SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

August 23, 2013

The South Florida Water Management District (District) is pleased to present the Caloosahatchee River Visioning Process Stakeholder Assessment Findings and Process Design Draft Recommendations Final Report, prepared by Consensus Building Institute (CBI) (attached).

After careful consideration, the South Florida Water Management District is proposing to move forward with a process that includes components of Consensus Building Institute's (CBI) recommendations, balances stakeholder input and considers the resource capabilities of the District and other participants. This approach includes a multi-day Caloosahatchee Science Workshop and ongoing Caloosahatchee Community Forums, both of which are consistent with recommendations by CBI.

The **Caloosahatchee Science Workshop** will bring together scientists for invited talks/presentations on specific topics, such as historic alterations and their effects on system components and the current state of the system. It is also anticipated that the workshop will include facilitated group discussions on specific topics such as ecological indicators, research/data gaps and science priorities. Florida Gulf Coast University's Coastal Watershed Institute will host the workshop and attendance will be open to all stakeholders. Among other things, the information generated at these workshops will be used to update and confirm the current state of scientific knowledge about the Caloosahatchee Estuary and River, identify information gaps, verify ecological indicators, and provide a science framework to guide Community Forums and other relevant discussions.

The **Caloosahatchee Community Forums** will be open workshops with multiple agencies, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and local governments to share and collaborate on science, projects, priorities and policy items on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly). Agenda items will be requested from the larger stakeholder group.

We believe this approach will accomplish the following objectives while balancing resources and staffing demands, and allowing agency resources to remain focused on continued basin management activities.

- Foster open and on-going dialogue between the District, other governmental agencies and stakeholders on Caloosahatchee items;
- Provide a continued opportunity to share information, ideas and knowledge;
- Verify ecological indicators and Caloosahatchee science, and identify data gaps:
- Allow for discussions on complex issues affecting the Caloosahatchee and identify potential strategies to mitigate effects;
- Provide for an opportunity to garner support for projects and to identify and seek funding to assist with project implementation; and
- Help with implementation of existing restoration plans such as the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan under the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program and the Caloosahatchee Basin Management Action Plan.

The District is open to evaluating the effectiveness of these ongoing approaches and, as appropriate, devising new ways to engage stakeholders as we move forward.

Planning for the Science Workshop to be held this fall is underway. We look forward to the involvement of our stakeholders and the many opportunities these workshops will offer.

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Caloosahatchee River Visioning Process Stakeholder Assessment Findings and Process Design Draft Recommendations Final Report

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

August 15, 2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

Report Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the initial stakeholder interviews and to present CBI's draft Process Design recommendations for the Caloosahatchee River Visioning Process. The stakeholder interviews were conducted by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) in March and April 2013. The draft Process Design recommendations were developed by CBI based on the stakeholder findings and a preliminary review of background information. The report is presented in the following sections:

- ***Section 1: Introduction***, which summarizes the Visioning Process objectives, CBI background and the stakeholder interview process.
- ***Section 2: Key Findings***, which summarizes key findings based primarily on our confidential interviews with Stakeholders and our review of key background materials.
- ***Section 3: Visioning Process Recommendations***, which provides CBI's recommendations for structuring a Visioning Process, including intended outcomes, structure, participation, agency roles and information needs.
- ***Section 4: Conclusions and Next Steps.***
- ***Appendices***, including: A: Interviewee List; B: Interview Protocol; C: Potential Near-Term and Longer-Term Actions; D: List of Potential Ecological Indicators; and E: List of Cited Studies and Background Documents.

The findings in this report (Section 2) were shared in draft form with all those interviewed and were revised based on interviewee feedback to ensure its completeness and accuracy. The process design recommendations (Section 3) reflect CBI's recommendations based on the input from our interviews (and stakeholder feedback to an earlier review-draft version of this report), discussions with District staff, and our best professional judgment based on almost forty years of combined experience from the two senior facilitators. Please note that the recommendations in this report represent what CBI concludes would be the most effective way to meet the objectives of the Vision as defined in this report. In choosing a path forward, CBI recognizes the District needs to consider many factors (e.g., funding and resources) as it decides how to move forward with all or a portion of the recommendations.

Background

In early 2013, the District began launching a public initiative to collaboratively develop a Vision for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary[1] that focuses on the key ecological conditions of a healthier system. The District contracted CBI to design and facilitate a series of broad-based

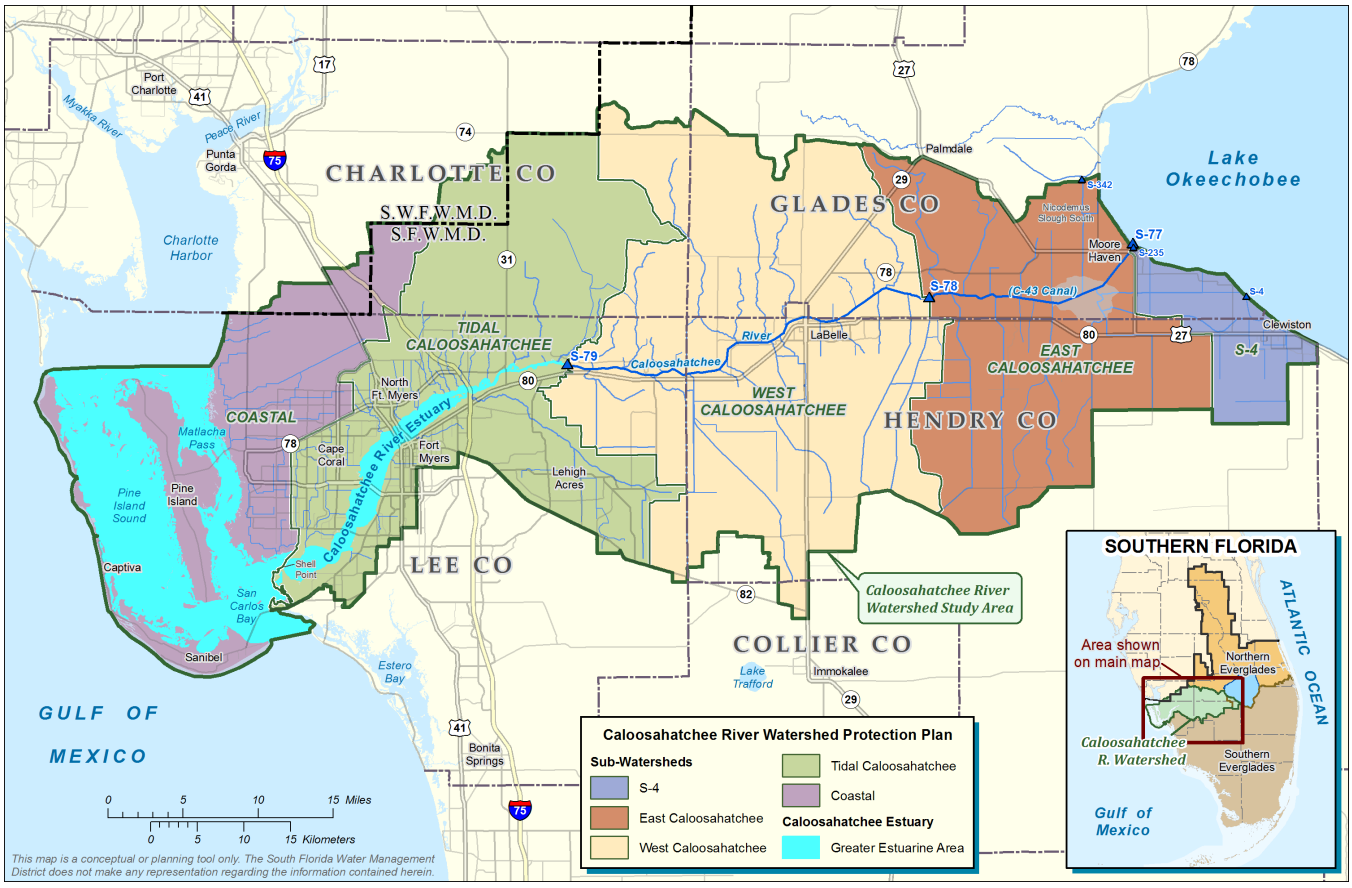
[1] The Visioning Process is focused on the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, but it is expected that the dialogue will necessitate consideration of activities within the broader watershed to foster the desired ecological conditions.

stakeholder workshops. In response to stakeholder input, CBI is recommending an expanded multi-pronged approach discussed further in Section 3.

The Caloosahatchee River is located in southwest Florida. (See Figure 1.) The Vision is intended to assist the District, other agencies and the public with:

- Developing well defined and broadly supported attributes of a healthier Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.
- Providing commonly accepted and well understood targets to guide a consistent and effective approach to restoration planning and activities.
- Directing restoration programs and priorities to focus limited resources and foster collaborative approaches.
- Unifying diverse stakeholders across the watershed.
- Broadening general public awareness of the watershed's values and needs.
- Seeking and securing funding for restoration programs and priorities.
- Providing a mechanism for measuring incremental successes towards achieving goals.

