

**MINUTES OF THE
TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
OCTOBER 16, 2015**

Chairman Mowery called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He led the pledge of allegiance and requested roll call.

The following members and alternates were present:

Indian River County:	Commissioner Zorc Vice Mayor Adams
Martin County:	Commissioner Fielding Commissioner Haddox Commissioner Thurlow-Lippisch
St. Lucie County:	Commissioner Mowery Councilman Bowen
Palm Beach County:	Commissioner Valeche Commissioner McKinlay, Alternate Commissioner Taylor Councilwoman Gerwig Councilman Hmara Councilmember Tinsley Commissioner Biggs, Alternate
Gubernatorial Appointees:	Douglas Bournique Michael Davis Toby Overdorf Reece Parrish Peter Sachs Kelly Smallridge Steven Weaver, Sr.
Ex-Officios:	Ann Benedetti, St. Johns River Water Management District Lois Bush, Florida Department of Transportation Jill Creech, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Kathy LaMartina, South Florida Water Management District
Council Staff:	Michael Busha Phyllis Castro Kim DeLaney Liz Gulick Stephanie Heidt Peter Merritt
Council Attorney:	Keith Davis

The Executive Director announced a quorum is present.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Councilman Bowen moved approval of the Agenda. Commissioner Haddox seconded the motion, **Motion** which carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff indicated Anne Bolduc from Representative Magar's office, and Michelle McGovern from Senator Nelson's office are present.

Staff noted review forms for the executive director's annual review were provided, and asked Council members to complete the reviews and forward them to Council offices. Staff indicated the Budget/Personnel Committee will provide a summary and make a recommendation with respect to the Executive Director reviews to the full Council in December.

Staff indicated a save-the-date flyer had been distributed regarding the Southeast Florida Regional Transportation Plan rollout on November 6th. Staff stated if anyone is interested in the future of Tri-Rail and the Tri-Rail Coastal Link, this is a great opportunity to take the train through Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties to learn more about these projects.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Mowery stated he enjoys working with the Executive Director, noting he appreciates his quick response to questions.

COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN/CENTRAL EVERGLADES PLANNING PROJECT – PRESENTATION BY THOMAS M. TEETS, OFFICE OF EVERGLADES POLICY AND COORDINATION DIVISION DIRECTOR, SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Staff has been working with the South Florida Water and St. Johns River Water Management Districts to educate Council members on regional water issues. Staff noted issues such as lack of water, water quality, and what we do with our water affects the economic development organizations, elected officials, private businesses, and the citizens in terms of the quality of life we enjoy. Staff indicated Thomas Teet's presentation will address Lake Okeechobee operations; implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP); and what is planned for the water management systems throughout the state.

Mr. Teets noted the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is the largest and most populated water management district in the state, covering about 18,000 square miles; 2,100 miles of canals; 2,000 miles of levees; more than 600 water control structures and 625 project culverts; and 70 pump stations. He noted SFWMD's core mission is providing flood protection, maintaining water quality, planning for water supply, and protecting the natural systems that serve 8.1 million residents in the district.

Mr. Teets noted Lake Okeechobee is the largest lake in the southeast and the second largest lake in the contiguous United States. He indicated the lake is very shallow, noting it is surrounded by a dike

that was started in 1930; rebuilt and extended in the 1960s; and is currently being enhanced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). He noted the lake has multiple objectives that include flood protection, water supply, ecosystems for wildlife, and recreational opportunities. He stated a good job has been done with water supply and flood protection, but one of the challenges now is to restore the systems both north and south of the lake. He indicated the tools for managing the lake are a regulation schedule, water shortage management plan, and adaptive protocols to determine where the water should go. He stated SFWMD works closely with the USACE, but ultimately it is the USACE's decision where the water goes from the lake.

Mr. Teets presented an overview of the Kissimmee Restoration project. He indicated the project has been ongoing for approximately 20 years and has been successful by filling in approximately 22 miles of canals. He stated the project has seen the marshes rehydrated; restoration of the fisheries; and return of the wildlife that had vanished when the canal systems were dug in the 1950s and 1960s. He also noted once this project is complete it will provide a lot of storage to the north.

