentioned earlier with roads, canals, other barriers. And as a result of all of these, we've lost some of the diversity and population numbers in a number of species. And since we created water quality, we're looking primarily at the salinity effects at this time.

Our goals and objectives are going to be consistent with the overall comprehensive plan. This slide shows the comprehensive plan, goals and objectives. And we didn't type up all the specifics. We're hoping for some input on them, but our objectives generally would come from the problems themselves. If a problem is too little flow to the Loxahatchee River during the dry season, some dry seasons, our objective would be to provide additional flows during the dry season to meet the needs of restoration. So that's how we work out objectives.

Also, on the -- on our posters on the back, we have draft objectives listed up there so that -- you may have seen them in the beginning and we'll come back to it again.

This is similar to what Matt showed from the comprehensive plan. This is management measures that we're considering at this time. We haven't placed them in specific locations yet because we're a little bit early in the process and we haven't pinned all of those down yet, but storage, both the surface storage and within the aquifer are both being looked at.

Conveyance. Moving the water and moving barriers from the moving water are definitely in the mix. And for structures that we build or structures that are already there, operational changes may improve conditions to restore some of the natural areas.

Vegetation management. There are certain pockets of either exotic species or invasive native species that are overtaking the more diverse habitats that we hope to -- hope to have and hope to restore. If we start something new, the disturbance usually provides an opportunity for basic species and we would build that sort of control to minimize that effect during the implementation.

That's the end of the formal part of the presentation. Any comments would be e-mailed to

Andy LoSchiavo or mailed to the address there. And comments or requests are due by the 5th of February.

LT. COL. GRECO: Thanks, Brad. Thanks, gentlemen.

We're going to go on to the public comments, but before we do that, I do want to just reiterate that it is going to be a public comment portion so it's statements to me that will be entered into the record. But before we do that, does anyone have any clarifying questions? We've got the experts here, not just the gentlemen who presented but also other folks from the team about anything that you saw. Whether it's for Matt's, Andy's or Brad's presentation, just clarity either on the project itself, the history of it or what the intent of tonight is? Yes?

MS. DIFFENDERFER: So you had that the L-8 Reservoir was removed and I sort of heard that you were talking about ASR as being one of the potential surface water storage options. Is there an actual reservoir, though, that's being looked at?

LT. COL. GRECO: I will let our team answer that.

Matt?

MR. MORRISON: Sure. Can you guys hear me okay? I don't think this is on. There we go.

We repurposed the L-8 Reservoir which was in the former plan to meet the water quality requirements that were required to send water to the south. So in repurposing that, we've taken the volume of water that's in the L-8 Reservoir and moved it to another project so that storage that's in the ground today will not be available for this planning so I want to kind of further talk about that a little bit.

We mentioned storage and those components were aboveground storage and aquifer storage and recovery, so this project will be looking at both of those as management measures or project components to store water when it's available and deliver it to the river when it's not.

From an aboveground impoundment standpoint, the South Florida Water Management District has identified what we call a replacement project for the L-8 Reservoir and that's the acquisition that we made with Palm Beach County for the Mecca location, which is in the western leg of the C-18. So we're looking at those lands since they were

former agriculture as an opportunity as lands that are in public ownership to build storage features aboveground that could be used or co-located with ASR technology to provide storage to the Northwest Fork of the river. So that's kind of Part 1.

Part 2, there's a second flow path that's owned and operated by the City of West Palm Beach known as Flow-way 1. They have a very large 20-square mile natural area known as Grassy Waters Preserve and that natural system is connected to the regional system. And we'll also be looking at that area as one mechanism to improve hydro periods in the natural system and see if there are opportunities to restore water that can be delivered to the river without adversely affecting the higher periods and grassy waters. So that's kind of the way the landscape was left.

So in short, we'll be looking at ASR technology and reservoir technology for storage. There's some storage out there now. We'll be looking at the land we acquired at Mecca and we'll be looking at ASR technology potentially with some of these reservoirs that are already on the...

LT. COL. GRECO: Yes, sir. Can you give him the microphone?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'll talk real loud. We have an abbreviated time schedule, a 3x3x3. What's the date of the first draft of the reports or documentation that you'll be presenting or putting forth? And specifically where I'm going, you showed a map with some generic symbols on it, but you said, "Well, we haven't done anything with any of these yet." And so the spirit of my question is when do you start and when do you start showing that to the public, and then how many days following when you first show that to the public do you actually start presenting the draft to -- up the chain?

