



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

August 5, 2013

Leah Oberlin
Chief, Palm Beach Gardens Regulatory Office
Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
4400 PGA Boulevard, Suite 500
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

SUBJECT: Final Environmental Impact Statement for A1 Shallow Flow Equalization Basin (A1 FEB)

Dear Ms. Oberlin,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the referenced Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in accordance with its responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The applicant, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), proposes construction of the A1 FEB reservoir to improve inflow delivery rates to STA 2 and STA 3/4 by attenuating peak water flows and temporarily storing water runoff primarily from the central Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). The project purpose as stated in the FEIS by the Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is to achieve the Water Quality Based Effluent Limit (WQBEL) for phosphorus at the STA 2 and STA 3/4 discharge points in the Central Flowpath of the Everglades Protection Area. According to the SFWMD the A1 FEB will assist in maintaining minimum water levels and reducing the frequency of dryout conditions within STA 2 and STA 3/4. This should increase the phosphorus treatment performance of these STAs in order to achieve the WQBEL. EPA commented on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in our letter dated April 5, 2013.

Alternatives considered were Alternative 1: No Action, Alternative 2: Shallow Flow Equalization Basin (Applicant's Proposed Action), Alternative 3: Deep Flow Equalization Basin and Alternative 4: Stormwater Treatment Area. The preferred alternative and other alternatives considered are located within western Palm Beach County Florida. The preferred alternative is the construction of A1 FEB (Alternative 2), which is a shallow above-ground impoundment for the temporary storage of stormwater runoff, with a capacity of approximately 60,000 acre-feet at an approximate maximum operating depth of 4 feet. Project features include: gated inflow structures, inflow conveyance channels and interior levees, outflow collection and conveyance canal and gated outflow structures. As a result of the project construction, approximately 536.8 acres of waters of the United States (US), including wetlands, would be impacted by the placement of fill and approximately 10,500 acres of waters of the US would be inundated (up to four feet of water depth). As proposed, the project will manage basin runoff in the Central

Flowpath in a more advantageous manner by reducing the impacts of storm-driven events to STA 2 and STA 3/4 and will improve operations during periods of drought and low water flows. Attenuating and managing excess water flows in the Central Flowpath will enhance operations and improve phosphorus treatment performance in the STA 2 and STA 3/4 complex to insure that these STA discharges meet the WQBEL. Discharges from these STAs flow into WCA 2A and WCA 3A, part of the Everglades Protection Area (EPA) marsh where the 10 ppb long term geometric mean numeric phosphorus criterion applies. EPA has made comments on the SFWMD's Permit Application (No. SAJ-2005-0053) in a separate letter dated April 4, 2013.

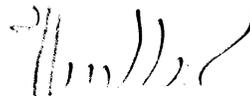
As a Cooperating Agency, the EPA worked collaboratively with the USACE and the SFWMD staff to develop both the DEIS and FEIS. EPA would like to compliment both the USACE and the SFWMD staff for their efforts in developing the DEIS and FEIS under an expedited time schedule.

EPA notes USACE's consultation efforts with the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. We encourage USACE to continue these consultation efforts at all levels of decision-making. The EPA works closely with both Tribes on Everglades matters and is committed to working with other federal partners to prioritize the Tribes' water quality and water management concerns.

Overall, the EPA supports the recommendations in the FEIS and the preferred alternative. EPA strongly supports the expedited permitting and construction of the A1 FEB. The project will play an important role in improving water quality conditions in the Everglades and contribute to accomplishing the world's largest ecosystem restoration effort, an effort that our mutual agencies are working hard to achieve.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed action. Please contact Jamie Higgins at (404) 562-9681 if you want to discuss our comments.

Sincerely,



Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office
Office of Environmental Accountability