Mr. Teets noted that since the mid-1990s the SFWMD has been in the process of building stormwater treatment areas (STAs) to treat the phosphorous coming off of the agricultural areas as well as Lake Okeechobee water flowing to the south. He indicated in order to optimize the amount of water being treated flow equalization basins were added to focus on treating existing flows. With respect, to the CERP, Mr. Teets stated this plan, started in the mid-1990s, is a cost-share plan between the SFWMD and USACE. He noted proposed projects include water storage; water flows; and removing barriers to allow more water to increase flow through the Everglades. He stated when the plan was finished in 1999, it was to be a \$7.8 billion dollar project, but over time the price has increased to around \$13-14 billion. He stated one of the first projects authorized in 2007 was the Indian River Lagoon South project. He provided an overview of projects in the Indian River Lagoon South project, including the C-44 canal reservoir; construction of STAs; and the C-43 canal reservoir. He noted that over the past year SFWMD has been working in cooperation with the Governor's office and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to develop a dedicated funding source from the state legislature. He indicated \$5 billion of state funding has been identified over the next 20 years, funding a combination of the restoration strategies as well as CERP. He also noted a need for at least \$4 billion in matching funds from the federal government.

Mr. Teets noted CEPP, a component of CERP, is instrumental in moving water south. He indicated they have found bundling some of the projects is very beneficial. He stated they have combined storage in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), de-compartmentalizing in the Everglades area to the south, and seepage management to formulate a plan that has been sent to Congress for authorization. He indicated this will increase the amount of water we can move from Lake Okeechobee south by an average of 200,000 acre-feet per year.

Commissioner Zorc asked how the restoration efforts will correct the water quality before it gets to Lake Okeechobee, and what else is being done to reduce the phosphorus and nitrogen going south. Mr. Teets stated the restoration efforts will provide additional storage to the north, which will slow the flow and rehydrate the flood plain and reduce the phosphorus. He stated other projects are underway with the USACE and FDEP that will provide additional storage and treatment on a regional scale to clean-up both the water coming out of the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee basin. Commissioner Zorc asked if only hard storage is being considered, or if other types of technology to clean the water are being considered. Mr. Teets stated that north of Lake Okeechobee

they are looking at other technologies and FDEP's Lake Okeechobee basin management plan has also identified some new technologies.

Commissioner Fielding noted there is hope in the upper chain of lakes that hydrology will be allowed to adjust to the natural flow. Mr. Teets stated once the back fill of the canals is completed the next step is head waters revitalization, which will allow an additional two feet of storage in some of the northern lakes. Commissioner Fielding stated there is an immediate emergency in the Florida Bay. He asked if we are at a point there to see some relief. Mr. Teets stated there is no immediate solution to what happened to Florida Bay. Commissioner Fielding noted Florida Bay is the largest seagrass bed in the world, and the salinity is now so bad that it has created an extremely dangerous situation for the environment. He stated this is an enormous recreational area that is in danger of being totally destroyed.

Councilmember Bournique stated he is a big advocate for the district to be more aggressive with a burn program to remove the exotics from the lake, which will bring back the fish and wildlife habitats. He noted Ten Mile Creek is being underutilized. He stated this was the first CERP project and he believes it is a shame to move on to other projects, but leave that hole in the ground as it is. Mr. Teets stated they would like to de-authorize that in such a way so they are able to take over and fix it. Councilmember Bournique stated it is not the water management district's fault, but it would be better to have left that land as a citrus grove, because there would be less runoff. He said there is no back up plan for water supply and we should be parking the water that is being put to tide on western lands for future use.