LT. COL. GRECO: Andy, would you like to answer that, discussing the role of the PDT and when we meet in this forum again?

MR. LOSCHIAVO: Yes, definitely. As far as we're going to be having a Project Delivery Team meeting at the end of this month. That's going to be getting heavily into the planning process to ultimately get to a set of alternatives to basically put forth plans that you're talking about to meet those restoration goals and objectives. And the goal is to have that document done and to start coordinating with ultimately the Corps' chain

of command and Water Management District by May of this year. So now the full draft document that ultimately what we would like to call -- our draft report that would be the Project Implementation Report, that wouldn't be until 2016, sometime in the summer. July, I think, is what was up there as far as having one that puts forth a recommended plan and applies all of those plans that we basically put together in May.

As far as the public process involvement, there's going to be PDT meetings, probably several over the next few months, to ultimately come up with those alternative plans and then that process is going to continue when we start talking about evaluating those, addressing specific issues that can identify as part of the PDT process. That's going to continue into the summer and into the next year as we prepare that draft Environmental Impact Statement. There's going to be public opportunities associated when we have that draft report that we put out next year as well as part much the PDT process, too.

LT. COL. GRECO: And can you explain, Andy, how folks find out about the PDT meetings?

MR. LOSCHIAVO: Yes. One thing actually -- if

you can move to the next slide actually. There's a website right here that I encourage you to write down and it should be on the agenda as well if you grabbed an agenda when you came in, and that is where we're going to provide information that you can keep track of what what's going on as well as if we get your email address today, you're going to get a note that comes out through emails before these meetings occur so you can be up to date on these opportunities. So please take advantage of those two opportunities.

LT. COL. GRECO: Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The water for this whole project, I assume it is the Loxahatchee River Watershed area and possibly Lake Okeechobee water?

MR. LOSCHIAVO: So that's a -- that's a good question there. Are we -- we're looking at the Loxahatchee River Watershed as an opportunity for excess water. The question is do we have Lake Okeechobee water that we're also considering as part of excess water.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Well, see I'm a -- you have too many variables here, especially when you consider that Orlando wants to capture the Kissimmee River Watershed, some of that water for

their aquifer re-nourishment and future growth when you have the others that are variables. You have too many variables and I don't know how you, you know, how you build the equations to tie up all the variables. I'm told the equation. If you ask, they say all water should go south. If all the water went south, how do we address all the freshwater about the growth and the people moving to the area and so forth? So, you know.

MR. LOSCHIAVO: Yes. So I think I hear your issue. You're concerned about what's going on with the coming in to the northern part, going -- of the watershed going into Lake Okeechobee and its relevance to this project. And just to let folks know, right now we aren't consider any changes to the lake and this project is really focused on the Loxahatchee River Watershed. And that's the focus. There are going to be future opportunities as things change in the future to look at changes to the lake. For example, complete analysis on the Herbert Hoover Dike. And as far as waters and from -- you know, being affected by, I guess, water supply in Orlando, there's going to be a process to look at that issue as well.

LT. COL. GRECO: Yes, sir. And I'll just add

on to that one thing that Matt briefed earlier is there are currently nine major projects underway throughout the state, four of which were just authorized, one was just very close to the final planning process and then we're starting this. So they all work together and we would certainly be happy to talk to you about how all of those pieces fit together. This is one important piece that's small in the grand scheme of the 18,000 mile watershed of South Florida, but there are many pieces in place right now that we're working on. And the ultimate goal, obviously, with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is to pull these pieces together and get the system back to that balance that Matt was talking about earlier, but we'd definitely be happy to talk with you about that afterward.

Any other clarifying questions?

Okay. So with that, I just wanted to let you know that it's obviously very important that we hear your voice. We're here to listen to your comments, to understand what your concerns are and provide you with the opportunity to put your opinions on the record should you care to do so. Consequently, you can provide a verbal comment here

with the comment cards or even just write down your comments and not elect to speak so that we can enter that into the record just as well.

