

Everglades West Coast Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) Annual Meeting Summary

*Tuesday, December 18, 2018 at 1:00 PM
SFWMD Lower West Coast Service Center,
2301 McGregor Boulevard, Fort Myers, FL
1st Floor Large Conference Room*

Attendees

Deborah Culp, Citizen
Brad Cornell, Audubon
Sara Davis, DEP
Tim Denison, Johnson Engineering
Stephanie Erickson, Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve
Matt Feeney, City of Bonita Springs
Kim Fikoski, SFWMD
Phil Flood, SFWMD
Marcy Frick, Tetra Tech
Karin Karagoz, AECOM
Keith Kibbey, Lee County
Lisa Kreiger, Lee County
David Liccardi, City of Bonita Springs

Michael Lyster, Collier Productivity
Alexander Menendez, Pavese Law Firm
Kelly O'Nan, Hendry County
Roland Ottolini, Lee County
Harry Phillips, City of Cape Coral
Pete Quasius, Audubon
Gary Ritter, Florida Farm Bureau
Geoff Rosenaw, Collier County
Darren Rumbold, FGCU
Chris Shinouskis, Citizen
Ed Shinouskis, Citizen
Rhonda Watkins, Collier County
Kevin Williams, DEP

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Marcy Frick welcomed everyone to the Everglades West Coast BMAP annual meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss activities that have occurred over the last year and the next steps for the BMAP. The bottom of the agenda includes a link to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) file transfer protocol (FTP) site where the presentation and summary will be posted after the meeting. The participants introduced themselves and the entity they represent. Sara Davis stated that she is the DEP lead for the South Florida BMAPs. Kevin Williams has taken over as coordinator for this BMAP, but Sara has been working closely with him.

Overview of BMAP

Sara stated that total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) are restoration targets set for impaired waterbodies. The TMDLs for Hendry Creek and Imperial River were set in 2008 for dissolved oxygen (DO) impairments caused by total nitrogen (TN). The target TN concentration is 0.74 milligrams per liter (mg/L) for all the waterbody identification (WBID) numbers except for one WBID in Hendry Creek. For the BMAP, the target of 0.74 mg/L was used. The BMAP was adopted in November 2012. The Hendry Creek required reductions are 44,414 pounds per year (lbs/yr) and the Imperial River required reductions are 192,202 lbs/yr.

Statewide Annual Report (STAR)

Sara stated that DEP used to compile a report annually for each BMAP with the details on stakeholder activities. In 2016, the Legislature created a requirement to provide one statewide report for all BMAPs, as well as TMDLs and minimum flows and levels, to help prioritize funding. This report required that the BMAP reporting occur on a calendar year instead of by BMAP adoption date. DEP will still hold

annual BMAP meetings and these meetings will be an opportunity for stakeholders to highlight their activities. The STAR does not include write ups on each stakeholder's activities, so these updates will occur at the annual meetings. Sara asked that stakeholders think about presenting at future meetings.

STAR 2018 was submitted to the Governor and Legislature on June 29, 2018 and it is posted on the DEP website. Through December 31, 2017 in Hendry Creek, 11 projects were completed that are estimated to achieve 67 % of the required reductions. In Imperial River, 22 projects were completed that are estimated to achieve 26 % of the required reductions. Sara stated that requests for project updates for STAR 2019 were sent in November and updates are due by January 15, 2019. DEP will work with stakeholders on estimating credits from new projects and will compile the report for submittal by July 1, 2019. Brad Cornell asked if DEP will make the presentation available. Sara responded that the presentation will be posted to the FTP site later this week.

Stakeholder Presentations

Lisa Kreiger presented an update on the Lee County projects within the BMAP area. For the Hendry Creek west branch project, the county has cleared out non-native vegetation so that a survey can be completed for the project. The county completed the Lakes Park littoral zone project, which included removing non-native vegetation and replanting with littoral vegetation. The county and the City of Bonita Springs are working together on the Pine Lake Preserve project. They just received the permit for this project in the Imperial River basin, and they plan to start construction in the dry season.