Figure 1: Caloosahatchee River and Estuary



Assessment Process

In February 2013, the District asked CBI to design and facilitate a visioning process. CBI[2] is a non-profit organization that specializes in facilitating and mediating collaborative dialogues on a wide range of environmental and land use issues, including water resources and environmental restoration work across the U.S. and in Florida. As a first step in the Visioning Process, CBI conducted a series of in-depth interviews with approximately three-dozen stakeholders affected by or interested in the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary from Lake Okeechobee west to the estuary. Stakeholders included state, federal and local governments; environmental, agricultural and tourism interests; fishing and boating interests; university researchers; and others. (See Appendix A for a listing of those interviewed.)

Most of the interviews were conducted in-person in mid-March 2013 at several locations throughout the region. Due to scheduling conflicts, some interviews were done via phone. Interviews were confidential and intended to provide feedback on the broad areas noted below. (See Appendix B for a listing of interview questions.)

- **Visions and interests** related to a healthy Caloosahatchee River and Estuary
- **Key ecological attributes** related to a restored Caloosahatchee River and Estuary
- **Recommendations for structuring** an effective Visioning Process

In addition to the stakeholder interviews, CBI reviewed numerous background materials provided both by the District and stakeholders, as well as participated in a site tour of a stretch of the Caloosahatchee River just east and west of W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (also known as S-79). Additionally, CBI had the opportunity to participate in briefings with senior District staff and other staffers involved with implementing Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. **Please note that CBI did not attempt to independently validate the claims or concerns of the interviewees. Rather, this brief report seeks to summarize the range of views, ideas, and concerns expressed.** Additionally, this brief report cannot do justice to the deep knowledge, experience, and nuances of the many stakeholders interviewed. Rather, the report tries to reflect back key themes and concerns. CBI has sought to present these findings, in our role as a neutral facilitator, as accurately and fairly as possible. Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of CBI.

2. KEY FINDINGS

The challenges of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary are well known to the many public and private entities that rely on or have management responsibilities within the region. Numerous past planning efforts have sought to understand and implement strategies for addressing the high and low freshwater flow and water quality challenges that adversely impact the river and estuary. Not surprisingly, this history significantly shapes stakeholders' perspectives on the approach to and potential of a Visioning Process explored in this assessment.

[2] CBI Managing Director Pat Field and Senior Mediator Bennett Brooks are serving as key project staff. More information on CBI can be found on-line at *www.cbuilding.org.*

The common stakeholder perspectives are summarized in three overarching findings listed here and described in more depth below:

- **Finding One:** Stakeholders are interested in the Visioning Process, but a clear link to action is needed.
- **Finding Two:** The context for the Visioning Process – both historical and technical – is challenging.
- **Finding Three:** A transparent, outcome-focused Visioning Process is needed and "business as usual" should be avoided.

Finding One: Stakeholders are interested in the Visioning Process, but a clear link to action is needed.

Years of damaging flow levels and lack of substantial progress in improving management of flows, real or perceived, shape many stakeholders' ambivalent attitude toward the proposed Visioning Process. On the one hand, most of those we spoke with are hungry for an effective dialogue, one that will generate meaningful outcomes, draw resources to the region, and help parties move past entrenched positions. On the other, there is deep skepticism among many that a dialogue framed solely around identifying ecological indicators will be sufficiently productive to warrant a significant investment of stakeholder and agency time, energy and resources. Below is a closer look at these somewhat conflicting perspectives.

- **Varied reasons to engage in Visioning Process dialogue:** Stakeholders identified a series of compelling reasons to engage in a potential Visioning dialogue. Many of the justifications were broadly shared among a wide range of stakeholders and centered around the following potential benefits:

    - Compile a common, technically-derived information base among diverse stakeholders about the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary needs.
    - Share, learn about, and synthesize information gathered from many different parties and currently in different reports, databases, and documents.
    - Forge a shared responsibility among parties (public and private, state, local and federal) for developing and implementing solutions.
    - Provide a forum for more productive and science-based dialogues and strengthen fragile agricultural-environmental and urban-rural ties.
    - Foster a balanced approach that takes into account the system-wide interconnectedness (from the Caloosahatchee Estuary to Lake Okeechobee, from the Kissimmee watershed to the Southern Everglades).
    - Discuss issues and solutions in the context of risk management for the integrated Caloosahatchee watershed as a whole and consider ways to mitigate risk in different ways across the different users and needs.
    - Develop a clear, prioritized and broadly supported roadmap for moving forward, which includes potential partners and schedules.
    - Create an effective coalition to request action and funding in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.

Additional potential benefits cited, while not necessarily cross-cutting, included:

- Ensure land acquisitions, if necessary, are genuinely productive and sensitive to local impacts.
- Provide a forum for identifying needed flows for environmental purposes.
- Consider C-43 reservoir design and purpose.
- Engage stakeholders to identify and solve issues related to "shared adversity."
- Develop a transparent water budget for the region.
- Demonstrate the resource's value to a wider audience.

- **Limited scope of "Visioning" process problematic:** The range of potential benefits outlined above is encouraging. However, there are broadly shared concerns that the Visioning Process as currently framed by the District – building stakeholder consensus around a set of ecological indicators and metrics that collectively would lead to a healthier Caloosahatchee River and Estuary – is not adequate to generate sufficient support for the process. To be sure, a small number of those interviewed did recognize this work product itself as a highly valuable outcome because it will provide an agreed upon Vision (for the first time) that could drive subsequent restoration planning and prioritization activities. But most interviewees voiced strong concerns that a process that simply generates indicators and stops short of implementing real actions such as identifying appropriate flows, prioritized actions and/or meaningful implementation commitments is at best insufficient and, at worst, supports the perception that the District is either "buying time" or "not serious" about meaningful action in the region. "We need to deal with the root problems," said one stakeholder. "It doesn't really help to just talk about a Vision." Said another: "Without a commitment to timely implementation…this visioning exercise will not provide added value."

  These concerns, voiced by a wide range of stakeholders, are further intensified by what we might call "process fatigue" – too many planning processes yielding too few on-the-ground results. (One stakeholder walked through a series of planning efforts – from the 1975 Clean Water Act Study to the more recent Southwest Florida Feasibility Study – that, in his view and the view of others, have fallen short in outcomes.) Another interviewee said: "Why do this if nothing will be implemented out of it?" Another yet another: "I am sick of Vision 2020, 2050, 2060. We need tangible, concrete goals."

Finding Two:	***The context for the Visioning Process – both historical and technical – is challenging.***

Conversations with stakeholders painted a mixed picture of the potential for moving forward with a successful dialogue and actions. Clearly, there are significant challenges to overcome if stakeholders and agencies are to engage in a productive dialogue and generate meaningful outcomes. The challenges identified ranged from deep concerns with equity and long-held positions, to the complexity of the system itself. Several interviewees noted that there are no easy answers. Below is a closer look at the most commonly cited constraints.

- **Equity considerations:** Interviewees from virtually every point of view suggest the current landscape includes many real and/or perceived inequities. Some stakeholders suggest solutions (e.g., land acquisitions) come at the expense of the local tax rolls and local economies. In addition, they add, the acquisitions are often poorly conceived and result in little to no environmental benefits. "We're pretty much at the end of our rope," said one interviewee. Environmental advocates see a system that reserves water for uses for all needs except the ecosystem; the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary suffer, they say, because the environment is always put last, the long-term damage is real and visible, and agriculture "doesn't have enough skin in the game." Urban interests worry greatly that the needs of other users, be that agriculture or the lower Everglades ecosystem, are harming the economic base of the region. And agriculture representatives feel frequently under attack despite their many efforts, including BMPs, with their long-term investments at-risk if water is redirected to other users. Said one interviewee: "We're just going to write off these people who've been here 70-80 years and made all these investments?" Most interviewees believe the region as a whole suffers from policies that favor the East Coast and Southern Everglades. "The Caloosahatchee River has been the sacrificial lamb to make all other things work," as one interviewee put it.

  Some stakeholders suggest the issue is not one of equity between water use and natural protection, but – rather – fundamental disconnects between permitting regulations dealing with wetland and water quality impacts, stormwater, and water use and the permitting regulations dealing with protection of wetlands, water quality, minimum flows and levels. If permitting regulations were adjusted to holistically address natural resource protection system-wide, these interviewees say, this would distribute responsibility more effectively.

- **Technically complex system that defies easy fixes:** Many of those interviewed underscored the challenge of creating a Vision (and associated solutions) for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary given its place within a technically complex, long established and highly inter-connected water management system. In some cases, the challenges are seen as highly technical; in others, some interviewees say, the issue is more about entrenched practices and/or a lack of political will (such as the lack of a water reservation for the Caloosahatchee) or the lack of coordination across the various permitting agencies. Among the more challenging factors are:

  - A longstanding water allocation system that assigns water permits to agriculture and urban but not environmental flows (a particularly strong concern for many of the environmental representatives interviewed); and
  - Broader linkage to Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee and the Southern Everglades and associated mandates;
  - Tradeoffs between water quality and water quantity improvements (higher flows lead to more nutrients);
  - Water quality and quantity concerns affected by watershed tributaries, urban runoff (exacerbated by sharp urban population growth in recent years), impervious surfaces, land use, and management of waste and stormwater, and Lake Okeechobee flows;
  - Recognition that there are no short-term fixes for the high-flow-driven water quality impacts to the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.

