



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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10 June 2005

To: SFWMD and DEP
CC: TOC members

From: Matt Harwell

Subject: **Response to written comments on the April 19, 2005 A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Enhanced Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling - Interim Report**

On 17 May we received written comments on the April 19, 2005 A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Enhanced Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling - Interim Report from both FDEP and SFWMD. We appreciate the time and effort put into providing these comments and will consider them when we produce our next annual report in 2006.

The comments did reveal the need for us to reiterate the purposes of the enhanced monitoring program and the modeling program, and to clarify several issues:

As stated in the report and given the relatively short period of record of report data, the authors do not believe that it is appropriate at this time to begin the assessment of the adequacy and appropriateness of the program to achieve its objectives, nor to recommend any adjustments to the sampling design or number and location of stations. Similarly, there are not enough data yet to significantly gain scientific understanding of historic and future exceedances. Additionally, we will focus only on better understanding of future exceedances if they occur, because we will have a much larger monitoring data set than was available for past exceedances.

While the occurrence of canal water intrusion into the Refuge is not a new finding, we anticipate that our increased understanding of these events will lead to specific water management recommendations to minimize the degree of canal water intrusion. To accomplish this objective, we will focus future reports on gaining a specific understanding of the relationships between canal and marsh water levels and other factors, and their influence on the extent of intrusion. For this interim report, we logically focused on conductivity, which is a good indicator of the presence of canal water and its associated nutrients and other ions.

We are working with USGS to make information on the Refuge's Enhanced Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling Program (such as the *Interim Report* and the comments) open and available to everyone on their SOFIA web site.

Thank you again for your comments, and we would be happy to discuss any of them individually with technical staff from the SFWMD or FDEP.