

RECORD OF DECISION

Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Hendry County, Florida

The Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), dated November 2010, and the reports of the Chief of Engineers, dated March 11, 2010, and January 6, 2011, address ecosystem restoration and recreation in the western portion of the Caloosahatchee River watershed in Florida. Based on these reports, the reviews of other Federal, State and local agencies, input from the public, and the review by my staff, I find the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir project to be technically feasible, environmentally justified, cost effective, in accordance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest. Thus, I approve the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir project for construction.

The FEIS documents the evaluation of a number of alternatives to restore aquatic habitat in the Caloosahatchee Estuary that has been adversely affected by extreme high and low freshwater discharges from the watershed. The selected plan is Alternative 3B. This plan is expected to be an increment of the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) plan for the entire Caloosahatchee River watershed that would be identified in a future investigation of storage capabilities in the eastern portion of the watershed. The selected plan consists of the following major features:

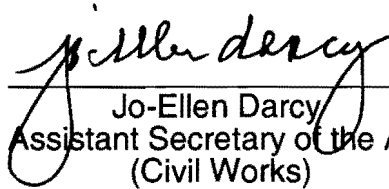
- Construction of a 170,000 acre-foot reservoir within an embankment up to 37-foot high;
- Construction of a canal around the embankment perimeter to continue existing canal operations at the site;
- Construction of a 1500-cfs pump station and appurtenant spillways, culverts, outlets and other minor structures to move and control water;
- Construction of a 12-mile-long trail on the embankment, a parking area, toilets, a kiosk, a boat ramp, a shade structure, fencing, and a foot bridge over the canal to enable incidental recreation; and
- Monitoring of water quality impacts to ensure ecological outputs.

In addition to the no action plan, four alternatives were evaluated in detail in the project implementation report. The alternatives included different combinations of reservoir footprint, size and pumping capacity. All of the alternatives are fully described and evaluated in the FEIS, and are incorporated herein by reference. The selected plan would capture and store excess surface water runoff from the Caloosahatchee River watershed and excess releases from Lake Okeechobee, and then release the stored water to augment inadequate flows during the dry season. These operations would reduce extreme changes in salinity in the estuary caused by extreme high and low flows

in the river, and thereby create a more stable and improved ecological function for approximately 71,000 acres of aquatic habitat in the Caloosahatchee Estuary. The selected plan is the environmentally preferable alternative. All practicable means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the project and no impacts that would require compensatory mitigation have been identified. The selected plan will require authorization.

Technical, environmental, economic, and risk criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resource Council's Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, Executive Orders, regulations and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of alternatives and the selection of the recommended plan. Based on review of these evaluations, I find that the public interest would be best served by implementing the recommended plan. This Record of Decision completes the National Environmental Policy Act process.

April 13, 2011
Date


Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Civil Works)