A transcript of this meeting will be prepared and the record will remain open until February 5th, which is pointed out up here. Written comments may be submitted to the email address and mailing address that you see up here. Certainly all comments will receive equal consideration. I would just ask that the folks who are speaking tonight, and right now we have two public comment cards, please come forward to the microphone which is in the center here and state your name and if applicable what organization you represent. I ask that you keep your comments pertinent to the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. If you have comments outside of the project itself, I'd be happy to meet with you immediately following the meeting.

So the first individual for comment is Michelle Diffenderfer.

Welcome, Michelle.

MS. DIFFENDERFER: Thank you very much. Michelle Diffenderfer with Lewis, Longman & Walker. I'm here this evening with the City of West Palm

Beach which, of course, is a partner and a member of your Project Delivery Team meeting, but we just thought we should also show up at the scoping meeting and show our support as part of the historic flow way to the Loxahatchee River. Of course we're asking waters preserved be part of the City's natural system but also a major part of the City's water supply system and as such we would just want to make sure that a study of that part of the system is still a focus and goal of this project. It's been a little amorphous as it's reentered the world here. And of course we don't have anything in writing yet, but we just want to make it crystal clear that the City system which has come to be know as Flow-way 1, that really grew out of the original planning out here back in the late 19s and early 2000s, so we became a part of the flow way system from then and have been functioning as such and I want to make sure that doesn't get lost in the scoping of the Corps' project. Because if you're starting from today, you might look at that as existing conditions, but for us, the City of West Palm Beach made that as part of parcel of a project that was this project before. So we want to make sure that concept

doesn't get lost in the fact that there are waters flowing through our system today and actually monies that the City has spent as a part of this kind of history of the North Palm Beach project that's now the Loxahatchee Watershed Project.

And then the City's very happy to be a part of an environmental restoration partner on that, but you have to realize, also, we want to make sure it's a part of the study that water quality and water quantity impacts occur to the City's water supply system as a result of using Grassy Waters Preserve as part of Flow-way 1 and that restoration of connection. So it's kind of a multi-purpose project for the City while being a restoration benefit for the Loxahatchee River Slough system absolutely, but we just want to have the water quality aspect considered as part of this and then the flowage so that as water flows through our system and it's pulled for restoration purposes, we want to make sure that doesn't negatively impact the utility which also relies on that shame shared system. It's actually a very beneficial shared system like much of the Everglades has become over time. So that's really our key comment.

And then being in the southern part of this

Loxahatchee system, we want to make sure that the lake lagoon that flows through the lagoon that comes to the City of West Palm Beach are not forgotten as part of this. I see that the lake lagoon is still listed, I'm not sure where it will fit into your scoping process and your study of alternatives. So we just want to make sure that bigger projects as we participated previously isn't lost. I know you're trying to go with a similar, more specific focus thing here, but there are some very key pieces there that the City of West Palm Beach was a historic partner on and would like to remain on a partner on those issues. Thank you.

LT. COL. GRECO: Thank you.

The next public comment is from Woody Wodraska. Welcome, sir.

MR. WODRASKA: Good evening. My name is Woody Wodraska. I live in Jupiter. Formerly I was with the South Florida Water Management District for 20 years, the last nine years as Executive Director. I've been authorized to represent the Town of Jupiter tonight. A concern -- and I was a critic of the initial PIR planning process when it first came out and felt that it lacked the focus and the direction in keeping the eye on the ball that is

needed for water resource projects. That being said, a lot of really good work was done in the PIR process and my concern is you've had a process and while Congress might have authorized the yellow book in 2000, the planning process went back into the early '90s so we've been working on this project for 25 years. We know an awful lot about this watershed. And my concern is the pendulum has swung so far in the other direction. Say you've got three years and $3 million, what are we going to jam into this process that I wanted to be -- I want this to be a comprehensive review of the Loxahatchee Basin. And as Michelle said, the role Grassy Water plays and the Lake Worth Lagoon, the Indian River, I want this to be more than just a Mecca project and really looking at the entire L-8 Basin. I was very intrigued by your comments about Lake Okeechobee. The one thing I think everybody in the Jupiter area is in agreement, and I've got to admit my thinking has changed on this, but I used to say, you know, the Water Management District and Corps will do the right thing, but thank God we don't have a connection with C-18, S-46 and Lake Okeechobee because I'm convinced that the same damages that occurred in the St. Lucie

Estuary would have happened in the Loxahatchee River if there would have been that direct discharge. And from the Culvert 10 structures into L-8, you can get water into the North Fork -- or into the system, especially if there's an extension of C-18 Canal. So keeping Lake Okeechobee water out of Loxahatchee water basin is a top priority. There's a concern. The Town of Jupiter has made a huge investment in brackish water desalination, it has some ASR projects.