- **No clear flow regime**: Interviews suggest there is no clear agreement on the minimum and maximum water flows needed to promote a healthier Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. Low flow needs cited in our interviews ranged up to 800 cfs (the current minimum flow level is 300 cfs); high flow limits for the region between S-79 and Shell Point were established (Doering et al. 2002) as 2,800 cfs. (Flow requirements were estimated based on salinity tolerance ranges.) Additionally, there is no broadly agreed upon translation of ecological indicators into seasonal flow requirements. Some of those interviewed say further work is needed to develop agreed upon flow regimes. Others say the work is done and known and all that is missing is a commitment and the political will to use the data to assign a water permit or reservation for environmental flows and manage the system adaptively. Several stakeholders noted that the District is already not meeting the Minimum Flow Levels (MFLs) adopted for the Caloosahatchee River by the District. Others underscored the need to move beyond minimum flows as those flows focus only on minimizing harm, rather than promoting a healthy river and estuary. To that end, environmental representatives reiterated the need for a formal water reservation for the river to ensure higher than minimum flows. There were also suggestions to rely more on monitoring of real-time conditions, rather than modeled efforts, to understand flows and system needs.

- **Past process failures:** Many stakeholders look at past dialogues and, for the most part, are skeptical of yet another initiative. Part of their discouragement is rooted in "process fatigue;" they are simply worn down by what they see as numerous stakeholder processes and "plans that just sit on shelves." More problematic, however, is a perspective shared across a wide range of interviewees that past dialogues have been undercut by "process fouls": for example, adding constraints mid-process (as some say happened in the Adaptive Protocols discussion) or ignoring broadly supported recommendations (as some say occurred in the North Spreader Barrier). A number of those interviewed say politics, the power of the status quo and constrained resources too often swamps science, skilled staff and good intentions.

- **Divergent views on merits of potential fixes:** While there are a number of ideas about shorter- and longer-term operational fixes, there are also significant divergent views on the merits of many of the actions already underway or planned. These included:

    - The C-43 reservoir (parties had varying view on the extent to which the proposed reservoir will address water quality or water supply concerns even though some or many noted it offers at least a partial fix);
    - Distributed water storage efforts (the extent to which it can be developed, how many acre feet of storage it will provide, when and where it will be built and at what cost);
    - How invasive plants and animals will be managed when land is taken out of production; and
    - The potential contributions of in-basin water quality actions, especially how much more Lee County can do regulatory-wise to address urban runoff.

There are also widely held views that projects already undertaken have failed to deliver the stated benefits. Land has been acquired in rural counties, for example, and then left unused. Other projects like the Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocols have been implemented, but are too limited to deliver significant environmental benefits. (A listing of near- and longer-term potential actions identified by stakeholders to improve the health of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary is included in Appendix C.)

Interviewees suggested other important challenges as well, including:

- **Climate change and sea level rise:** A number of those interviewed said any Visioning Process needs to take into account climate change (especially changes in rainfall patterns and storm intensity) and sea level rise, both in identifying ecological indicators and considering the merits and siting of possible actions (e.g., retreat from versus hardening of the shoreline). This was seen as crucial, given the potential for sea level rise to impact the discussion of how to measure restoration and what is even possible. To that end, the Visioning Process was encouraged to take into consideration the latest sea level rise model results and forecasts when devising both objectives and strategies.

- **Divergent views on BMP effectiveness and implementation:** Interviewees had sharply divergent views on the potential for additional agriculture best management practices (BMPs) to make meaningful contributions to a healthier Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. Some stated that, unlike the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), there are no monitored and enforced permit conditions for source control and hence BMPs are purely voluntary, not fully taken up by all actors, and the actual implementation of these BMPs is not fully known.

- **Insufficient incentives:** A number of those interviewed suggested that long-held positions and insufficient incentives hamper efforts to find a stable middle ground, both for agricultural and environmental representatives.

At the same time, there is widespread recognition that a tremendous amount of good work has already been accomplished and any Visioning dialogue can – and should – build on the data and relationships developed over the past 20 years. Many of those interviewed are eager to engage in more productive discussions. Key factors identified that provide strong support for a Visioning Process include:

- **Ecological indicators well known**: Many stakeholders broadly agree that establishing a common set of science-based, ecological indicators and metrics is essential for guiding future restoration activities. A number of those interviewed suggest the likely indicators, especially those related to the estuary, have already been well characterized through previous planning efforts (e.g., the minimum flow level process in 2000) and should be easily confirmed by a broad-based group. (See Appendix D for a listing of potential ecological indicators cited by stakeholders.) It should be noted, however, that it was not possible for the authors of this Assessment Report to identify the detailed range of agreement or disagreement on technical details. This would require an in-depth science

Workshop or other process to complete. Additionally, many interviewees share the strategic view that ecological indicators will be most effective if they center on ecological indicators that: 1) resonate with stakeholders and can be communicated easily with elected officials and the general public (i.e., charismatic indicators coupled with compelling visuals and accessible narratives) and 2) demonstrate system-wide balance and health. Some also suggested there was likely more disagreement around indicators than meets the eye, and, as one interviewee put it, "nobody has a uniform and accepted definition of what's 'healthy." It was also noted that listed species that may or may not be identified as "indicators" as part of this Visioning Process will have federally mandated recovery strategies independent of and not necessarily consistent with this effort.

- **Shared perspective on overall goal and many constraints:** Almost all interviewees across sectors agreed that the long-term goal of the region is to improve flows and water quality in order to improve health and habitat of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. For the most part, interviewees broadly accept that a dialogue that focuses on a "healthier" Caloosahatchee River and Estuary must necessarily be bounded. Many interviewees, though not all, agreed to a common series of constraints and conditions. One interviewee noted: "We don't have an expectation of perfection. The system was not designed that way. But if say we are only meeting basic ecological function 1/3 of the time now, let's get to 60% or set a goal of 75%. That would make the overall system still imperfect, but less stressed and more resilient." Regarding constraints, many of those we talked to:

  - Recognize that the river/estuary needs to be healthier, but understand that a baseline restoration to "historic conditions" is very unlikely;
  - Accept that "it's a highly engineered system" with locks, canals, pumps, and other structural features, many of which are highly unlikely to be removed;
  - Appreciate the need for developing ecological indicators for a healthier system even if it may be decades before they can be achieved - "they are what they are," as one person said; and
  - Are open to considering more larger-scale or bigger changes such as engaging tough topics like "shared adversity," as part of brainstorming discussions about potential long-range solutions, as long as those conversations are held later in the Visioning Process.

  Stakeholders also uniformly agreed that the District must provide upfront clarity on any constraints and intended outcomes, including both products and links to implementation, so expectations are set early in the Visioning Process. Several of those interviewed also urged that constraints should not be used to drastically limit the upfront vision, even if the plan for relaxing constraints evolves over time. "In short, nothing should be off the table for this visioning process," said one interviewee.

- **Strong information base**: Stakeholders uniformly recognized the extensive data already developed through the wealth of planning efforts and studies previously conducted. "None of us want to waste time reinventing the wheel," said one stakeholder. In

particular, stakeholders recommended drawing on the following studies to populate candidate lists of ecological indicators and/or potential actions:

- Southwest Florida Feasibility Study;
- Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan;
- Caloosahatchee Water Management Plan;
- Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan;
- Lower West Coast Supply Plan;
- Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project Final Integrated Project Implementation report and Final Environmental Impact Statement;
- Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan;
- CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan;
- Various other local studies.

A more extensive listing is included in Appendix E.

Other factors likely to support a productive stakeholder dialogue include:

- Recognition that an improved Caloosahatchee River and Estuary requires contributions by a wide range of parties and geographies ("no one party alone can fix this"), not just the District.

- Recognition that this is a long-term recovery process, and actions and their positive impacts will take many decades, but some actions can and should be started immediately.

- Strong professional relationships and mutual respect among many parties, as well as recognition by many of District staff skills and expertise.

- Mutual interest in clearing up long-held and widely cited "facts" and "myths" as part of a Visioning dialogue. (We are opting not to list these "myths" here as we believe they are best engaged through the upcoming workshop process.)

- Interest in pooling data to ensure the dialogue is supported by the best available data in as transparent a manner as possible.

Finding Three: A transparent, outcome-focused Visioning Process is needed and "business as usual" should be avoided.

Interviewees offered a range of suggestions related to the design and execution of a Visioning Process. Many recommendations are drawn from stakeholders' experiences with what they characterized as "flawed" processes. Others were rooted in what many said was the imperative for a transparent and public process that would not be seen as an "inside" conversation among a limited set of players.

Stakeholders had somewhat mixed views on the structure of the Workshop process itself. A majority of those we interviewed tended to favor a standing stakeholder body comprising diverse but set participants; all meetings of the group would occur in public. Such an approach, those interviewees said, would balance the imperative of a public process with the need to: (1) foster continuity; (2) build a common base of understanding; (3) build agreement among participants through dialogue and negotiation; and, (4) support development of a stable outcome. "If you can get a group of stakeholders together who represent the range of interests,' said one interviewee, "you'll be able to accomplish more." Others, however, preferred to err on the side of a more "open" public Workshop process with flexible participation and then rely on active and strong facilitation to bring stakeholder voices to the table on a consistent basis and drive towards broad agreement. "We need to make sure the conversation isn't dominated by just a handful of players," one interviewee said, suggested a more open dialogue would foster broader buy-in.

We also received other input on the process as described below.