Commissioner Valeche asked how old Lake Okeechobee is and how it was formed. Mr. Teets stated he did not know. Commissioner Valeche asked if the St. Lucie Canal has any treatment capacity other than diverting flow to the C-44 canal basin. Mr. Teets indicated the canal itself does not do a lot for treating the water. He stated there is the water farming pilot Councilmember Bournique mentioned. He stated anytime water is taken off-line in that basin, whether it flows back or remains off-line, it will reduce the amount of phosphorus flowing to the east. Commissioner Valeche asked who is funding the efforts to reduce the phosphorus and if there is a marginal difference between 15 and 10 parts per billion. Mr. Teets stated they are managing phosphorus using the stormwater treatment areas and they have been able to meet the standards. He noted it is not all the time, but it is getting better with time and he is confident the legal requirements will be met. He indicated that as part of the overall restoration strategy effort, there is a scientific plan that looks at optimizing treatment capabilities. Commissioner Valeche asked if there will be a heavy reliance on aquifer storage and recovery (ASR). He stated it is his understanding this is expensive, not very effective, and contributes to air quality problems. Mr. Teets indicated two ASR system projects were constructed and are successfully operated. He noted in order to answer some of the questions and concerns about ASR, a regional study was conducted over the last year, which determined there are no fatal flaws with ASR, and identified 80 potential locations around the lake for ASR systems. Mr. Teets stated this is less than was originally envisioned, but it is still viable and comparable to a reservoir. Commissioner McKinlay stated that according to FDEP's website, Lake Okeechobee is 6,000 years old and was formed when ocean water receded and water was left standing in a shallow depression.

Vice Chairman Davis stated Mr. Teets is one of the true Everglades heroes and he remembers standing in the oval office with President Clinton and Governor Bush when President Clinton signed CERP. He asked how many projects are operating today out the 68 projects initially

anticipated. Mr. Teets indicated only one project, the Melaleuca eradication facility in Davie. Vice Chairman Davis stated when CERP was initially written it was anticipated it would be about 30-35 years, and about \$8-9 billion. He noted over the next 20 years the state is going to invest \$5 billion and the federal government will contribute \$4 billion. He asked what portion of the state's contribution will be used for water quality obligations. Mr. Teets indicated about one half billion dollars. Vice Chairman Davis stated \$9 billion over the next 20 years is not enough. He stated there is an opportunity with the Presidential election in 2016 to get some commitments from the candidates on this issue.

Commissioner Thurlow-Lippisch noted storage of water in south Florida has been altered in two major ways. The capacity of Lake Okeechobee has been reduced by encroaching agriculture lands by 30 percent and water that was once "stored" on the land is now drained off due to development. She stated that it is great to have a goal of 100,000 acre feet, but is that enough? She asked how much storage is truly needed to offset releases coming from the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee and how much water is now being directed to the St. Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon? Mr. Teets stated he does not know the storage needs for the St. Lucie Estuary, but the storage needs for the Caloosahatchee estuary is about 400,000 acre feet. He stated there is a debate about how much storage is needed north and south. He indicated this will evolve over time, because we do not know how much flow can actually be put through the Everglades without causing more damage. He stated when an overall plan was developed the focus was on Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) 3A and 3B, and Everglades National Park. He stated they are working through the science now to determine how much storage will ultimately be needed.

Councilmember Overdorf stated that the roughly 8 million residents being served by SFWMD are being held hostage by a listed species called the Cape Sabol Seaside Sparrow. He asked what the SFWMD is doing to potentially alleviate that situation and the flow associated with that STA. Mr. Teets stated the issue is in Everglades National Park and moving the water to the east takes a big step away from the sparrow. He stated if we can move a little bit to the east, water will flow through the Shark River Slough, which is not their habitat. Councilmember Overdorf asked if they have always lived there or have they moved based on management over the last 20 years. Mr. Teets stated he believes they moved there as a result of natural occurrences such as hurricanes and parks being drier, which is an undesirable habitat. He stated they dwell in areas that are seasonally flooded. He said one of the problems is the park may be dry enough for their nesting season, but it dries too quickly and woody vegetation moves in, which brings in their predators. He stated flooding during certain times of the year may actually be beneficial to the species. Councilmember Overdorf stated we are dealing with a listed species, not in their original habitat. He asked if the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has helped with looking into alternative plans for their habitat. Mr. Teets stated there is a limitation of good lands for the sparrow.

