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October 17, 2019

Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration

Overview

What Is the Everglades? The Everglades is a unique network of subtropical wetlands in South Florida. Due in part to federal water supply and flood control projects (as well as agricultural and urban runoff), it has been degraded and is approximately half its historical size. The ecosystem is home to a number of unique species, including 67 species on the Federal Endangered or Threatened Species lists.

What Is CERP? The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000; P.L. 106-541). It is a framework under which the federal government, with the State of Florida, is attempting to restore the Everglades and expand water supplies by improving the timing, distribution, and quality of the water flowing south from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades, among other things. Under CERP, the federal government, through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), is required to fund half the costs for restoration, with an array of state, tribal, and local agencies paying the other half. Originally, CERP was to include 60 projects that would be completed over 30 years at a cost of $10 billion. More recent estimates have projected that CERP will take approximately 50 years to implement at a total cost of $13.5 billion. To date, the federal government has spent more than $1.5 billion on CERP. The State of Florida estimates it has spent over $4.2 billion, according to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, although much of this funding has yet to be officially credited for Florida's portion of the cost share.

Everglades restoration under CERP was authorized in 2000 and is expected to take 50 years to complete.

Outside of CERP, complementary efforts to restore the Everglades (most of which predate CERP) are ongoing. The federal government has spent more than $3 billion on these efforts, collectively referred to as *non-CERP projects*.

Everglades Restoration Projects Must Be Authorized by Congress

WRDA 2000 approved the overall CERP plan and process and authorized several pilot projects, However, most CERP construction projects require additional study by the USACE and congressional authorization of construction before they can receive federal appropriations, including credit or reimbursement for nonfederal work undertaken in advance. Several laws subsequent to WRDA 2000 have authorized projects under CERP, and some projects are under construction after receiving appropriations from Congress. Studies for other CERP projects are complete, awaiting congressional construction authorization, or in progress (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Status of Recent CERP Projects

Project Name	Construction Authorization	Status
Site 1 Impoundment	WRDA 2007	Phase I completed Phase II on hold
Picayune Strand	WRDA 2007	Under construction
Indian River Lagoon-South	WRDA 2007	Under construction
C-43 West Storage Basin	WRRDA 2014	Under construction
C-111 Spreader Canal	WRRDA 2014	Complete
Broward County Water Preserve Areas	WRRDA 2014	Under construction
Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands	WRRDA 2014	Under construction
Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)	WRDA 2016	Awaiting construction
Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir Storage	WRDA 2018 (authorized as an addendum to CEPP)	Awaiting construction
Loxahatchee River Watershed Project	Awaiting authorization	Study in progress
Big Cypress/L-28 Interceptor	Awaiting authorization	Study in progress
Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project	Awaiting authorization	Study in progress

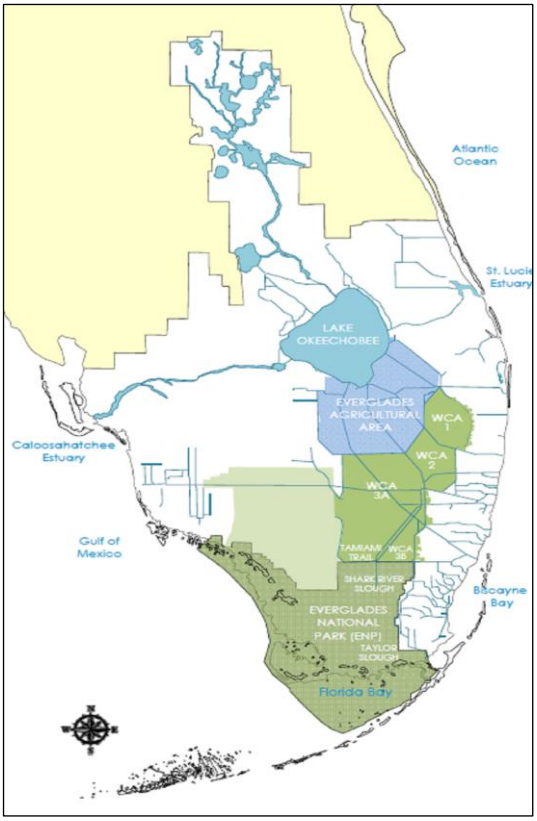
Source: Congressional Research Service based on USACE data.
Note: WRDA = Water Resources and Development Act. WRDA 2007, WRDA 2016, and WRDA 2018 are P.L. 110-114, P.L. 114-322, and P.L. 115-270, respectively. WRRDA 2014 = Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-121).

Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)

CEPP is a restoration project under CERP that was authorized in 2016 (P.L. 114-322). CEPP's objective is to improve the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water flows through the Everglades ecosystem south of Lake Okeechobee (see **Figure 1**). CEPP focuses on prioritizing restoration projects in the Everglades. The estimated cost is $3.0 billion, with a federal share of

approximately $2.9 billion. (The cost share of individual projects can vary from the overall cost share of CERP, which is 50:50 for the federal government and Florida.) Some observers consider CEPP to be a key project in restoring the Everglades.

Figure 1. Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)



Source: USACE.

Note: Green shaded portions indicate CEPP project area.

WRDA 2018 Authorization

The Water Resources Development Act of 2018 (WRDA 2018, Title I of America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, P.L. 115-270) authorized the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir Storage Project (EAA Storage) as an addendum to CEPP. EAA Storage is a USACE project that aims to provide approximately 350,000 acre-feet of water storage for receiving water flows from Lake Okeechobee and stormwater treatment areas (wetlands that remove nutrients from agricultural and urban runoff) for improving water quality.

Congressional Interest

In Congress, attention has focused on appropriations for constructing projects and overseeing progress in Everglades restoration and related projects affecting water flows.

Appropriations. According to the 2018 Seventh Biennial Review of Everglades Restoration, conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, funding for Everglades restoration remains a key constraint on the rate of restoration progress. The federal appropriations process dictates the timing and level of funding, which affect project implementation and completion.

The President's budget request for FY2020 initially was $69 million but was amended in May 2019 to increase funding to $205 million, which is expected to accelerate some CERP projects (e.g., CEPP), according to the Administration. In FY2018 and FY2019, Congress provided appropriations for Everglades restoration activities to USACE exceeding the budget requests, and subsequent USACE work plans for both fiscal years included a total of approximately $111 million (see **Table 2**).

Congress also has provided appropriations to DOI agencies for Everglades restoration activities. These agencies received $65.0 million for these activities in FY2018 and $63.7 million in FY2019. Of these amounts, CERP activities received approximately $8.0 million annually.

Table 2. Federal Funding of Everglades Restoration

Agency	Project	2017	2018	2019	2020 Request
USACE	CERP	$78.4	$95.0	$97.2	$200.0
USACE	Non-CERP	$53.5	$16.4	$13.7	$6.6
DOI	CERP	$8.0	$8.0	$7.8	$7.8
DOI	Non-CERP	$56.6	$57.0	$55.9	$48.1

Source: South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.

Notes: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), funding is in millions of dollars and rounded to the nearest decimal for each fiscal year.

Lake Okeechobee/Herbert Hoover Dike. Since 2007, USACE has conducted repairs on Herbert Hoover Dike and has regulated water storage and discharges from Lake Okeechobee to address structural issues associated with the dike. Because of these changes, increased discharges from the lake have at times led to an excess flow of nutrient-rich water down canals to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, which has exacerbated harmful algal blooms and increased sediment in the estuaries.

Repairs of Hoover Dike may increase Lake Okeechobee's capacity to store water and regulate discharges to reduce negative environmental effects. These activities are not categorized under Everglades restoration per se but are considered by many observers to be essential to broader restoration efforts in South Florida. For FY2018, this project received $514 million in supplemental funding.

USACE anticipates repairs to be completed by 2022, which would allow for new discharge regulations to be issued under the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual. Section 1106 of WRDA 2018 directed USACE to expedite completion of an updated Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule to coincide with completion of the repairs. The schedule aims to consider relevant aspects of CERP, including projects not yet constructed (e.g., EAA Storage).

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