



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
441 G STREET, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20314-1000

CECW-SAD

2-Dec-2024

MEMORANDUM FOR Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase I Project, Miami-Dade County, Florida

1. Purpose. To provide for your review and concurrence the enclosed Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase I Project Validation Report. The report presents a revised cost estimate and updated analysis of the authorized project to support the authorization of a new project cost. The report documents the need to increase the authorized project cost from \$242,005,000 (FY25 price level) to a project first cost of \$342,430,000 (FY25 price level). The recommended changes necessitating the increase to the cost limit imposed by section 902 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, as amended (33 U.S.C. §§ 2280), are within the existing authority of the project.

2. Authorized Project. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Phase I Project was authorized by Congress in Section 7002(5) of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014. The purpose of the BBCW Phase I Project is to contribute to the restoration of Biscayne Bay and adjacent wetlands as part of a comprehensive plan for restoring the south Florida ecosystem. The BBCW Phase I Project includes features that would rehydrate coastal and freshwater wetlands by reducing harmful freshwater releases. This plan includes culverts, concrete channel lining, pump stations, and spreader and seepage canals.

3. Post-Authorization Changes.

a. The project currently has features in the design, construction, and operation and maintenance (O&M) phases. Features in design are trash rakes and manatee barriers and a real estate relocation to raise approximately 3,300 feet of a Florida Power and Light access road. Features in construction include at the L-31E Flow-way ( pump stations S-703, S-705, S-710, and S-711; seepage canal C-711W; two spreader canals; and a recreational shelter with kiosk and campsites) and at the Cutler Wetlands ( pump station S-701; concrete-lined channel C-701; culvert S-701A; micro-tunnel S-701B; spreader swale C-702; berm breaches; 8-foot bike/multi-use trail, bird watch overlook; and parking area). Features that have been completed and are in O&M include Deering Estate (pump station S-700, canal extension, pipe, and spreader structure) and L-31E (flow-way pump station S-709; culverts S-23A, S-23B, S-23C, S-23D, S-712A, S-712B, S-706A, S-706B, S-706C, and S-708; and a gated culvert).

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b. The increases in cost are primarily due to several factors, as follows:

(1) \$39,800,000 due to channel and canal modifications to avoid conflict with underground utilities and a canal managed by Miami-Dade County;

(2) \$81,200,000 due to pump stations design changes as a result of design refinements in accordance with new design guidelines, and the addition of a precast concrete spreader canal in the L-31E Flow-way;

(3) \$10,000,000 due to changes in Planning, Engineering, and Design associated with the L-31E Flow-way being separated into four contracts, and Cutler Wetlands features being separated into two contracts; and

(4) \$1,200,000 due to a Florida Power and Light access road relocation not previously identified; and

(5) Additional project changes, representing minor reductions of scope and/or cost, include Fish & Wildlife Facilities, Floodway Control & Diversion Structures, Lands and Damages, Construction Management, Recreational Facilities, Relocations, and Contingency. These changes represent decreases in cost.

c. The engineering and design changes contributing to the cost increase are within the Chief's Discretionary Authority and satisfy the criteria outlined in Paragraph G-13 of Appendix G of ER 1105-2-100 because they represent minimal changes in scope and the benefits provided remain the same. However, these changes result in an increase of more than twenty percent of the total project cost, therefore requiring authorization of a new total project cost.

#### 4. Project Justification.

a. The project will redistribute freshwater runoff from the watershed away from the existing direct canal discharges into Biscayne Bay and into the freshwater and coastal wetlands adjoining Biscayne Bay to provide a more natural overland flow and the beneficial ecosystem services provided by the wetlands. This project will also help restore submerged nearshore areas by establishing optimal salinity gradients and habitat for seagrass, mangrove and reef fish and shellfish.

b. Recent Everglades system status reports indicate the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project canals continue to impact Biscayne Bay and Biscayne Bay National Park, altering the quantity, timing, and distribution of flows to Biscayne Bay. Unnatural pulse releases through C&SF Project canals cause salinity extremes that are outside the desirable tolerance ranges of many fish and wildlife species, decreasing floral and faunal abundance and biodiversity. Spatial and temporal reductions in estuarine habitat reduces the diversity and density of species that require this habitat

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within some part of their life cycle (e.g., crocodiles, shrimp, mangrove, reef fish and oysters). Completion of the remaining BBCW Phase I Project features will ensure continued progress in meeting Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan objectives for restoring Biscayne Bay and adjacent wetlands.

c. BBCW Phase I Project features reduce harmful freshwater releases, improve wetland hydrology, and provide incidental water quality benefits that increase critical estuarine habitat and restore valuable freshwater and coastal wetlands. BBCW Phase I Project features will provide the benefits as described within the 2012 Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement and assist with recovery of the watershed and estuarine ecosystems.

5. Environmental Compliance. Since authorization, there have been no major changes to the analysis of environmental effects, and the project is still consistent with the Record of Decision signed in 2012. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District reports that the BBCW Phase I Project is currently in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

6. Recommendation. I report that the project remains technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, and economically justified based on the benefits provided. I recommend the Validation Report be transmitted to Congress as a basis for increasing the authorized project first cost of the BBCW Phase 1 Project to \$342,430,000 (FY25 price level).

 Edward E. Belk, Jr PE  
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Director of Civil Works