Councilmember Overdorf stated he understands that ASR is huge component of CERP. He asked if there is a tremendous amount of science to back up the ASR systems and injections. Mr. Teets indicated there is a lot of science. Councilmember Overdorf asked if there is anything noted that it will affect in any way the drinking water for residents within South Florida. Mr. Teets stated definitely not, because with these ASR systems the water is injected and brought back up and then re-oxygenated and put back into the natural system. He stated there are ASR systems all over the state, and Peace River has a huge facility for public drinking water. He stated one of the issues they have run into around the state is the issue of arsenic. They have found in the facilities that have been tested, because there is very little treatment done, the arsenic does not get released. He indicated

when the water is oxygenated there are arsenic problems in the Florida aquifer. He stated they will continue to do ecological studies on the ASR systems to ensure there are no negative impacts, and this is a technology that will gradually grow. Councilmember Overdorf stated that if you look at the costs of the ASR systems and then the per acre-foot cost of what is done at the C-44 canal, and looking at the water storage associated with a former citrus farm, it appears you are getting a better bang for your buck on the private side than you would on the construction of these large facilities. He asked if there has been any shift toward allocating monies more to the private side and private water farming. Mr. Teets indicated there are different types of projects, because they fill different needs. He stated the reason the ASR systems were implemented is to supply carry over storage through multiple seasons. He noted a large reservoir has larger pumps, which allows water to pull the water faster into the facilities. In the case of water farming, it is more gradual and can capture and then recharge the ground water. He stated that a combination of all these facilities are needed.

Councilmember Weaver asked if there is any water quality treatment done inside the levy system. Mr. Teets stated that would depend on the facility. If it is a deep reservoir then a lot of treatment is not anticipated. He stated when you capture a large flush of water and pull it into the reservoir, the sediment will settle. He stated in the case of a shallow reservoir, there is some treatment, through the flow equalization basins. Also, because the water level is only about 4 feet, there will most likely be cattails growing in that area, which will help to reduce phosphorous levels. Councilmember Weaver asked if this is done inside the main levy around Lake Okeechobee. Mr. Teets indicated no, that the main treatment occurs within the lake's littoral zone. He stated in the open water areas the water quality is not good, and heavy winds churn up the sediment making water quality worse. Councilmember Weaver requested Mr. Teet's presentation be made available on Council's website.

Councilmember Parrish stated that about five or six years ago when the lake was extremely low, there was a plan to de-muck around the lake. He asked what the long-term effect is from that de-mucking. Mr. Teets indicated de-mucking removed a lot of phosphorous out of the lake, but unfortunately there is a lot of muck still in the lake. He noted that de-mucking and the burning that also occurred was very beneficial to the lake.

Councilman Hmara thanked Mr. Teets for his presentation.

Councilwoman Gerwig asked if the silt in the center of the lake was affected by all the sloshing. Mr. Teets indicated yes, stating the water quality in the lake was terrible after Hurricane Wilma, and it took years for the sediments to settle. Councilmember Bournique stated the average depth of the lake is 9.6 feet, so any wind suspends the phosphorous and sediments at the bottom of the lake. Councilwoman Gerwig asked if the muck that was removed has any value for farming. Mr. Teets stated there is value for farming, but there are some concerns about contaminants. Additionally, he noted Palm Beach County is looking at an opportunity to create some littoral type areas on the southeast side of the lake.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Bournique moved approval of the Consent Agenda. Councilwoman Gerwig **Motion** seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Items on the Consent Agenda were: 8A, Financial Report – August 31, 2015; 8B, Minutes – September 18, 2015; 8C, Town of Lantana Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 15-1ESR; 8D, Martin County Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 15-2ESR; and 8E, Intergovernmental Coordination and Review Log

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FEDERAL METROPOLITAN PLANNING ENHANCEMENT ACT

Staff provided an overview of a draft resolution to support federal legislation being proposed by Congresswoman Frankel. Proposed in 2014, the legislation will create a federal Metropolitan Planning Enhancement Act that will allow the designation of “high-performing” metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Staff indicated the MPOs would be required to serve a population of more than 200,000 people, which would include both the Palm Beach MPO and St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization in our region. Staff noted criteria would include regional cooperation with other MPOs, technical capacity, and achievement of MPO performance targets. Staff indicated the proposed legislation will provide greater flexibility over the use of federal funds and perhaps additional funding through reallocations to increase resources for designated MPOs.

