



EVERGLADES COALITION

July 29, 2026

RE: Everglades Coalition Comments – Southern Everglades Study (CERP) PDP Process

Dear Project Managers,

The Everglades Coalition is composed of nearly 60 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America's Everglades, representing a network of more than 12.2 million supporters. As a coalition, we support the continued advancement of Everglades restoration and recognize the importance of accelerating projects from planning to implementation. We appreciate the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) decision to extend the stakeholder review period on the final array of alternatives to July 29 following the July 15 Project Delivery Team (PDT) meeting. Below we present a list of some of our initial concerns:

1. The RAPID process should continue to support meaningful stakeholder engagement

The Coalition appreciates ACOE's efforts to optimize project delivery through the RAPID planning process, however, accelerated planning should continue to provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration throughout project development. Early and ongoing engagement with federal, state, Tribal, local, and nongovernmental stakeholders, along with timely access to supporting technical information - strengthens restoration planning and helps ensure that alternatives benefit from the collective expertise of project partners. As the study advances, we encourage ACOE and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to continue creating opportunities for the stakeholders to help inform and refine restoration alternatives, and identify potential issues before key planning decisions are made, which facilitate building broad support for successful implementation.

2. Protection of Bird Drive Basin and Pennsuco wetlands is critical to providing restoration benefits as set forth in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)

The Coalition strongly supports acquisition and long-term protection of Bird Drive Basin and Pennsuco wetlands from future development, and the protection of Bird Drive Basin wetlands should be included in the chosen Southern Study plan. However, land acquisition alone does not

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fulfill the restoration purpose and benefits originally envisioned in the CERP. These wetlands were proposed as active restoration features providing critical benefits including managed storage, groundwater recharge, conveyance, and restoration of natural hydrology; if these functions and benefits are not provided by Bird Drive Basin features as part of the Southern Study, they must be restored and replaced.

3. Restoration cannot simply shift water deficits elsewhere

While reducing seepage from Everglades National Park (ENP) is an important restoration objective, comprehensive restoration cannot be achieved by transferring hydrologic deficits to adjacent wetlands, groundwater, or downstream regions such as Biscayne Bay, where it would perpetuate existing and substantial ecological stress. The reported reduction in freshwater deliveries to the east associated with the final array of alternatives is concerning. Any preferred alternative – including seepage walls – must demonstrate maintenance of regional hydrologic functions, protection of freshwater availability, and consistency with the broader restoration objectives established under CERP.

We appreciate your consideration of these preliminary comments. The Everglades Coalition looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with ACOE and its partners to understand the plan to provide the benefits described in the original Southern Study CERP Project and to advance restoration solutions that achieve lasting benefits for the Everglades ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Mark Perry
Co-Chair

Lauren Jonaitis
Co-Chair

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