

**Estero Bay and Watershed
Management and Improvement Plan
Workshop**

May 1, 1996

Ft. Myers, Florida

**A workshop hosted by the
South Florida Water Management District**

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Facilitated by the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium and Moore/Bowers

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 1, 1996, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) convened a one-day workshop in Ft. Myers, Florida, addressing conservation, management, and improvement of Estero Bay. The workshop was attended by over twenty-five representatives of environmental and civic groups, as well as of local, regional, and state governments and agencies. The purpose of the workshop was twofold: to provide input to the SFWMD in the preparation of its Estero Bay and Watershed Management and Improvement Plan; and to identify actions which local governments, environmental groups, and other stakeholders in Bay issues could undertake in the short-term to improve the condition of the Bay.

The workshop began with presentations outlining the history and current condition of the Bay. Participants first identified opportunities and threats facing the Bay, and then addressed their aspirations for its future. Based upon the results of these discussions, participants identified one hundred and thirty-six possible strategies for protection of the Bay, of which eighteen were identified as the most urgent or important. The participants concluded the work of the day by outlining action plans for implementation of these highest priority strategies.

A summary of the highest priority strategies is presented here (in no particular order.) The full text of the strategies, as well as the action plans prepared for them, can be found in the corresponding sections of this report.

Education

- Educate the community about the importance of the Bay and watershed
- Establish and emphasize an environmental education program at the new university

Facilities

- Develop a master education/recreation plan for all public/private facilities

Land and habitat acquisition and protection

- Hold a critical lands referendum
- Increase funding for land acquisition programs, including the Estero Bay buffer CARL project
- Start protecting uplands

Monitoring and research

- Establish regular cooperation and exchange of information on monitoring
- Extend the Indian River Restoration study to Estero Bay Improvement and Management study - include Federal government, district, and local government
- Map historic seagrass beds
- Establish watershed and Bay baselines

Water quantity and quality management

- Develop a plan to retrofit stormwater
- Reactivate a stormwater utility
- Implement a natural hydroperiod

Development

- Implement a short-term building moratorium
- Undertake programmatic analysis of the secondary cumulative impacts of development

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

On May 1, 1996, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) convened a one-day workshop in Ft. Myers, Florida, addressing conservation and management of Estero Bay. The workshop was attended by over twenty-five representatives of environmental and civic groups, as well as of local, regional, and state governments and agencies. The purpose of the workshop was twofold: to provide input to the SFWMD in the preparation of its Estero Bay Improvement and Management Plan; and to identify actions which local governments, environmental groups, and other stakeholders in Bay issues could undertake in the short-term to improve the condition of the Bay.

PARTICIPANTS

At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked with which of the following groups they most closely identified. Some participants chose to identify with more than one group.

Group	Number of Participants
Environmental groups	15
Government	16
Business or commercial	9
Civic Associations	4
Citizens	3
Education	2
The media	2

PROCESS AND AGENDA

Plenary and small group sessions were facilitated under the auspices of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium and the firm of Moore/Bowers. During each session, records were made on newsprint of the discussions and conclusions of the group. These records were transcribed and form the basis for this report.

INTRODUCTION

The agenda for the workshop was as follows.

Objectives:

- Identify and analyze threats to and opportunities to improve Estero Bay and strengths and weaknesses of the regulatory and political institutions which protect it.
- Highlight and share survey information
- Based upon this analysis, envision the desired future for Estero Bay
- Identify and agree upon priority strategies
- Involve key stakeholders in the initial steps of preparing an action plan
- Identify and build consensus around key next steps.

- 9:00 Welcome and Introductions
9:10 Situation Analysis - Presentations
9:45 Opportunities and Threats to Estero Bay/Strengths and Weaknesses of the Political and Regulatory System Designed to Protect It (S.W.O.T.)

10:30 Break

10:45 S.W.O.T. (continued)
11:00 Visioning
12:00 Review Survey Findings in Relation to Themes

12:25 Lunch

1:30 Identify Strategies for Implementation of the Vision

2:45 Break

3:00 Action-planning
4:05 Wrap-up
4:15 Adjourn

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (S.W.O.T)

In this exercise, participants were asked to list on worksheets opportunities and threats facing the Bay, and the strengths and weaknesses of the regulatory and political systems governing it. These were defined as follow.

Strengths: Internal resources or capabilities that help the political and regulatory system accomplish its mandates or mission. (Examples: professional staff, adequate resources, leadership.)

Weaknesses: Internal deficiencies in resources and capabilities that hinder the systems' ability to accomplish it mandate or mission. (Examples: lack of effective communication, absence of clear vision or mission, flawed organizational structure.)

Opportunities: External factors or situations that can affect the Bay in a favorable way. (Examples: new funding from a federal program, political support for a potential project, a chance to modify an outdated mandate.)

Threats: External factors or situation that can affect the Bay in a negative way. (Examples: reductions in agency funding, increasing population, etc.)

After participants had listed each on worksheets, they were asked to transfer their seven most important to post-it notes. These in turn were placed on newsprint, and then grouped according to themes, identified by the participants under each category: i.e. themes under strengths; under weaknesses; under opportunities; and under threats. After themes had been identified, participants were each given five votes (adhesive dots) and asked to select the five most important themes by placing their dots next to those themes.

The themes and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats comprising each theme are presented in the list below. Numbers in parentheses after each theme represent the number of votes it received. Items which did not seem to fit under any theme are presented at the end of the list.