Commissioner Fielding moved approval of the Resolution in Support of the Federal Metropolitan Planning Enhancement Act. Commissioner McKinlay **Motion** seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

ALL ABOARD FLORIDA UPDATE

Staff provided an update of the All Aboard Florida (AAF) project. With respect to quiet zones, staff indicated activity varies throughout the region. Staff continues to assist the local governments from West Palm Beach to Boca Raton, which are located in the AAF Phase I segment, with the establishment of quiet zones. Staff indicated there will likely be six quiet zones in this segment with the goal being establishment of quiet zones before the AAF train service begins.

Staff noted in northern Palm Beach County, from 15th Street in West Palm Beach to Tequesta, Council staff is working with the Palm Beach MPO and the respective local governments to analyze what is being proposed by AAF versus what is necessary for the establishment of quiet zones. Staff indicated most of the infrastructure necessary for quiet zones appears to be within the latest plans, with the exception of one section in the Town of Jupiter where the trains will slow down before they cross the Loxahatchee River bridge. Staff noted this means the trains will be moving more slowly in this area, and in the absence of high speed corridor requirements, AAF would not be required to install as much infrastructure. Staff stated the Palm Beach MPO has already allocated funds to address this as well as any other additional infrastructure that would be needed for quiet zone establishment. Staff indicated that currently all local governments along the FEC corridor in Palm Beach County have indicated they want to establish quiet zones, and it is staff’s expectation that will be done consistently throughout all of Palm Beach County.

Staff indicated the local governments in Martin and St. Lucie counties have received 90 percent plans from AAF. Staff noted a workshop was held with those local governments and Indian River County, which has not yet received its 90 percent plans. Staff stated Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) staff was present at the workshop to help explain the process for establishing quiet zones and answer any local government questions. Staff indicated key points raised at the workshops dealt with local government quiet zone liability; installation of wayside horns; and what infrastructure will be installed at the grade crossings. Staff noted there are some discrepancies between the list of infrastructure requirements in the environmental impact statement (EIS) and other interpretations of what the FRA's high-speed rail (HSR) guidelines would seem to require at grade crossings. Staff indicated there is continuing discussion with the FRA on the subject of liability of quiet zones as well as the agency's legal opinion as to how liability is handled at the local government level.

Staff explained wayside horns are pole-mounted horns installed at grade crossings and are considered a form of noise mitigation. Staff stated these are an alternative to the train-mounted horns that project sound roughly a half-mile down the track, thereby impacting homeowners and businesses located near the tracks. Staff indicated the wayside horns are mounted at grade crossings and instead of having the train blow its whistle, the engineer triggers a switch as the train approaches a grade crossing with the horn noise traveling down the street such that it is not heard by residents further away. Staff noted in residential and mixed-use districts, wayside horns can be a positive or a negative depending on how many homes are in that area and how they are affected by the sound. Staff indicated that in the EIS, wayside horns are recommended in a number of grade crossings, but at the workshop some local governments indicated they did not want wayside horns and asked how they can get out of that requirement. Staff provided contact information for local governments to send correspondence to the FRA indicating they oppose the installation of wayside horns.

With respect to required grade crossing improvements, staff indicated there is more extensive infrastructure delineated in the EIS than what would appear to be required by the HSR guidelines. Staff stated local governments in the region have indicated they would rather have AAF pay for as much infrastructure as possible so those costs do not have to be carried locally. Staff noted that because the railroad will be operating within one state, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will be the decision-maker on the requirements and not FRA. Staff stated updates will continue to be provided.

Commissioner Valeche asked if the infrastructure recommendations in the EIS are prescriptive. Staff indicated if AAF intends to pursue a Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RIFF) loan, it will be awarded on the basis of the EIS. Staff noted if private activity bonds (PABs) are secured, the authorization to seek those PABs also requires compliance with the EIS. However, if alternative funding is used, the EIS would only be considered a guidance document, without a requirement for compliance. Staff stated the recommendations are based on field reviews that are embedded in the EIS. Commissioner Valeche asked if the deadline for AAF to issue the PABs has been extended. Staff stated the latest correspondence received indicates the deadline has been moved to December 31st. Staff stated if the PABs are the financial route taken, the EIS could encourage FDOT to make decisions that are more protective of local governments. Commissioner Valeche asked if the requirements in the EIS are making AAF consider other sources of funding. Staff indicated there is no evidence of that, but the EIS has not been highly celebrated publicly by

AAF as it contains extra conditions that go beyond the HSR guidelines, and the company has been clear that the project is a private, for-profit venture, and they want to economize where possible.