- **Encourage Visioning outcomes beyond broadly agreed upon ecological indicators:** As noted earlier, many interviewees stressed that any Visioning Process must do more than simply identify ecological indicators. Many of those interviewed suggested a range of potential outcomes that would make the dialogue more valuable and worthy of stakeholder and agency commitment. Among the outcomes cited by interviewees include:

    - Confirm the agreed-upon flows necessary to support identified ecological indicators.
    - Identify key data gaps and develop an action plan to generate the needed information.
    - Prioritize among near- and longer-term actions needed to achieve a healthier Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. (See Appendix C for a listing of potential actions identified by stakeholders).
    - Identify implementation partners, reliable funding sources, meaningful commitments (accountability measures, etc.) to translate recommendations into actions and strengthen the linkages towards implementation.
    - Commit to an implementation plan and timeline
    - Identify policy/operational obstacles to achieve objectives

- **Avoid business as usual**: Many stakeholders strongly recommended that the process be structured in a way to clearly show that the Visioning Process is a departure from "business as usual." This recommendation, considered paramount among many of those interviewed, centered on several specific ideas:

    - Broaden dialogue sponsorship for the Visioning Process beyond just the District. This could include co-convening and/or partnering with others such as local communities and counties, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Army Corps of Engineers. Several interviewees said that this step would bring other potential implementers into the group and show participants that this was "not just another District-dominated planning exercise."

    - Articulate ahead of time a more certain linkage between: 1) ecological indicators and recommended actions generated by a Visioning Process, and 2) follow-up

implementation, including funding commitments and report-back mechanisms. Such steps, a number of interviewees said, would likely increase stakeholder confidence in concrete outcomes and, as such, enhance their willingness to participate.

- Rotate meetings throughout the basin, with interviewees most frequently citing Fort Myers, Clewiston and LaBelle as possible venues. Several stakeholders also recommended including site tours and other "non-meeting" functions to foster more informal interactions among participants. There were also suggestions to hold meetings in non-District locations and seek stakeholder hosting of meetings.

- **Articulate process constraints upfront.** Many of those interviewed underscored the need for dialogue participants to understand and agree upfront to any constraints on the process (nature of recommendations sought, the roles and responsibilities of the District or and other implementation partners, etc.) These constraints, interviewees said, should be incorporated into the ground rules and adhered to throughout the process Visioning Process. More generally, many stakeholder also supported loosening constraints on longer-term indicators and actions to foster more "outside the box" thinking. Several interviewees recommended drafting an upfront Terms of Reference and/or Statement of Principles at the beginning to ensure all parties understand and agree to the Visioning goal and process. Said one interviewee, pressing for binding participation commitments: "If the players can walk at any time, this effort is wasted."

- **Ensure balanced participation:** All of those interviewed widely acknowledged the need for broad and balanced representation among the range of stakeholders including: local, state and federal participants; environmental groups; agricultural and fisheries/boating interests; university researchers and others. Some noted that fishing interests need to be included, but given their limited resources and schedules, they may find it difficult or not compelling to participate. Some expressed similar concerns about broader agricultural interests being able to participate actively as well. A number of those interviewed encouraged the District and facilitation team to attract "new" voices to the group to make it easier to step beyond long-standing and/or unproductive patterns. The District was also encouraged to participate regularly and make technical staff available to support deliberations.

- **Foster transparency:** Nearly every interviewee stressed the importance of a fully transparent process. Specific suggestions included: holding all stakeholder deliberations in public; conducting broader Workshops to share evolving concepts with and seek feedback from the broader public; presenting complex data in terms and visuals easily accessible to the general public; and, pooling technical information among the various participants and making it broadly available (e.g., via a common website). Interviews also highlighted a number of preliminary information needs from their perspective and interests. (See table below.)

Some Information Needs Identified During Interview Process	
• History and background (brief) • How various agency plans to-date fit together (or do not) • Estimate of sources of flows and nutrients into the river (LO, sub-watersheds, etc.) • Legal framework of water reservations, permits, etc. • Existing indicators and/or metrics identified for the river and estuary • County land use plans	• Water budget for the basin, including tributary flows • Estimate of allocation or over allocation of water • Minimum Flow Levels (MFL) for the River below S-79 for protection and recovery • Maximum Flow Levels for the River below S-79 for protection and recovery • Actual water needs of various crops versus what they are allocated as of right now

- **Other Visioning Process suggestions included**:

  - Draw from existing studies and planning efforts to develop an initial list of ecosystem indicators, metrics, and potential actions. These "starting point" lists can then serve as the jumping off point for the Visioning Process and quickly identify areas needing further discussion and/or technical work.
  - Build agreement on a short-term Vision and actions first; then relax constraints to foster longer-term brainstorming.
  - Form a broad-based technical committee to foster information-sharing and pooling of the best available data.
  - Set a defined timeline and budget for the Visioning Process (under some type of binding or tangible commitment) to propel progress; set meeting schedules early to foster more reliable attendance.
  - Foster activities early that build trust and strengthen relationships among participants; focus on underlying interests, rather than positions.

3. CBI RECOMMENDED APPROACH

The interview process yielded important insights from a broad range of stakeholders. In addition, CBI received valuable feedback on our process recommendations in our draft assessment. Commenters on the draft assessment noted the following, in summary:

- Support for an independent convener to the greatest extent possible.
- Support for a multi-pronged approach as laid out in the draft assessment.
- Support for a Science Workshop, as long as it is convened under the right auspices, organized in an effective way, also considering sociological research, and likely needing more than one workshop to tease out the most important technical issues.
- Support for a Coordinating Committee of some kind, but with added stakeholder. participation to balance Agency participation and to more directly incorporate interests such as tourism, development and water-based businesses (boating, both recreational and commercial fishing, etc.).
- Concern about the restrictions of the Florida Sunshine Law limiting open and on-going dialogue among participants.
- Support for an implementation-focused process, with an emphasis on a "roadmap" forward and not too much time spent focusing solely on the upfront vision.
- As noted in the interviews, upfront clarity on the roles and responsibilities of various actors in the process and their commitment and constraints to implementing potential recommendations or priorities coming out of the process.

The recommended approach outlined in this section is based on stakeholder responses and reflects what the authors identified as the most promising strategy for achieving all of the objectives listed in this report. The recommendations are driven heavily by the various perspectives of the stakeholders, as well as the best professional judgment and extensive experience of the authors. The table below summarizes these important components of the recommended Visioning Process.

Key Components of the Recommended Visioning Process	
From CBI Past Experience	**From Stakeholder Interviews**
• Establishing clear and realistic objectives, mandates and timelines • Setting broadly accepted principles to guide work • Providing continuity among a critical mass of participants • Utilizing focused Working Groups to propel progress • Establishing realistic and effective linkages to decision-makers • Pooling and developing relevant information and data • Using a credible process with transparent dialogue, meaningful public involvement, balanced participation, reliable ground rules, clear decision rules and effective staffing	• Providing early clarity on intended outcomes and relevant constraints • Fostering a credible link between any agreed-upon Vision and a concrete path forward • Balancing the need for continuity with the importance of a public, open and meaningful dialogue that invites "new" voices to the table • Bringing implementation partners together • Fashioning a forum for sharing, integrating and reconciling differences on key data • Setting interim benchmarks to drive and confirm progress • Fostering a science-based dialogue • Focusing on existing analyses and data to maximize efficient use of available resources and avoid "reinventing the wheel"

	• Identifying broadly supported, near-term projects that can propel early progress towards shared goals

We do note that all participants are seeking to balance several, possibly conflicting interests that make designing the process challenging. We want to emphasize that no process, given these various interests and constraints, will be perfect. These factors all are trying to balance include:

- **Authority**: Commenters want the process to have a measure of authority so that they can be assured final recommendations and priorities will be taken seriously and have a high likelihood of being implemented.
- **Inclusive**: Commenters want the process to be inclusive so as many parties as wish to can participate in some way in the process.
- **Decisiveness**: Commenters want the process to be decisive in that a limited number of interests across all sectors can reach decisions on specific recommendations and priorities rather than simply generating a range of ideas and options.
- **Openness**: Commenters want the process to be as inclusive, open, and dynamic as possible so that all who want to participate can and those who participate have the ability to talk freely in small and large groups throughout the process to foster an effective outcome.
- **Independence**: Commenters want the process to be independent of any party who might exercise undue influence, be that the District, federal government, or others.
- **Resources**: Commenters feel the process will have value, but are concerned about the resource commitment (time and/or budget) required to engage effectively and then implement any recommended actions.

Given these factors, any process design is going to pose challenges. For instance, a process can be decisive by ensuring a limited number of representatives participate in a consensus-seeking committee in an on-going fashion and with clear decision rules, but this approach does not allow for members to informally meet, talk, and explore ideas or projects with each other in-between meetings. Similarly, a process can have greater authority by being linked or convened by an entity with authority to act, such as the District's Governing Board, but then, the process is likely to not have the desired independence from any one convener. We also note that, while most interviewees are eager to engage in an implementation-focused dialogue, many are wary of devoting time to an effort if there are insufficient resources to implement at least some of the agreed upon steps. Our final recommendations seek to strike a balance among these factors to the greatest extent possible.

Based on the interviews, comments on the draft and further deliberations with potential conveners, we continue to recommend a multi-faceted approach that relies on six key components.

- Identify a *Convener* to provide the appropriate and legitimate auspices for the work and to ensure the decision-makers take up the advice and recommendations developed.
- Establish a high-level *Coordinating Committee* to spearhead development of a vision and an associated action plan for the Caloosahatchee.