Sara stated that DEP has also prepared a BMAP story map, which is posted on the DEP BMAP webpage. The story map is an interactive way to view what projects are occurring in the BMAP area. The story map includes a high-level overview of the BMAP requirements, location of the BMAP WBIDs, and a map of project locations. The dots on the map show the general project location and clicking on the dot provides project information. The map does not include projects such as public education that occur over a larger area. Sara asked that the stakeholders review the map and ensure all their projects are included. Sara noted that DEP is trying to report information in a more interactive way and they are hoping to add an interactive format as part of the next STAR.

Water Quality Review

Sara stated that she has been talking with staff in the DEP Watershed Assessment Section to identify a path forward for the Everglades West Coast BMAP. Studies and efforts have occurred in the watershed during the last five years, and the water quality assessment was recently completed for this area. Sara noted that she would present a summary of the assessment results and she provided contact information for DEP staff who could provide answers to more detailed questions about the assessment.

Sara presented a map showing the monitoring stations in the Hendry Creek WBID used to assess TN and DO in the watershed. There is an Estuary Nutrient Region that extends partway up the creek and DEP is considering extending this region further upstream based on observed conditions. Extending this region may help with future water quality assessments. Sara presented a graph of the annual geometric means for all stations within the Hendry Creek watershed for the period of 2011 through 2017. During this period for the assessment, the TN concentrations have decreased but are still above the 0.74 mg/L TMDL target concentration. The assessment also looked at the relationship between TN and DO percent saturation. Sara noted that the trendlines shown on the figure are generic linear trendlines and not representative of a more detailed statistical trend.

In the Imperial River, there is a station in the north along the river and there are also stations in the southern portion of the WBID along the river, Leitner Creek, and Kehl Canal. DEP wanted to determine if all these stations should be assessed together so they evaluated the annual geometric means separately for the one station to the north, the other stations along the river, the stations along Leitner Creek, and the stations along Kehl Canal. For the period of 2011 through 2017, the trends for each of these sets of stations were very similar. The trend showed that TN has been getting lower and getting closer to the 0.74 mg/L target. Based on this evaluation, it does not seem like the WBID boundary needs to be redrawn, but DEP is looking for feedback from stakeholders.

Pete Quasius asked since the Estero River is not included in the BMAP, does that mean it is not impaired. Sara responded that when the BMAP was adopted, DEP made the determination to focus on the two waterbodies; however, there are other impaired waterbodies in the area. When DEP staff brings a BMAP to the DEP Secretary for adoption, they must present a strong case that the BMAP is a good plan to help with restoration. At the time of the BMAP, DEP staff felt they only had a good plan forward for the two WBIDs. Pete noted that Estero is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and the local stakeholders would like assurances for water quality in this area. Sara responded that there is more information the DEP website about which WBIDs are impaired in the area. Darren Rumbold asked what time of day the DO percent saturation data were collected. Sara responded that the time would vary by sample and that information is included in the full database. Rhonda Watkins added that there is a time of day adjustment factor for this parameter.

Sara stated that DEP evaluated the data for the BMAP WBIDs to determine if the path forward needs to change or if the current BMAP should continue to be implemented with more projects. Based on these assessment results, it appears that continuing to work on the current BMAP is the best approach. The stakeholders should submit additional projects as part of the STAR updates by January 15, 2019 to help meet the TMDL target.

Questions, Comments, and Discussion

Rhonda asked if Collier County should provide projects for this BMAP. Sara responded that the county is not within the current BMAP boundaries, so project information does not need to be submitted for the STAR. However, the project information could be helpful in the future if the BMAP area is modified. Darren asked when DEP shows the percent of the TMDL reductions achieved, if they also provide a report card to help with prioritization. Sara responded that DEP only reports the percent of TMDL reductions achieved. By putting all the BMAPs together in the STAR, legislators can see how far along each BMAP is to help make funding decisions to move projects forward.