Commissioner Fielding stated the two underlying concepts to understanding quiet zones are liability and safety, noting the allowed projected average speed will influence the requirements. Staff noted there is a difference between the amount of infrastructure that is required due to the speed of the train and what is required to establish a quiet zone, although both do take safety into consideration. One of the things local governments consider when establishing a quiet zone is whether or not there is sufficient grade crossing safety infrastructure in place so it can be concluded the additional notice from blowing a train horn will not make a difference. Staff stated AAF has indicated they plan to operate up to 110 miles per hour (mph) between 15th Street in West Palm Beach all the way up to State Road 528 in Brevard County, with exceptions at the Loxahatchee and St. Lucie bridges, where they are proposing to run about 60 mph. Staff noted this will shift the cost to the local governments who want quiet zones, because AAF is not required to comply with the HSR sealed corridor guidelines where trains will be traveling at speeds below 80 mph. Staff noted the grade crossings will be built to the highest standards per FDOT, with most of the quiet zone infrastructure paid for by AAF along the high-speed segments, because they are the entity changing the operating condition.

Commissioner Zorc noted the wayside horns for SunRail are in three parts that include a horn, a strobe light, and a pedestrian buzzer. He indicated wayside horns appear to be a better option for his county if the decibel level is the same as the train-mounted horns. He stated that because Indian River County has eight grade crossings at an average of 200 yards apart, if there is not a quiet zone, then there will be a continuous train horn through the area. He also noted there has been a lot of news with respect to the PABs, that if they do not sell and the project is privately funded, the requirements in the EIS will not be required. Staff stated the wayside horns are louder for a shorter distance, and train-mounted horns have a lower noise level, but the sound footprint expands because the trains are moving. Staff noted there is a half-mile threshold that is considered with respect to how far that sound is moving on the track.

Council Member Tinsley asked if wayside horns and quiet zones affect one another, and if you oppose wayside horns does it negate or do the opposite for quiet zones. Staff indicated quiet zones eliminate all horns, both train and pole-mounted. Council Member Tinsley asked why some intersections have wayside horns, and others do not, noting in her city they have requested the wayside horn for only two of the crossings. Staff stated it is unclear what the logic is, but Council will request a methodology as to how those decisions were reached.

Councilmember Weaver asked if staff has been provided any construction details for the sealed corridors. Staff indicated nothing has been received, noting the sealed corridor requirements address the fencing along the corridor outside the grade crossing improvements. Staff stated requests for clarity with respect to where and what type fencing will be installed, and the ability for the local governments to modify the plans, have not yet been answered, nor has a deadline for those plans been given. Staff will continue to request that information from both AAF and FRA.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Drew Martin stated the reason high speed rail around the world works is because it is elevated. He stated the biggest problem is the proposed AAF project is not elevated which means traffic is going

to be blocked. He indicated one of the concerns of the Sierra Club is the impact the AAF service will have on the wildlife in Jonathan Dickinson Park. Mr. Martin stated he believes the issue with the Cape Sabol Seaside Sparrow is over exaggerated. He stated at this point there is no facilitated way to move water in the western areas and the sparrow has always been in those areas. He stated the real problem is the Tamiami Trail and how the water was adjusted to flow into the park. He indicated that originally the water flowed over the trail so it was not as impactful as it is today, because our drainage is basically damming the water into WCAs 3A and 3B. Mr. Martin noted the Sierra Club does not support ASR. He stated ASR is expensive and the simple way to get water into the aquifer is to allow water in wetlands to percolate into the aquifer. He stated that pumping in water will bring contaminants from the surface down into the pristine aquifers, impacting the water quality. He stated the environmental community has pushed for storage in the EAA, but the SFWMD pushed back. He stated the problem now is the SFWMD does not have adequate funding and if we want to help with Everglades restoration the legislature and the governor need to understand the importance of funding the water management districts. He noted a big problem now is the invasive species of plants that are destroying the environment. He indicated the Loxahatchee Wildlife refuge needs \$25 million to clean out the invasive plants, and because the federal government does not have the money, the funding will need to come from the state. He noted that Amendment One could have provided all the needed funding, but instead the legislature is using that for operating existing programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

None.