- Conduct a *Scientific Workshop(s)*, convened at the outset and likely at least once more during the process, to review and synthesize existing documented scientific work and establish a common science-based platform for moving forward.
- Hold open *Stakeholder Workshops* coupled with the Coordinating Committee meetings to vet Work Group products and inform Coordinating Committee deliberations.
- Utilize topic-specific *Work Groups* to undertake joint fact-finding needs identified by the Coordinating Committee.
- Develop Tasks and *Schedule* for the Visioning Process.

Other elements of our recommended approach include:

- Promote active facilitation to foster engaged and balanced participation by stakeholders.
- Use joint fact-finding and informal consensus-building at levels, but "take stock of formal consensus" only at the Coordinating Committee.
- Rotate meeting locations throughout the region.
- Leverage previous work and analysis to the greatest extent possible to maximize efficient use of available resources.
- Identify sufficient staff from appropriate entities to work with participants and prepare relevant documents.
- Include dialogue "sponsors" beyond the District.
- Provide opportunities for informal stakeholder gatherings.
- Set meeting schedules well in advance of meeting times to foster broad participation.

We recognize that the recommended scope of the process design is more elaborate than the District's original vision for this process, and it may be challenging to marshal the necessary resources to support such a multi-faceted dialogue. Stakeholders, too, may be reluctant or unable to dedicate the time needed to engage effectively. To the extent the District and stakeholders are unable to move forward with the full suite of recommendations, we encourage all parties to consider whether there are discrete elements that, if moved forward initially, would provide a more solid platform for ongoing discussions.

Below is a closer look at each of the six key components above, as well as a rough sketch of a possible timeline and workflow.

Identify the Convener for the Process as a Whole

In order for the Visioning Process to have both legitimacy and influence, it is important to consider who the convener of the process is, in whole or part. Each of the convening options considered, including the recommended option, possesses non-trivial process challenges given the factors we noted earlier. However, given the comments we received and seeking to balance the factors noted above, we recommend using the Coordinating Committee as the convener (to emphasize an independent and stakeholder-driven process).

- *Coordinating Committee as Convener*. The Coordinating Committee, with the assistance of the facilitators, could, in essence, "self-convene" once the CBI facilitators have helped establish the process. This is the preferred method suggested by most

commenters. Participants on the Coordinating Committee would commit to bring any final recommendations back to their particular constituencies or organizations for their consideration and, as appropriate, action. Collectively, members would provide various types and levels of support to the process (i.e. resources such as staff time, assist with developing process documents and outcomes, etc.). The District would be one of the Coordinating Committee members as a co-convener and would provide facilitation services (in accordance with a defined scope and budget).

Such an approach does have implications that merit careful consideration. For one, participating organizations would need to be thoughtful about who they appoint to the committee to ensure effective participation of various staff and individuals between, as well as in, meetings. We recognize that having multiple participants would be easier for some entities than others. As well, there would be no direct linkage to any decision makers as the convener. It may also have ramifications on available resources.

Three other convener options were also considered – two (the District and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force) were discussed in the earlier draft report, and a third (the National Academy of Sciences or similar body) was suggested by a number of stakeholders in response to the earlier draft report. Though each of these options is supported by some stakeholders and has merits, we do not recommend further consideration of these options for the reasons described below.

- *District as Convener*. As noted elsewhere in this report, many interviewees cited the District's deep expertise and dedicated staff and called for strong District support and involvement in any visioning process. Some even suggested that the District as convener, with CBI as neutral facilitator, might be an acceptable option. However, most respondents did not support the concept of the District as sole convener. Stakeholder comments clustered primarily around the following three concerns: (1) the District lacks sufficient neutrality and independence to convene the process; (2) dissatisfaction with past processes led by the District; and (3) the District is not the only entity that would need to implement actions to realize the vision.

- *National Academy of Sciences as Convener.* It is worth noting that a number of commenters recommended considering the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) or other such non-aligned body as the dialogue convener. Such an approach can be advantageous in fostering an arms-length evaluation and providing targeted scientific input into a specific topic under discussion. However, in our experience, a convener such as the NAS would not be appropriate in this case as (1) it takes significant time to convene such a panel and often requires a Congressional request; and, (2) NAS-convened deliberations typically are narrowly bounded to specific scientific questions and would likely not be able to address the many implementation questions stakeholders have raised. As well, NAS deliberations are often conducted with only limited stakeholder involvement.

- ***South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force as Convener.*** The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force consists of fourteen (14) members (seven federal, two

tribal, and five state and local government representatives) that are generally high-level decision and policy makers. It coordinates the development of consistent policies, strategies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and priorities addressing the restoration, preservation, and protection of the South Florida ecosystem[3] and facilitates the resolution of interagency and intergovernmental conflicts associated with the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem among the agencies and entities represented on the Task Force. As the Task Force includes multiple parties and has convened other kinds of related processes in the past, it was considered as a potential multi-agency, independent convener of the process. In this case, it was envisioned that the Coordinating Committee would report its findings and recommendations directly to the Task Force. Although the District would have had an active role in helping to support the various aspects of the process as described in option 1 (self-convening) and it was envisioned that CBI would still facilitate the process at the Coordinating Committee level, several interviewees expressed significant concern about the Task Force as convener due primarily to (1) it being an agency-driven and non-independent body, and (2) uncertainty regarding its past and current commitment to and knowledge of the West Coast.

Establish a Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee would be intended to serve as the focal point for dialogue for developing a Vision and associated implementation roadmap for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary which: 1) draws on solid science and a shared view of challenges, and 2) identifies and prioritizes among near-and long-term projects. The Coordinating Committee should consider information developed by the Scientific Workshop, Work Groups and Stakeholder Workshops to:

- Confirm key science-based ecological indicators.
- Identify and clarify technical, policy, political, and other challenges to attaining the key indicators.
- Develop feasible incremental objectives to address challenges.
- Match, prioritize and schedule existing and new actions and tools to meet identified near-term objectives and create a Project Matrix.

It is the authors' expectation that these general objectives would be refined and made more substantive by the Coordinating Committee if it is convened. The Coordinating Committee would be responsible for directing the work of all other elements of the visioning process. Neutrals would facilitate the discussion. Meetings would be held in various locations throughout the basin.

The Coordinating Committee would meet in public, meetings would be noticed and open to the public, and public comment periods during meetings provided. It is our understanding that the Coordinating Committee must operate consistent with Florida Sunshine requirements (e.g., no two members would be able to discuss Committee issues with each other outside of public meetings). As noted earlier, participating organizations would need to be thoughtful about whom

they appoint to the committee to ensure effective participation of various staff and individuals between, as well as, in meetings.

It is our recommendation that the Coordinating Committee be structured to bring together policy-level representatives from state, local and federal entities with implementation and/or management responsibilities as well as representatives of key stakeholder groups (selected by each caucus) from agricultural, environmental, development, tourism, and fishing interests. Including stakeholder representatives would meaningfully help integrate their perspectives into the consensus-seeking body. We recognize that some stakeholder groups may find it a challenge to identify enough representatives while others may find it hard to select as few as suggested. Our numeric recommendation seeks to provide an overall balance of interests. The table below outlines our recommended composition for the Coordinating Committee.

STAKEHOLDER	ORGANIZATIONS/NUMBERS
Governmental Entities	SFWMD Glades County Hendry County Lee County FL DACS FL DEP FL FWCC CHNEP Ding Darling/FWS Army Corps
Environmental Interests	2-3 Representatives
Agricultural Interests	2-3 Representative
Fishing Interests – commercial and recreational	2 Representative
Recreational/Tourism Interests	1 Representative
Development interests	1 Representative
TOTAL	18-20 Members

The authors encourage the principle of "self-selection" of members for creating the Coordinating Committee, wherever possible. This means that within the organizations or categories defined above, either organizations or "caucuses" of interest groups would put forward their nominees to fill the seats on the Committee. We recommend that participants on the Committee meet at least the following criteria:

- Represent and speak to the viewpoints of their organization or their constituency as a whole, not of just themselves and their viewpoints.
- Are versed in the issues sufficiently so as to be able to speak to technical, policy, political, financial, and other attributes of the issues.
- Are open to exploring new ideas and options.
- Are willing to work with others across sectors and geographies in the spirit of collaboration and consensus building.
- Have sufficient time to participate actively in multiple meetings, engage with constituents between meetings, and prepare for and follow up to meetings.

- Are able to adhere to the requirements of State of Florida's sunshine and open government laws and regulations.

Conduct a Scientific Workshop

The Scientific Workshop(s) is recommended to be convened at the outset of the visioning process and is intended to be outcome-focused and to serve as the technical foundation for the implementation-focused process. More specifically, the objectives of the workshop would be to:

- Evaluate existing documented scientific research/information
- Identify areas of agreement and divergence in estuary/river science and then work to resolve divergent views
- Characterize possible key ecological indicators, ranges of variability and performance metrics for discussion by the Coordinating Committee
- Suggest refinements to existing information/studies to support the ongoing visioning dialogue
- Suggest incremental targets to help measure progress

The multi-day, facilitated Scientific Workshop would bring together Agency, academic and stakeholder scientists and technical experts. Efforts would need to be taken prior to the workshop to gather and integrate the various data sources to ensure participants have all relevant information and can focus deliberations on engaging and, as possible, resolving (or at least narrowing) divergent perspectives and outlining areas of remaining uncertainty. It is our sense that the workshop is best convened by an independent entity (or entities) to improve its standing with the broader stakeholder community. Alternatively, the District itself could convene the workshop, in close consultation with other co-conveners. Suggestions we received include Florida Gulf Coast University's Coastal Watershed Initiative and/or the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

We recommend that the multi-day deliberations be held publicly and with opportunities for public participation. Any report to the Coordinating Committee on workshop results should include the range of perspectives discussed and any divergent views.

