
Lake Belt Working Group Advisory Team

Working Group Issue Advisory Team Directive #2, January 8, 1997

TITLE: Lake Belt

BACKGROUND: The remaining wetlands within the Lake Belt area provide a variety of wetlands functions that will be lost as a result of anticipated mining activities in northwest Dade County. Approximately 5,000 acres have been mined, permits have been issued for an additional 5,000 acres, and a coalition of miners have proposed a plan for mining an additional 16,000 acres over the next 50 years for a total of 26,000 acres.

The Northwest Dade County Freshwater Lake Plan Implementation Committee was created through Florida legislation to recommend a plan to maximize the mining of this area while enhancing water supply and protecting the environment. The committee will submit a report to the Legislature by February, 1997, with its recommendations. The interim work products of the Committee should provide a good foundation for developing an alternative analysis and creating a comprehensive plan for the area.

Prior to the initiation of the Committee, the Corps initiated a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement due to concerns about cumulative impacts of piecemeal permitting decisions in this area. Several initial alternative plans have been identified that provide varying proportions of mining (from 5,000 to 26,000 acres), water management (seepage control, storage, and water quality treatment), and wildlife habitat. Wildlife studies and some hydrologic modeling has been performed by the Committee. However, alternative project features have not been sufficiently modeled to select a reasonable alternative that best meets regional objectives.

Absent this effort, detailed analysis of this area, under the auspices of the Restudy, would not occur until after completion of the Comprehensive Plan. It is, therefore, the opinion of the Working Group, that a timely analysis of the Lake Belt Plan would allow completion of the Programmatic EIS and will lay the foundation for any subsequent analyses needed for the Restudy.

PURPOSE: The team will analyze a set of alternatives and recommend a preferred alternative that balances public need for construction aggregate, cement, and road base materials with: (1) environmental restoration goals for the Everglades, (2) regional water management goals and, (3) achieving a "no net loss" of wetland functions from mining activities.

DELIVERABLES: The team will prepare a report that describes their formulation and evaluation process. The evaluation process must be based on best available data and best professional and expert judgment. The team will compare, among alternatives, the benefits and detriments of various factors and identify those that influenced their selection of the recommended alternative. This alternative will form the basis for developing a Programmatic EIS and a proposal for a Programmatic General Permit for mining in this region. This report should be completed by April 1997.

MEMBERS:

John Hall, USACE, Chair	Eric Hughes, EPA
Janet Llewellyn, DEP, Co-chair	Henry Bittaker, DCA
Bill Porter, USACE	Jim Jackson, SFWMD
Bob Barron, USACE	Tommy Strowd, SFWMD
Russell Reed, USACE	Jayantha Obeysekera, SFWMD
Frank Bernardino, DERM	Melanie Steinkamp, USFWS
Karyn Ferro, NPS	Tom MacVicar, Mining Coalition
Mark Kraus, Audubon	Bob O'Brien, Florida Rock Industries
Al Townsend, Tarmac Florida, Inc.	Bill Payne, CSR Rinker
Jim Hurley, White Rock Industries	Paul Larson, Alternate at Large
Alberto Tamayo, property owner	Karsten Rist, Florida Audubon Society
Joseph E. Podgor, consultant	

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Working Group Issue Advisory Team Directive #2, January 8, 1997 (continued)

GUIDANCE:

In considering the alternatives, the team should address at a minimum:

- (1) An appropriate level of compensatory mitigation that will be required to offset loss of wetland functions and values resulting from mining, including consideration of a user fee to accomplish the mitigation.
- (2) Project features to manage seepage and offset any increase of seepage due to mining. (e.g., water management through step-down measures, subterranean seepage barrier (grout curtain walls and muck barriers), etc.)
- (3) Any secondary impacts within WCA-3B, Everglades National Park, and the Pennsoco wetlands as a result from increased seepage resulting from additional rock mining activities.
- (4) Any upstream and downstream effects of seepage control measures. (e.g., increased salt water intrusion, salinity changes in Biscayne Bay, effects to well fields, etc.)
- (5) Means to increase rock mining tonnage within the existing mined areas. (e.g., remove Section roads, remove existing littoral shelves, reopen old shallow pits, etc.)
- (6) Means to improve water management (urban water supply, storage, water quality treatment) within northwest Dade County. (i.e., utilize the rock pits, above ground impoundments, backpumping, etc.)
- (7) Water quality issues related to backpumping. (e.g., well field impacts and use of this water for natural system needs).

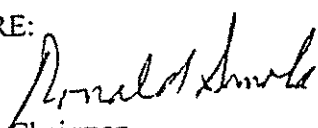
As needed, the team should develop recommendations for additional analyses and/or studies that should be accomplished to address any unresolved issues that arise from this task.

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:

- a. The team shall convene its working session no later than January 17, 1997, hold sessions every 2 weeks thereafter, and present a draft recommendation at the April 1997 Working Group meeting.
- b. All working sessions will be open to the public and include opportunity for public comment.

SIGNATURE:

Dated: 5/6/97


Ron Smola, Chairman
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group