

SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE

Sustainable Agriculture Task Team Directive

BACKGROUND: Agriculture, tourism and construction make up the three economic legs on which Florida stands. Florida is the nation's 9th leading agricultural state, with annual farm cash receipts totaling \$6 billion. It also contributes \$18 billion in farm related economic activity and employs 80,000 people a month. From field to supermarket, Florida's agriculture contributes \$45 billion to the State's economy annually. Between 1982 and 1992, the number of acres designated as agricultural in Florida has decreased from 12.8 million acres to 10.7 million acres, a loss of 15.98%. Even with this significant loss in production area, agriculture remains a significant source of jobs and income in South Florida. Four of South Florida's counties are among the nation's major agriculture leaders: Palm Beach leads the nation in sugarcane production; Hendry leads in the production of oranges; St. Lucie leads in the production of grapefruit; while Dade leads in the production of snapbeans. The total cash receipts generated by these four counties equals \$2 billion. If these counties were a state, they would rank 30th in farm cash receipts.

The Governor's Commission for A Sustainable South Florida has recognized agriculture as a critical industry, both economically and environmentally. In South Florida agricultural lands buffer natural systems from urban areas, and inhibit urban sprawl, while providing extensive employment opportunities and agricultural products. Thus, the loss or conversion of farmlands to urban development undermines the restoration of South Florida's ecosystem. Transforming development patterns within urban areas and designating open space outside these areas for non-urban uses are tools for a sustainable community. Designating lands in local government comprehensive plans for non-urban uses; continues land in agricultural production, buffers natural systems from urban areas, preserves natural systems and inhibits urban sprawl.

PURPOSE: To develop and create the Sustainable Agriculture Plan for the Working Group's Restoration and Sustainability Plan for South Florida. The knowledge and expertise of each team member's agency shall be used in this effort.

Members: Co-chairperson - Ron Smola, USDA

Co-chairperson - John Folks, FDACS

USACE - COL Joe Miller

FDEP - Mark Glisson

EPA - Avinash Patwardham

SFWMD - Bruce Adams

FG&FWFC - Brad Hartman

Palm Beach County - Linda Sue Hoppes

BIA - Jim Harriman

DERM - Sue Alspach

Seminole Tribe - Craig Tepper

USGS - Aaron Higer

NOAA - Geoff Scott (Brad Brown)

NPS - Bob Doren

FKNMS - Joy Tatgenhorst

FDCA-Ed Cobham and Toni Riordan

Any Working Group member may appoint a representative to the team by notifying Ron Smola (561) 686-6600 x 2857 or John Folks (850) 414-9928.

GUIDANCE:

a. The team will quantify and qualify the attributes of sustainable agriculture and the potential methodologies and actions needed to assure the existence of a "Sustainable Agriculture" in South Florida.

b. The team shall meet as often as needed.

c. As issues develop that may impede the development of the plan and recommendation, these issues will be presented to the Working Group for assistance. The team co-chairs shall coordinate with the Working Group Chair and the OED to arrange briefings at appropriate Working Group meeting.

d. All team meetings will be open to the public and will provide an opportunity for public comment.

e. The team will recommend to the Working Group a panel of experts to serve as an independent peer review panel and provide advice during the plan's development.

f. The team will recommend to the Working Group a stakeholders' advisory group that shall provide input to and review interim products and the final draft plan.

g. Deliverables:

1. The team will identify the ideas, practices and policies that constitute the concept of sustainable agriculture in South Florida.

2. The team will clarify priorities and research agendas and develop practical steps that may be appropriate for establishing a sustainable agriculture in South Florida.

3. The team will provide the Working Group with:

(a) An outline and schedule for developing the Sustainability Plan

(b) A draft Plan for review and comment and

(c) A final Plan

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:

The Co-chairs will appoint a Public Affairs member to the team:

The public affairs member will coordinate with the Office of the Executive Director for additional instructions as soon as possible, but no later than one week prior to the initial meeting. This member will be responsible for providing public affairs support to the team, to include: providing adequate public notice of team meetings, facilitating public comment and providing a summary of all meetings that is suitable for publication on the Task Force Home Page.