Finally, most commenters suggested that a one-time Scientific Workshop may not be sufficient and that at least one other session may be needed during the process to fully vet the range of scientific and technical issues. At a minimum, we would recommend that the data gathered to support participant deliberations serve as the foundation for an online repository accessible to all. We would further recommend that the workshop approach to pooling data from multiple sources serve as a model for supporting the ongoing visioning process.

Hold Stakeholder Workshops

Broad public awareness and participation is essential for any Visioning Process. Accordingly, the authors recommend that the Caloosahatchee River Visioning Process include Stakeholder Workshops as part of many Coordinating Committee meetings, keyed to strategic points throughout the process. The Stakeholder Workshops would be used to share evolving work

products and invite participants from across locations, disciplines and interests to engage in subsequent Committee deliberations. For instance, prior to or right after a Coordinating Committee meeting, Stakeholder Workshops might be held. Topics might include:

- Key ecological indicators
- Challenges, objectives and incremental goals
- Actions/tools to meet objectives

As an example, in a morning workshop, participants could review a set of draft ecological indicators suggested in the Science Workshop, discuss their particular merits, from importance to measurability to short versus long-term significance. In the afternoon, the Coordinating Committee would meet to build upon the work of the morning public workshop and deliberate on these indicators, seeking to prioritize them. To be most effective, outreach components will be needed as part of the Stakeholder Workshops to include "new voices" and make technically complex materials understandable and available to the general public. We recommend that as many Coordinating Committee members as possible attend each Workshop to: 1) underscore the importance of the Stakeholder Workshops; and 2) foster clear interactions with the main Committee. Summaries of main points raised during the Stakeholder Workshops would be provided to the Coordinating Committee. As noted above, the authors also put forth the option that much of the initial deliberations take place in workshops in lieu of forming the Coordinating Committee early in the process.

Utilize Work Groups

The Coordinating Committee will need to convene topic-specific Working Groups in order to undertake joint fact-finding, involve interested stakeholders, and develop options to inform subsequent Coordinating Committee deliberations. These Working Groups would be essential to fostering focused and in-depth deliberations. The Working Groups would meet between Coordinating Committee meetings to develop the fact base for subsequent Coordinating Committee deliberations. Some might meet only once while other Working Groups might need more than one meeting to accomplish their tasks. How the Coordinating Committee would organize the Working Groups has not been defined, but it is anticipated that the Working Groups might undertake activities such as the following:

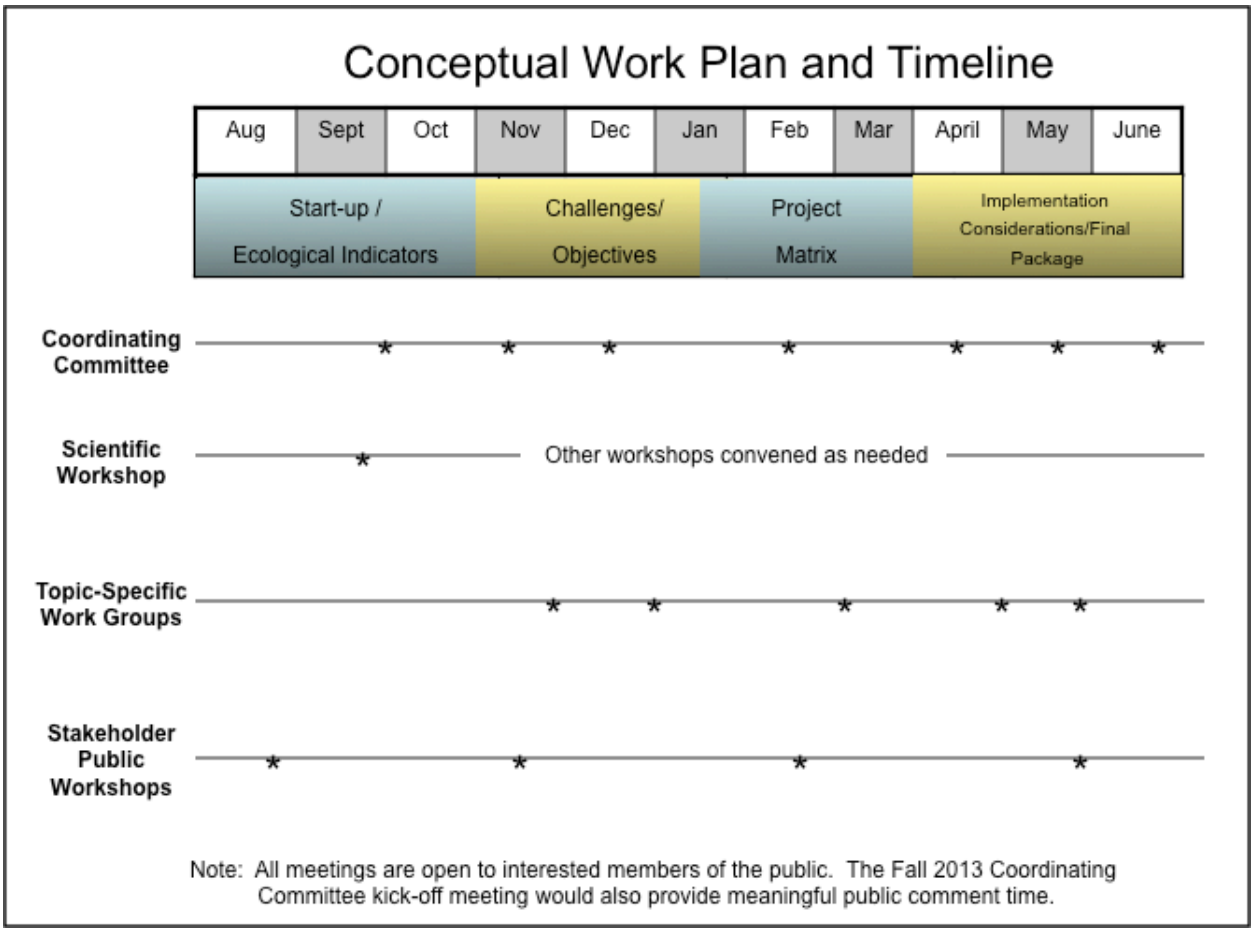
- Identify policy, political and financial challenges to attaining the key indicators and discussing the technical barriers named in the Science Workshop;
- Develop objectives to address feasible challenges
- Match and schedule existing and new actions and tools to meet Visioning objectives and develop a project matrix.

Participation on Working Groups would be determined by the Coordinating Committee to ensure a balanced, active, and appropriate set of core participants, and meetings would be noticed for other stakeholders interested in attending. It is suggested that one member of the Coordinating Committee represent the larger body on any Working Group to foster connection, clear communication and coordination. Since the Working Groups will be convened for fact-finding only, participants would be able to meet informally outside of regularly scheduled deliberations.

It is also recommended that stakeholder participants be identified to support Working Group meetings, such as developing meeting materials and information prior to each meeting and providing a written record of key discussion points, information needs and next steps. It is not clear at this time whether the Work Team deliberations would require outside facilitation or whether preparations and discussions could be adequately guided by either a Working Group or Coordinating Committee member.

Develop Tasks and Timeline

While a detailed work plan would need to be developed by the Coordinating Committee, it is helpful to provide at least an outline of how the proposed approach might move forward. Based on stakeholder feedback, it is our recommendation that the dialogue move quickly from ecological indicators into more deliberations focused on development of an implementation roadmap. For purposes of discussion, the following general workflow and timeline is provided (assuming the District is to move forward with all facets of the recommended approach).



4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

As the initial task for the District, CBI conducted over 35 stakeholder interviews during March and April 2013. The findings of the interviews were compiled and used to develop a suggested process design. These findings were distributed in a draft report in May of 2013 and reviewed by interviewees. CBI received 13 comments on the draft by mid-June 2013. CBI incorporated the comments received, to the greatest extent possible, and finalized this report.

In summary, the three key findings are:

- Most stakeholders are interested in the Visioning Process only if it includes a clear link to action (i.e., "an implementation roadmap").
- The context for the Visioning Process – both historical and technical – is challenging.
- A transparent, outcome-focused process is needed and "business as usual" should be avoided.

In crafting a visioning process, the authors are mindful that stakeholders are seeking to balance several, possibly conflicting interests that make designing the process challenging. Based on the interviews and comments on the draft, we recommend a multi-faceted approach that relies on six key components:

- Identify a *Convener*
- Establish a high-level *Coordinating Committee*
- Conduct a *Scientific Workshop(s)*
- Hold open *Stakeholder Workshops*
- Utilize topic-specific *Work Groups*
- Develop Tasks and *Schedule* for the Visioning Process

We recognize that the recommended scope of the process design is more elaborate than the District's original vision for this process, and it may be challenging to marshal the necessary resources to support such a multi-faceted dialogue. Stakeholders, too, may be reluctant or unable to dedicate the time needed to engage effectively. To the extent the District and stakeholders are unable to move forward with the full suite of recommendations, we encourage all parties to consider whether there are discrete elements that, if moved forward initially, would provide a more solid platform for ongoing discussions.