STAFF COMMENT

Staff indicated at the September meeting there was an agenda item related to the Miami-Dade Beach Renourishment project and discussion of available sand sources, the bulk of which is proposed to come from offshore Martin and St. Lucie counties. Staff noted the same issue was raised at a recent Treasure Coast Council of Local Governments (TCCLG) meeting. Staff indicated the problem of sand shortage is getting worse and with sea level rise the need for beach renourishment will be more frequent in the future. Staff stated the idea raised at the TCCLG meeting was to look at a regional plan for sand management. Staff indicated offshore sand from zero to three miles out falls under the jurisdiction of the FDEP, and beyond that the federal government has jurisdiction. Staff stated one of the reasons to look at this issue regionally would be to have a stronger voice in the decisions that are made for the distribution of offshore sand. Staff also noted there may be some cost and mobilization efficiencies with having a good regional restoration plan. Additionally, as a group a much better case can be made for opening up international sources of sand, such as the Bahamas. Staff noted the regional effort would involve the Central, Treasure Coast, and South Florida regional planning councils. Staff requested authorization to initiate a meeting to see if there is any interest in putting together a regional plan.

Commissioner Fielding stated it is essential to be able to have some influence beyond that of an individual county, suggesting staff be allowed to come back with a recommendation on how to implement a collaborative effort. Commissioner Zorc suggested having discussions with organizations such as the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association and the offices of Congressmen Posey and Murphy to see if we can partner with them on some of their efforts.

Commissioner McKinlay stated she would motion to authorize staff to look into a regional collaboration on this issue. She indicated she believes the highest quality of sand comes from the center of the state, so we need to make sure those counties are part of the conversation. Commissioner Biggs seconded the motion.

Commissioner Valeche stated regionalism is already taking place if they are taking sand from borrow areas off the Treasure Coast and using it in Miami. He stated he recently saw a presentation on this and the idea is the sand does not belong to any particular county and can be used where it is needed. He stated he did not know if Miami’s sand borrow areas will be built up again through storm action or sand washing of the beach. He asked if this is going to be a duplication of what is already taking place. Staff indicated the sand is being taken regionally, but there is no cooperation, which is needed in order to avoid conflict.

Vice Chairman Davis stated that because this will most likely require federal funding or federal permitting, the right venue for this would be a programmatic EIS to get the big picture. Chairman Mowery stated an EIS has already been done and it has been delineated the Treasure Coast is the closest and most economically feasible sand source. Vice Chairman Davis stated an assessment needs to be look more broadly at the entire coastal needs.

Commissioner Haddox stated it is important to get out in front of this issue before it becomes a war. He stated he is concerned that if we deplete all of our own domestic sources, the cost is going to be tremendous for importing sand from international sources. He noted he believes this should also be of concern to the state.

Councilmember Bournique stated that before a lot of money is spent in beach renourishment, it is important to make efforts to slow down the velocity of the water moving to the south. He suggested using permeable groins and connect the outer reef structure to the beach so water flowing south is slowed down or diverted. Chairman Mowery asked that the focus be on whether or not to have a study. Councilmember Bournique stated that before we spend a lot of money, we need to seriously look at the big problem of where the sand supply is coming from and stabilizing the beaches. Commissioner Fielding stated he would like to add an amendment to the motion to include Councilmember Bournique’s suggestions. Commissioner McKinlay and Commissioner Biggs indicated they are fine with the amendment.

Upon being put to a vote, the motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Mowery adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m. This signature is to attest that the undersigned is the Secretary or a designated nominee of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, and that the information provided herein is the true and correct Minutes of the October 16, 2015 meeting of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

Date

Signature