Brad asked why Gordon River, Lake Trafford, and other waterbodies are not included in this BMAP. For instance, Cocohatchee River is impaired for copper. Sara responded that different impairments, such as the Cocohatchee River copper impairment, would need to be addressed in a separate plan because different types of projects are needed to address those kinds of impairments. The other nutrient-impaired waterbodies are not included in the BMAP because information is still being gathered to determine a plan forward. In Lake Trafford, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has been conducting studies on the watershed boundaries and DEP has collected groundwater data. The local stakeholders have also been coordinating on a management plan through the SFWMD. Brad stated that he thinks the STAR needs to include information on the TMDL waterbodies without restoration plans.

Sara responded that the STAR does include information on TMDLs, but in a different section. The DEP website has an interactive map that shows the impaired waters, TMDLs, and BMAPs, but it is difficult to show this in a report. Sara requested input on how best to organize the STAR to help convey the information being requested.

Ed Shinouskis stated that there are several tributaries that are impaired for bacteria. He asked if these tributaries would be included in the BMAP. Sara responded that the bacteria impairments would be addressed in a separate BMAP since different actions are needed for bacteria. Chris Shinouskis asked if this means that the BMAP will not have more facets added to it, only more projects. Sara responded that the BMAP could be updated in the future to include other waterbodies in the area that are impaired for nutrients. The bacteria impairments would need a separate BMAP. Sara showed the pathogens story map on the DEP BMAP webpage. Ed stated that a specific plan to address these bacteria impairments is needed, not a statewide plan. Sara responded that the bacteria impairments are addressed in separate plans, although the story map provides information for all the bacteria BMAPs statewide. Pete stated that only focusing on the two WBIDs in the BMAP understates the level of impairment in the Everglades West Coast basin. Sara requested suggestions on how to better present information in the STAR to help with updating the format for the next report.

Ed stated that in the 2016 progress report, there is a chart showing good progress with project reductions, but the water quality trends show that TN concentrations are increasing. Sara responded that DEP assesses both items to determine progress. The bar charts estimate progress based on completed projects and associated efficiencies. DEP also assesses water quality to determine trends. Looking at both measures of progress helps to provide a full picture of what is occurring spatially throughout the watershed. Chris stated that they are concerned because the trendlines in the measured data show a significant increase in TN for Hendry Creek. Sara responded that more work is needed to achieve the TMDLs. Roland Ottolini added that there is a lot of variability in the system based on the amount of rainfall, what is occurring upstream, the time the sample was collected, etc. Many years of good data are needed to assess a trend. It also takes time for the benefits of completed projects to be fully seen and it is early in the plan process. Chris stated that the last water quality evaluation includes data from 2000 through 2016 and TN is increasing. Sara responded that the project bar chart is showing the longer-term benefits of the projects, and the measured data show what is currently occurring. Darren noted that DEP is doing a disservice to the BMAP by going back to 2000, which is before the TMDL was adopted. DEP should determine a breakpoint in the data to better present the results. Sara responded that DEP tried to do this a few years ago and presented the results at a meeting. The trends in data are affected by the period of record and there is no clear breakpoint. The year 2000 was selected because this is when the BMAP projects started, but a date closer to when most projects were completed could be selected for future analyses.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.

Action Items

- Stakeholders should consider presenting on project activities at future meetings.
- Stakeholders should submit STAR updates to DEP by January 15, 2019.
- DEP will post the presentation to the FTP site later this week.
- Stakeholders should review the BMAP story map to ensure all their projects are included.

- Stakeholders should provide feedback to DEP on the WBID boundaries for Imperial River and Hendry Creek.
- Stakeholders should provide ideas to Sara on how to better show information in the STAR.