

Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) Meeting Summary

Hendry County Emergency Operations Center

4425 West State Road 80, LaBelle, FL

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Participants

Santiago Acevedo, SFWMD

Evelyn Becerra, DEP

Jenna Bobsein, SFWMD

Jennifer Davis, Hendry County

Rebecca Dougherty, SFWMD

Yesenia Escibano, FDACS

Jake Fojtik, FFBF

Alexandria Foos, Geosyntec (FDOT Central)

Marcy Frick, Tetra Tech

Jorge Hernandez, Hendry County

Moirra Homann, DEP

Emily Hunter, Hendry County

Megan Jacoby, SFWMD

Jacob Landfield, SFWMD

Celeste Lyon, RES

Libby Pigman, SFWMD

Steve Smith, FDACS

Mary Szafraniec, RES

Jennifer Thera, FDACS

Raychel Thomas, Pavese Law

Tony Tomalewski, DEP

Diana Turner, DEP

Matt Warren, FDACS

Lori Wenkert-Lane, SFWMD

Bonita Whelan, FCA

Welcome and Introductions

Marcy Frick welcomed everyone to the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary BMAP meeting, and the participants introduced themselves and the entity they represent.

Agency Presentations

Tony Tomalewski reviewed the BMAP update components and summarized recent legislative requirements including wastewater and septic system remediation plans. The BMAP update will include a list of projects to meet five-year milestones, as well as regional projects. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been conducting water quality analyses to evaluate progress including hotspot, targeted restoration area (TRA), and trend evaluations. They also identified any modifications needed to the monitoring network. The BMAP update will include the recommendations from the last 5-Year Review. Tony reviewed the BMAP update schedule, which includes technical meetings this week, draft BMAP update in January for review, another round of public meetings to present on the draft BMAP document, public comment period, and then finalization by July 1, 2025. The BMAP project collection portal was opened early for BMAP updates and it will remain open until mid-January for the Statewide Annual Report (STAR). Tony stated that the numbers on the poster for the project reductions are reflective of the last STAR through December 31, 2023, and do not include the new project information that stakeholders recently provided.

Megan Jacoby stated that the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is conducting the five-year update for the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Construction Project (CRWCP). They have been providing updates on the projects annually in the South Florida Environmental Report (SFER) to promote transparency, provide accountability to stakeholders, and help achieve the total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). The CRWCP has 4 projects in planning/design, 3 in construction, and 4 in operations. She noted that a key part of what they are evaluating is the water storage goal of 400,000 acre-feet.

Projects to date have provided over 25,000 acre-feet of storage, with an additional 184,000 acre-feet of storage from future projects. SFWMD is also updating the previous model from 2008–2009, and the updated model shows the estimated storage needed for this watershed from the previous modeling is correct. The draft 2025 SFER is available for public comment through December 17.

Jennifer Thera reviewed the staff changes at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). She noted that they are working to update all 12 best management practice (BMP) manuals and the FDACS website has a rule development activities webpage with the latest details on the updates. They plan to have the updates completed early next year. FDACS is also updating the cost-share program to create a system to evaluate projects and status to provide transparent information. Producers can apply for different measures and FDACS has a better tool to evaluate effectiveness to determine what projects are most needed. They also increased the cost-share limit including higher amounts if the producer agrees to monitoring. Jennifer showed the BMP enrollment status for the Caloosahatchee subwatershed and impaired tributaries as well as the Everglades West Coast subwatersheds. The FDACS website includes an interactive map showing enrollment, commodity type, and last implementation verification visit.

Poster Session

After the agency presentations, a poster session was held to allow participants to have one-on-one discussions with the agency staff, ask questions, and provide comments. No comment cards were submitted during the meeting.