AUDUBON OF FLORIDA
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

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Mike Eng
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution
110 South Church Avenue, Suite 3350
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Dear Mr. Eng:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report, *"Assessment of Opportunities for Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration on the Environmental Impact Statement Process for the Combined Structural and Operational Plan (CSOP) for Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park and C-111 Canal Projects."* We support an appropriately crafted stakeholder process as a means to expedite the development and implementation of the CSOP that achieves the projects' authorized purposes. To do this, however, it is critical that the CSOP stakeholder process be organized so that all participants understand that the end product is to achieve these statutory purposes – restoration of water flows to Everglades National Park, along with mitigation from the impacts of such restoration. Most fundamentally, *our* participation in such a process is contingent upon the establishment of such a clear and appropriate direction.

In this regard, we are concerned about the lack of emphasis in this report on the primary authorized goal of restoring Everglades National Park and the southern end of the ecosystem. Specifically, the ModWater and C-111 projects were authorized "to improve water deliveries to Everglades National Park and … restore natural hydrologic conditions," and restore "the ecosystem in Taylor Slough and the eastern panhandle of ENP." The report also focused extensively on concerns for increased flood protection even though the 1994 Final Integrated General Reevaluation Report (GRR) – which is what Congress authorized – and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the C-111 Project "focuses on preserving the current level of flood protection" only (Sec 1.3.1) and further confines such flood protection maintenance purposes to the C-111 drainage basin. Any efforts to enhance flood protection must be consistent with, and must not compromise in any way, the projects' goals of restoring the ecological conditions of the Park and the southern end of the ecosystem.

Generally, we concur with the guidance criteria developed by the U.S. Institute with regards to the CSOP advisory body. A workable structure for the advisory body is critical for ensuring the success of the collaborative process. An independent, impartial, and experienced facilitator should moderate the meetings to ensure that no one individual dominates the process and that progress is made on the substantive issues.

The advisory body's work should be open and transparent to all participants and properly noticed and accessible to the general public. In this manner we would prefer to convene under the

provisions of FACA, led by the four agencies. However, in the interest of time, it is acceptable to establish this advisory group under a FACA-exempt body. We understand that the agencies may utilize the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force or Working Group. While we are not entirely opposed to this idea, we have some overriding concerns outlined below. The same concerns may not present themselves if the advisory body were established under the U.S. Institute, which we understand is also FACA-exempt.

Regardless of the convening entity, any products of the advisory body must be transmitted to the sponsoring agencies without amendment. If the Task Force or Working Group is utilized, then neither should modify any reports generated by the advisory body, nor should these entities be permitted to suppress the products of the advisory body.

The four agencies should select the members of the CSOP advisory body. We do not believe that the convening entity should select or advise the agencies on the membership of the advisory body. In addition, we do not believe that any individual serving on the convening entity should also be permitted to serve as a member of the advisory group.

It is critical that the advisory group undertake this process with clear direction from the four sponsoring agencies to ensure success. The Corps, with input from the other three sponsoring agencies, not the convening body, should develop and present to the advisory group the alternatives for review. Ground rules for reviewing alternatives, reaching consensus or non-consensus, including majority and minority reports, and finalizing recommendations should be developed by the sponsoring agencies and adhered to throughout the process.

Completion of these projects is long overdue. If the CSOP stakeholder group is pursued, it is critical to design this process properly in order to expedite finalizing these projects. We look forward to working with you through this process to successfully implement these projects to restore Everglades National Park and the overall Everglades ecosystem.

Sincerely,

John Adornato, III
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Signatures waived to expedite delivery

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