

Memo Addressing Comments on the *Process for Assessing Data Usability* Document and Recommendations to the TOC

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Provided by

Ernest Marks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Ernest.Marks@dep.state.fl.us

The attached Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) *Process for Assessing Data Usability* document was presented to the Everglades Technical Oversight Committee (ETOC) prior to the May 31, 2011 ETOC meeting. At that time, comments were solicited from the Federal ETOC representatives. This cover memo is meant to address the comments provided and provide recommendations on how these particulars might be addressed by the ETOC.

ETOC Compliance Evaluation with Regard to the Data Usability Document:

The Data Usability Document (Attachment 1) is meant to provide a consistent approach to evaluating data for determining representativeness, including data used for assessing compliance with Appendix A and Appendix B of the Settlement Agreement. Using Data Quality Indicators (Sections 3 -16 of Attachment 1), qualified data and the factors that led to that qualification and proposed use/removal of the data from the compliance calculation will be documented and presented to the ETOC as such circumstances arise. In order to provide further clarification, the term “data auditors” shall apply to both the South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) or FDEP internal certified quality assurance officers. Evaluations under Section 18.1 will be provided to the ETOC when data used in Appendix A or B do not pass one or more DQIs. The members of the ETOC will then evaluate whether data should be used for compliance purposes under the Consent Decree. The function of the useability document is to provide detailed and consistent information to the ETOC and does not limit the ETOC’s ability to determine whether qualified data should be used or removed from the compliance calculation. With information summarized through the actions in 18.1 and evaluated by quality assurance officers under 18.2, the ETOC will recommend data useability for purposes of compliance with the Consent Decree.

Data Collection and Use:

While the attached document does not specifically address the frequency of collection and the use of additional relevant information for compliance with Appendix A and B of the Settlement Agreement, it provides ample opportunity to utilize additional data and information to aid in deciding data useability. Section 1.1 on the Data Assessment Process, indicates “evaluating corroborative data (e.g., performance tests, data from other laboratories)” should be considered during assessment. Further, Section 2.4 promotes the use of archival records to support sample results in the useability evaluation process. The useability document does not preclude or limit the use of additional data when circumstances warrant such use. The document is not meant to alter current compliance sampling frequency or protocols. However, should data quality concerns arise, additional data may be evaluated to determine its usability/applicability for compliance and/or other purposes and provided to the ETOC for their evaluation. Acceptance of the procedures and methodology within the Data Usability Document are not intended to limit the TOC’s authority and responsibility to use all relevant information when deliberating the question as to whether “substantial evidence” exists that an exceedance may be due to error or extraordinary natural phenomena.

Outlier Data:

For the purposes of determining the usability of data for Appendix A and B compliance testing, data which fall outside three standard deviations from the mean of the sampling period data set shall be considered outlier data. This determination does not preclude the ETOC from further evaluating the data. Implementation of this test will provide a bench mark by which groupings of data can be properly compiled and presented to the ETOC for their consideration.