

Notes from the Quarterly Meeting of the Everglades Technical Oversight Committee (TOC)

June 24, 2025

South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406

TOC Representatives:

Julianne LaRock, TOC Chair, SFWMD
John Barkett, Special Master
Daniel Crawford, USACE

Melissa Juntunen (alternate), LNWR
Edward Smith, FDEP
Donatto Surratt, ENP

Note: This meeting was conducted in person, online, and by phone, and was recorded by a court reporter. Copies of the transcript are available for purchase. Please contact Florida Court Reporting (561-689-0999) for more information. Handouts and presentations are available on the TOC website (<https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/toc>) and a recording of the meeting is available online at [Everglades Technical Oversight Committee - June 24, 2025](#).

Note: Definitions of agency acronyms are provided at the end of the notes.

1. TOC Opening Business – Julianne LaRock, SFWMD

1A. Welcome, Announcements, and Identification of Participants

Julianne LaRock called the meeting to order and provided instructions for participating during the meeting discussions.

1B. Agenda Modifications and Documents Available on the TOC Web Page

There were no requests to modify the agenda.

1C. Approval of Meeting Summary for March 4, 2025

The TOC approved the March 4, 2025, meeting summary with no changes.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Final Agenda for June 24, 2025, TOC Meeting](#)
- [Final Meeting Notes for March 4, 2025](#)

2. Settlement Agreement Quarterly Report, October–December 2024 – Chelsea Qiu, SFWMD

Chelsea Qiu presented the Settlement Agreement Report for the fourth quarter of 2024, October–December 2024, including results of surface water total phosphorus (TP) monitoring in the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (LNWR), Shark River Slough (SRS), and Taylor Slough and Coastal Basins (TSCB). Each area has a unique TP compliance regime. Results for SRS were calculated using provisional flow data and are preliminary. Monthly compliance results for the LNWR were presented for the fourth quarter of 2024.

The LNWR 14-station geometric mean TP values for October 2024 were above the computed stage-based long-term concentrations. The values for November and December 2024 were below the long-term concentrations. The preliminary monthly data outlook for January 2025 through May 2025 was also presented for the LNWR. There is a potential excursion in February 2025 based on preliminary data. For February 2025, the concentration at station LOX8, located

in the interior marsh, was 21 parts per billion (ppb), which was much higher than the other surrounding sites including stations along the marsh periphery. Investigations into why this site has such a high concentration are ongoing. The final data for this month and any investigation results will be presented at the next meeting.

SRS has a flow-based long-term limit that is inversely related to the 12-month total flow for each federal water year. However, the long-term limit has remained at 7.6 ppb following the implementation of the Combined Operations Plan (COP) due to associated increased flow. Preliminary tracking results were presented for the 12-month periods ending in October, November, and December 2024. The provisional tracking TP flow-weighted mean concentrations (FWMC) for this quarter were higher than the tracking flow-based long-term limit. TSCB has a fixed long-term limit of 11 ppb. Tracking results for the 12-month periods ending in October, November, and December 2024 were presented. The tracking TSCB TP FWMC values for these periods were less than the tracking long-term limit.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Settlement Agreement Quarterly Report, October–December 2024, Presentation](#)
- [Settlement Agreement Report, Fourth Quarter 2024, October–December](#)
- [Quality Assessment Report for Water Quality Monitoring, October–December 2024](#)
- [Quarterly Assessment Report for Water Quality Monitoring, October–December 2024: Water Quality Data](#)
- [Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Compliance Status as of the Fourth Quarter 2024](#)
- [Provisional Shark River Slough Fourth Quarter 2024 Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Data Report](#)
- [Taylor Slough and Coastal Basins Fourth Quarter 2024 Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Data Report](#)

3. Shark River Slough Final Water Year 2024 (WY2024) Annual Compliance Results – Chelsea Qiu, SFWMD

Final results for SRS TP compliance for WY2024 (October 1, 2023–September 30, 2024) were presented. The long-term limit was 7.6 ppb, while the TP FWMC was 8.0 ppb.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Shark River Slough Final WY2024 Annual Compliance Results Presentation](#)
- [Final Shark River Slough Third Quarter 2024 Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Data Report](#)

4. Water Quality Conditions for Everglades National Park, WY 2024, Shark River Slough – Chelsea Qiu, SFWMD

Information was presented about water quality conditions for SRS inflows to Everglades National Park (ENP) in WY2024 in relation to the SRS exceedance, focusing on localized downstream conditions and phenomena. The flow and water quality data were evaluated for data errors and extraordinary natural phenomena, and system conditions. There were no missing data samples but there was one suspicious (qualified) water quality event. Sensitivity analyses were conducted on the annual FWMC and the results indicate this event had no effect on compliance. The exceedance was not attributed to data errors. While WY2024 rainfall was higher than average, and the dry season (November–March) rainfall was higher than the 30-year average due to the El Niño event, the exceedance was not attributed to the extraordinary natural phenomena. Also, there were no abnormal system operations. Instead, system conditions indicated the

persistence of a localized phenomenon, which was related to more flow during low stages. More flow coupled with expected high TP concentration at low stages results in increases to the 12-month FWMC while high flow under COP results in a low long-term limit (7.6 ppb). The combination of higher FWMC and lower long-term limit led to the exceedance. Long-term compliance trends, based on 5-year averages, reflect the same pattern. Together, these trends of lower long-term limit and higher FWMC have resulted in persistent exceedances since COP was implemented in 2021.