One of the mysteries of water resources in South Florida has been changing of the upper Florida and finding out that the quality and the source water changes and its had a -- it used to be back in the '80s an unlimited potential for the upper Florida. Now we're finding out that it does have limits. And as you put in -- if you were to put in systems, clearly the existing users have concerns about what impact that might have on the investment Jupiter has made with their groundwater system. So these are all things -- and my concern is you're on this fast track. The PIR process is way too slow, way too ambiguous, way too big. Now you've kind of got your .30-06 and you're saying full speed ahead, we're going to hit this target

out there. And I think it's going to end up somewhere in between those two extremes. But let's not throw out all the good work that had been done in looking for a comprehensive standpoint of what needs to be done with the Loxahatchee Basin. It is a complex area and it's a very special place and this could be that blueprint for how we manage water resources in the future of the county in the north end, but it's got to be done right. Thank you.

LT. COL. GRECO: Thank you, sir.

Deb Drum.

MS. DRUM: Hi. Good evening. I'm Deb Drum with Martin County and I just wanted to say welcome to all of the agencies that are represented here tonight. We really appreciate you taking the time to come to our community and talk about the Loxahatchee River and the restoration that's taking place. I've worked on the Loxahatchee for a lot of years so it's nice to see -- to see another opportunity to all come together to restore this important ecosystem.

Martin County, I'm the Ecosystem Director for Martin County and we remain committed as your partner. We've been a large partner in the

Loxahatchee restoration. We've gotten some active projects going on in the Kitching Creek area. We have an active project ongoing and I'd be happy to take any of you out there to see it in progress to build a stormwater treatment area to clean the water before it reaches into Kitching Creek which is one of the main headwaters of the -- that restores the river. So we're looking at maintaining dry season flows for the Loxahatchee with that project. We are also, our Board of County Commissioners voted last year to set aside a million dollars of land acquisition money to continue land acquisition to try to get a more active program back in acquiring the Pal Mar area which is in your project area as well to see what we can do to get some of those important wetland areas under public ownership. And we've got a number of other projects going on in Cypress Creek. So we've tried to step out and we've taken some leadership and building some new structures in that watershed up along the Ranch Colony Canal. We replaced the 28 storm structures recently. And the operations of the area, the complexity of the operations can't be underestimated so we would just ask you to take that into consideration as we move

forward. We did proceed through the Loxahatchee River Preservation initiative asking for some design in planning, funding. And if we're successful in getting funding from the legislature this year, we can move on planning and design of infrastructure along the Ranch Colony Canal that will help the Loxahatchee River in some very significant way. But we are looking for partners for constructing that structure and we look to you for consideration as we move forward in this process. We will be at the table, we will be active. Please let us know if there's anything we could do to assist. Thank you.

LT. COL. GRECO: Thank you.

Are there any other comments? I'll let you fill a card out afterward. Okay. So with that, I'd certainly like to thank everyone for taking their time out of your busy schedules to participate in tonight's meeting. If you do have additional questions or would like to discuss any aspects of tonight's presentation, representatives from the Corps and the Water Management District will remain around and available by posters in the back.

Thanks again, and certainly have a safe drive

home. Thanks.

Oh, one final thing is I'll put this information up here again just in case you wanted to access what Andy was talking about in terms of schedules.

(Thereupon, these proceedings concluded at 8:04 P.M.)

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, DIANNE MORRIS, Registered Professional Reporter, in and for the County of Martin, do hereby certify that in the matter of Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project, a public hearing was held, beginning at the hour of 7:00 P.M. on January 12, 2015; that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings in that meeting, and that the foregoing pages, number 3 through 52, comprise a true and correct transcript of those proceedings.

Done and dated January 26, 2015, at Stuart, Martin, Florida.

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DIANNE MORRIS, RPR