APPENDIX A
Interviewee List

Below is a list of those individuals interviewed and their affiliation(s). Many of those interviewed were identified by the District as stakeholders active in Caloosahatchee River-related issues. Some were suggested by other stakeholders, and a handful of individuals contacted the District directly and requested to be interviewed. All interviews were confidential.

Noel Andress, Board Member, Southwest Florida Watershed Council
Dr. Lisa Beever, Director, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program
Dr. John Capece, President, Southern Datastream, Inc.
John Cassani, Secretary, Southwest Florida Watershed Council
Sarah Catala, Assoc. Planner, Hendry County
Brad Cornell, Chair SW Florida Policy Associate, Collier County Audubon Society
Wayne Daltry, President, Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association
Mick Denham, Vice Mayor, City of Sanibel
Russell Echols, Chair, Glades County Commission
Hugh English, General Partner, English Brothers
Shannon Estenoz, Director Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives, U.S. Department of the Interior
James Evans, Dir. of Natural Resources, City of Sanibel
John Fumero, Esq., Legal Consultant, Lee County
Jane Graham, Everglades Policy Associate, Audubon of Florida
Dr. Paul Gray, Okeechobee Science Coordinator, Audubon of Florida
Tammy Hall, Commissioner, Lee County
Ron Hamel, Exec. VP & General Manager, Gulf Citrus Growers Association
Dr. William Hammond, Special Advisor, Kitson & Partners
Kurt Harclerode, Operations Manager, Natural Resources, Lee County
Jennifer Hecker, Dir. of Natural Resource Policy, The Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Capt. Larry Hendricks, Vice President, Lee County Professional Guides Association
Mitch Hutchcraft, Vice President of Real Estate, King Ranch, VP
John Kilpatrick, Chief, Jacksonville District Multi-Project Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Joan Lawrence, Liaison to SFWMD, Off. Everglades Restoration Init., U.S. Department of the Interior
Tom MacVicar, President, MacVicar Consulting, Inc.
Judy Ott, Program Scientist, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program
Roland Ottolini, Dir, Natural Resources Department, Lee County
Joyce Palmer, Deputy Refuge Manager, J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge
Dr. Mike Parsons, Assoc. Professor of Marine Science, Florida Gulf Coast University
Tamara Pigott, Exec. Director, Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau
Pete Quasius, Director, Snook and Gamefish Foundation
Jed Schneck Esq., Legal Consultant, Lee County
Dr. Greg Tolley, Prof. of Marine Science, Dir. Of Graduate Studies, Florida Gulf Coast University
Paul Tritaik, Refuge Manager, J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge
Karson Turner, Chair, Hendry Board of County Commissioners
Thomas Van Lent, Sr. Scientist, Everglades Foundation
Dr. Aswani Volety, Prof. of Marine Science, Dir. Vester Marine Station, Florida Gulf Coast University
Malcolm Wade Jr., Sr. VP Sugar Operations, U.S. Sugar Corporation
Garrett Wallace, Dir. Government & Regulatory Affairs, Alico Incorporated
Tara Wertz, Former Wildlife Biologist, J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge
Rae Ann Wessel, Dir. Natural Resource Policy, Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation
Tracy Whirls, Executive Director, Glades County Economic Development Council

APPENDIX B
Interview Protocol

Below is the interview protocol used to guide the interviews. Please note that the interviews were wide ranging, specific to individual interest and concerns, and the interview protocol was not necessarily covered in full in every interview.

Background

- Professional background
- Work to-date on the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary
- Why was your organization established? What were the driving considerations?

Interests and Vision

- What's your Vision for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary in ten years time? In 20-25 years?
- What do you see as possible key ecological attributes that are fundamental to a healthy Caloosahatchee system?
- What are your organization's particular interests related to a Caloosahatchee River Visioning Process?

Visioning Process

- **Goals and Objectives.** What should be the goals and objectives of the Caloosahatchee River Visioning process? What would "success" look like to you at the end of a Visioning Process?
- **Issues.** What issues will the group need to discuss and deliberate upon to develop a well-informed Vision? Which ones are most important to you?
- **Pitfalls or Barriers.** What do you see as the pitfalls or barriers to success? What are your thoughts for overcoming these barriers?
- **Linkage to Other Water Planning/ Visioning/Restoration Efforts.** Are there other ongoing planning efforts that are important to consider in developing a Vision for a healthy Caloosahatchee River and Estuary? Please explain.
- **Lessons from Elsewhere.** Are there lessons/approaches from other dialogues you would recommend incorporating into this effort? What's worked elsewhere?
- **Work Product.** What should be the product of the Visioning? What is an appropriate level of detail for an ecological Vision?

Stakeholder Deliberations

- **Participation.** Who needs to be represented in the process? The thought is an open process without set membership but a core group of consistent participants. Pros, cons, considerations?
- **Meeting Frequency.** The thought is to hold meetings every 4 to 6 weeks, as this is seen as sufficient time to maintain momentum but allow for between-meeting work. Would you be able to participate? Does this seem appropriate? Achievable? There may also be the need for Working Groups. Would be able to devote time to occasional Working Group participation?

- **Meeting Location.** The thought is holding the meetings both inland and on the coast. Do you have any thoughts on meeting locations? Timing?
- **Information Needs.** What information is needed to support effective stakeholder deliberations? What other resources – District staff, non-district scientists, others – are needed to support the process? Any recommendations on how the technical expertise should be organized best support the group's deliberations? Would you be willing/able to provide in-kind support for the process?
- **Targeted Outreach.** Is there a need for targeted outreach beyond the regularly scheduled stakeholder meetings? To whom? Why? What might that look like?
- **Commitment to Outcome.** Is it important that participants in the Visioning Process commit to jointly support an agreed-upon Vision? How might participants be incentivized to commit to the process and avoid any diversions from the path forward?
- **Ground Rules.** What ground rules would you recommend to foster effective deliberations?
- **Guidance to Facilitator.** We welcome your feedback on the facilitator role. What's needed at the table? What should our role be between meetings? What makes for successful facilitation? What is challenging to you?

Other

- Any other related observations/comments?

APPENDIX C
Potential Near-Term and Longer-Term Actions

Below is a list of near- and longer-term action identified by interviewees. Some actions focus on on-the-ground activities; others, on mechanisms to improve transparency, project effectiveness and the likelihood of progress. Note: In some cases, the same actions were cited as short- or long-term activities, depending on the interviewee. In such instances, we have included those actions as both. The actions in the table below are not listed in priority order nor are they an indication of broad support. Rather, the list is intended to capture the range of ideas put forward by stakeholders. They also may or may not be addressed in the Visioning Process.

Scan of Candidate Actions Put Forward in the Stakeholder Interviews	
Near-Term Actions	Longer-Term Actions
• Foster great compliance/incentives for Ag BMP implementation • Foster distributed water storage/ management • Consider options for improving water quality – within and outside Basin (county stormwater ordinances, chemical treatment, septic system removal, innovative septic treatments, fertilizer application, infrastructure retrofits, north of lake solutions, stormwater treatment areas) • Confirm Caloosahatchee River and Estuary water flow needs • Capture/recycle stormwater runoff • Promote energetics and systems analysis (least cost analysis or LCA) to identify viable projects • Put in place S-79 operational changes during storm events; explore alternative operation during droughts • Develop risk insurance policy to enable reduced agricultural allocations • Clarify C-43 reservoir purpose (water quality or supply) • In-water monitoring of SAV to allow species identification and geographic ranges in conjunction with salinities • Make available water budget and current allocation determinations; address over-allocations • Put in place percentage set aside for funding projects • Improve management of state/District-owned lands • Promote greater use of pilot projects to confirm effectiveness • Improvement in efficiency of existing canals • Address pooling between locks • Ag land capture and recycle runoff using Recycled Water Containment Areas • Assess impact of sea level rise on the tidal force and extent upriver	• Fix and raise Hoover Dike; direct some periodic higher water flows to the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary in low-flow times • Build and operate C-43 reservoirs • Pursue Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASRs) • Develop additional storage north of Lake Okeechobee to handle excess runoff • Develop water reservation/permit for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary • Improve conveyance to move excess flows south • Reduce nitrogen loading from outside the basin • Address in-basin septic tank concerns • Support oxbow restoration • Site inland water storage in areas likely to support economic development/ recreational opportunities • Improve delivery of flows and water quality through top release versus bottom releases • Remove S79 or keep open periodically to allow isohaline fluctuations • Address sea level rise • Modify dam gate structures to eliminate bottom opening gates and sediment discharge

APPENDIX D
List of Potential Ecological Indicators

Below is a list of potential ecological indicators identified by stakeholders during the interview process. This listing is not intended to represent a consensus view; rather, it merely summarizes the possible ecological indicators mentioned in the interviews.

Several interviewees suggested that a more complete candidate list could and should be developed prior to the Visioning Process by reviewing the following studies, in particular: Southwest Florida Feasibility Study, Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan, Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and the CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan, and various other local studies. The purpose of the recommended Science Workshop, in part, will be to develop and prioritize this kind of list of indicators. A brief description of each of these and other studies are provided in Appendix E.

Candidate Ecological Indicators Suggested in the Assessment Process		
Estuarine Ecological Indicators	**Mid-Upper Estuary Ecological Indicators**	**Freshwater Ecological Indicators**
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (shoal, turtle and manatee grass; density and spatial distribution)	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (tape and shoal grass; density and spatial distribution)	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (tape grass; density and spatial distribution)
Shellfish (Eastern oyster and bay scallops)	Shellfish (Eastern oyster, *Rangia* and *Polymsedoa* clams)	Shellfish (*Rangia* and *Polymsedoa* clams)
Fisheries (Red drum, snook, tarpon, spotted sea trout)	Fisheries (larval abundance and diversity)	Fisheries (large-mouth bass)
Crustaceans (Blue crab)	Crustaceans (Blue crab)	Water Quality (Class I water standards - swimmable and fishable)
Zooplankton (larval crabs, shrimp and oysters)	Zooplankton (larval crabs, shrimp and oysters)	Water Quantity (flow)
Water Quality (dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll)	Water Quality (dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll)	Macro Algae (presence/absence of accumulations)
Water Quality (salinity, flow)	Water Quality (salinity, flow)	Harmful Algal Blooms (red tide, blue green species)
Macro Algae (presence/absence of drift accumulations)	Macro Algae (presence/absence of drift accumulations)	Oxbow Restoration (bathymetry, hydrology, vegetation)
Harmful Algal Blooms (red tide, blue green species)	Harmful Algal Blooms (red tide, blue green species)	Public Health Impacts (fecal coliform)
Manatees health and abundance (critical habitat)	Manatees health and abundance (critical habitat)	Benthic invertebrate diversity
Smalltooth Sawfish (critical habitat)	Smalltooth Sawfish (critical habitat)	
Public Health Impacts (fecal coliform)	Public Health Impacts (fecal coliform)	
Benthic invertebrate diversity	Benthic invertebrate diversity	

Other possible key indicators cited but not specific to a particular reach section include: water clarity/kd; chlorophyll; HAB (Red tide, cyano bacteria and marcroalgae); oxygen/hypoxia, hypoxic volume days; nutrient concentrations; toxin levels in fish (anatoxin, PAHs, pesticides); and sediment toxicity.

APPENDIX E
Listing of Cited Studies and Background Documents

Below is a listing of relevant studies and background documents cited most frequently by interviewees, followed by a brief description of each. In addition, there are numerous local, NGO and university data sources available to support a Visioning Process. Interviewees broadly called for the process to create an on-line repository that provides a compendium of all relevant literature and/or links to all those materials. The list below is not intended to be exhaustive. Please also note certain kinds of materials may be protected by copyright or other intellectual property constraints and could limit what may be posted on line.

Southwest Florida Feasibility Study
The Southwest Florida Feasibility Study is a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The study is being used to set objectives for and develop a Comprehensive Watershed Master Plan. The study was recommended by the Yellow Book (CERP) as a comprehensive Watershed study. Specific project purposes include: Health of Aquatic Ecosystems, Water Flows, Water Quality (including appropriate pollution reduction targets), Water Supply, Flood Damage Reduction, Wildlife and Biological Diversity, Natural Habitat and Recreational Opportunity. The Plan's name is the Southwest Florida Comprehensive Watershed Plan.

Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan
The Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan was developed by the SFWMD, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) in cooperation with other affected counties and municipalities – along with a diversity of other stakeholder and public input in response to the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Act (373.4595 F. S.). The Plan identifies the best combination of Watershed storage and water quality projects needed to help improve the quality, timing and distribution of water in the natural ecosystem. The original plan was published in 2009 and updated in 2011. The plan can be found at: www.sfwmd.gov/northerneverglades.

Caloosahatchee Water Management Plan
The Caloosahatchee Water Management Plan (CWMP) is considered a subset of two of the four regional planning areas within the SFWMD Lower East Coast and Lower West Coast areas. The CWMP is the product of a public process, which relied heavily on the Caloosahatchee Advisory Committee (CAC). The planning effort provided a forum to weigh projected water demands against available supplies and to discuss potential solutions to identified shortfalls. Five components (regional reservoirs, Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASRs), backpumping, distributed small-scale reservoirs, and water harvesting) were evaluated and combinations of the components were tested as alternatives.

Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP)
In December 2009, FDEP adopted the Caloosahatchee Estuary TMDL for total nitrogen (TN), which has been linked to high chlorophyll-*a* (chl *a*) concentrations in the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary downstream of the Franklin Lock and Dam (Control Structure S-79). The TMDL accounts for the total load at the estuary inclusive of loads from the upstream freshwater portions

of the Caloosahatchee River as well as Lake Okeechobee and requires a 23% reduction in this total TN load. The purpose of the BMAP is to address total nitrogen (TN) load reductions in the portion of the Watershed below S-79 that drains to the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan
The goal of the water supply planning process is to determine the region's water needs and develop sound, workable solutions for those needs. The 2012 Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan Update focuses on other water supply sources, such as reverse osmosis to treat brackish groundwater, reclaimed water, storage options, seasonal surface water and water conservation to address future demands.

Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement
This report documents studies for the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir project, in accordance with the requirements of Section 601(d) of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000) and recommends authorization of this project. This Project addresses the need to restore the ecosystem function in the Caloosahatchee Estuary by reducing the number and severity of events where harmful amounts of freshwater from basin runoff and Lake Okeechobee releases are discharged into the estuary. The project also helps to maintain a desirable minimum flow of fresh water to the estuary during dry periods.

Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)
The CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) identifies Priority Problems and Quantifiable Objectives needed to protect and restore the natural resources throughout the CHNEP study area. The four Priority Problems include: water quality degradation, hydrologic alterations, fish and wildlife habitat loss and stewardship gaps. The CCMP includes a series of graphic Vision maps, quantifiable objectives, priority actions and many support documents.

CHNEP Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan
The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan is the product of a partnership between the CHNEP and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The purpose of the Plan is to provide a technically sound, consensus-based approach for identifying oyster habitat restoration goals, methods and partnerships for the estuaries within the CHNEP. The Southwest Florida Oyster Working Group (SWFOWG), a diverse group representing local stakeholders, was convened to assist in the development of this plan. The plan provides the guidelines for native oyster habitat restoration within the CHNEP study area using a regional partnership approach.

Additional references that contain pertinent information and historical context (submitted by interviewees following the interview process) include the following:

- *Landscapes and Hydrology of the Predrainage Everglades*
  by McVoy, C. W., W. P. Said, J. Obeysekara, J. A. VanArman, and T. W. Dreschel. 2011.

A group of scientists at the South Florida Water Management District have united in an effort to establish a benchmark from which to measure Everglades restoration success. Using survey notes, historical maps, photos, and firsthand descriptions, they have reconstructed a vivid ecological--and hydrological--picture of the Everglades of the 1800s, before drainage of the swamp drastically altered the landscape.

- FGCU Library Collection of Caloosahatchee Documents available at the following link: http://fgcu.catalog.fcla.edu/gc.jsp?fl=ba&st=Caloosahatchee+documents+collection&ix=kw

- Art Marshall Study 1950-60s

- Biological Investigations of Caloosahatchee Estuary Gunter & Hall, 1962

- NOAA Distribution and Abundance of Fishes and Invertebrates in Gulf of Mexico Estuaries Volume I: Data Summaries, 1992

- NOAA Distribution and Abundance Fisheries and Invertebrates 1997

- Chamberlin & Doering studies, 1997-1999

    - Freshwater inflow to the Caloosahatchee estuary and the resource based method for evaluation
    - Preliminary estimate of optimum freshwater inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary: A resource based approach, 1998
    - Using Submerged Aquatic Vegetation to Establish Minimum and Maximum Freshwater Inflows to the Caloosahatchee Estuary, Florida, 2002

- SFWMD 2000. Draft technical documentation to support development of minimum flows and levels for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. SFWMD Water Supply Department.

- SFWMD 2003. Technical documentation to support development of minimum flows and levels for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. Draft 2003 Status Update Report. SFWMD Southern District Research Department and Water Supply Department.

- SFWMD 2003. Technical documentation to support development of minimum flows and levels for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. Appendices. SFWMD Southern District Research Department and Water Supply Department.

- Caloosahatchee River/estuary Nutrient Issues document, SFWMD, 2005

- Habitat Use of *Vallisneria americana* Beds in the Caloosahatchee River: Final Report SFWMD, 2004

- SCCF Methods Manual and Monitoring Results for Vallisneria americana Restoration in Southwest Florida, 2008
- SCCF Calooshatchee and Estuary Condition Report
- FWC Report Relationships Between Freshwater Inflows And Fish Populations In the Caloosahatchee River Estuary, Florida, P.W., Stevens et al, 2008
- Mainstem and Backwater Fish Assemblages in the Tidal Caloosahatchee River: Implications for Freshwater Inflow Studies Stevens et al, 2010
- Seasonal Freshwater inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary Greg Tolley, 2010
- Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir PIR
- Caloosahatchee Tidal TMDL 2009
- Caloosahatchee Tidal Basin Management Action Plan 2012
- Caloosahatchee Tributary TMDL 2013
- Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan 2012
- The Responses of turbidity, CDOM, benthic microalgae, phytoplankton and zooplankton to variation in seasonal freshwater inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary by Tolley, G.S., et al. 2010
- Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program 2006. Lower Charlotte Harbor Reconnaissance Report. SFWMD.
- Lower Charlotte Harbor SWIM Report (2008)