Questions, Comments, and Discussion:

Dan Crawford, USACE, stated that the primary purpose for COP is to restore hydrology to Northeast SRS by providing continuous flow in the dry season, which is ecologically beneficial. All agencies involved in the TOC were involved in the COP and were in agreement of the plan.

Donatto Surratt, ENP, stated he has done a lot of investigations of the WY2024 SRS exceedance, and most of his evaluation aligns with the evaluation as presented by Chelsea. Donatto added he reviewed the COP deviation that occurred in WY2024 and conducted a sensitivity analysis to assess the impact on exceedances from shifting flows to the S12A and S12B structures, during the typical closure periods for these structures. Results show no impact on compliance interpretation when S12A and S12B deviation flows were shifted to S12C, S12D, or a combination of the two.

Juli LaRock asked the representatives if there were any objections to taking a vote on the exceedance and asked for any public comment before the vote. There were no objections or comments, so she reiterated the Principals' direction on how to deal with exceedances that were provided in a 2016 memorandum. The representatives must answer three questions:

- 1) Has the TOC done sufficient relevant evaluation?
- 2) Has the TOC determined the exceedance is due to data error or extraordinary natural phenomena?
- 3) If there is no substantial evidence that the exceedance was due to data error or extraordinary natural phenomena, has the TOC applied Appendix C of the Consent Decree to consider what additional remedies may be taken?

A vote was taken based on Chelsea's presentation and other information provided on the web. All TOC representatives agree that sufficient evaluation was done, that there were no data errors or natural phenomena that caused the WY2024 SRS exceedance, and that no additional remedies are needed at this time.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Water Quality Conditions for Everglades National Park, Water Year 2024, Shark River Slough Presentation](#)
- [Direction from Principals to TOC Representatives in the Event of an Exceedance](#)

5. S333 Working Group Update – Jodie Hutchins, SFWMD

Jodie Hutchins presented an update on the S-333 working group's activities, beginning by recapping the three engineering and maintenance solution recommendations that were presented at the last TOC meeting: Task 1 is maintenance dredging for removal of canal sediments; Task 2 is installation of low-sill weirs to their final elevation; and Task 3 is the monitoring and assessment plan that will commence immediately after completion of Task 1 and will occur for up to five years to evaluate the effectiveness of these solutions and to identify any optimization opportunities. An updated schedule was presented showing changes since the last update at the December 2024 TOC meeting.

The schedule for Task 1 has shifted by four months while the USACE finalizes the Section 404 permit. The FDEP permit and the USACE Section 408 authorization has already been received. The solicitation is in-process and is expected in July–August 2025. The solicitation includes both Tasks 1 and 2, allowing for utilization of the same contractor. Contract execution is expected in September or October 2025. Construction is anticipated to start in December 2025, with completion in October 2026, contingent upon minimal weather and flood control operational impacts.

Questions, Comments, and Discussion:

Special Master John Barkett made the following observations: (1) the overall schedule may not be impacted by much from the permitting delays, which is good news and bravo for seeking opportunities to get back on schedule, and (2) permits should be expedited when dealing with a violation of a federal consent decree and this should be emphasized.

Ed Smith, FDEP, informed the committee that 100% of funds are available for Task 1 and Task 2 and a contract agreement to secure the funding is underway and should be executed in about two weeks.

Dan Crawford, USACE, acknowledged the hard work by the S333 Working Group and mentioned that the USACE has other permit reviews underway that are subject to statutory timelines, but they are actively working to make sure they are not unnecessarily delaying the permitting process.

6. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

7. TOC Closing Business – Julianne LaRock, SFWMD

The next quarterly TOC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, 2025, followed by a meeting on December 9.

Special Master John Barkett thanked all TOC representatives for thoughtfulness, preparedness, and diligence.

Juli mentioned there was one action item. Analyses of the potential February 2025 excursion in the LNWR will continue and results will be presented at the September meeting.

8. Adjourn – Julianne LaRock, SFWMD

Julianne LaRock adjourned the meeting.

Agency acronym definitions:

DOI – Department of Interior

DOJ – U.S. Department of Justice

ENP – Everglades National Park

FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection

FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

LNWR – Arthur M. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

NPS – National Park Service

SFWMD – South Florida Water Management District

USACE – United States Army Corps of Engineers

USEPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency