

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

September 16, 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
Rebekah Gibble, LNWR

Mark Shafer (alternate), USACE
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 - September 16, 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 June 24, 2025

The TOC approved the June 24, 2025, meeting summary with Donatto Surratt's changes.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Final Agenda for September 16, 2025, TOC Meeting](#)
- [Final Meeting Notes for June 24, 2025](#)

2. Settlement Agreement Quarterly Report, January–March 2025 – Chelsea Qiu, SFWMD

Chelsea Qiu presented the Settlement Agreement Report for the first quarter of 2025, January–March 2025, 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.

The LNWR 14-station geometric mean TP value for February 2025 was above the computed stage-based long-term level (LTL), however the values for January and March 2025 were below the LTLs. Preliminary geometric mean TP values for April through August 2025 were below the long-term levels. The 36-month average TP geometric mean of 7.1 parts per billion (ppb) remained below the 36-month average LTL of 9.1 ppb.

SRS has a flow-based long-term limit that is inversely related to the 12-month total flow for each federal water year. Preliminary tracking results based on provisional data for the 12-month periods ending in January, February, and March 2025 indicate TP flow-weighted mean concentrations (FWMC) for the quarter were higher than the 12-month tracking long-term limit.

TSCB has a fixed long-term limit of 11 ppb. Tracking results for the 12-month periods ending in January, February, and March 2025 were below the 12-month tracking long-term limit.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Settlement Agreement Quarterly Report, January–March 2025, Presentation](#)
- [Settlement Agreement Report, First Quarter 2025, January–March 2025](#)
- [Quality Assessment Report for Water Quality Monitoring, January–March 2025](#)
- [Quarterly Assessment Report for Water Quality Monitoring, January–March 2025: Water Quality Data](#)
- [Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Compliance Status as of the First Quarter 2025](#)
- [Provisional Shark River Slough First Quarter 2025 Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Data Report](#)
- [Taylor Slough and Coastal Basins First Quarter 2025 Total Phosphorus \(TP\) Data Report](#)

3. Water Quality Conditions for the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, 2024 and 2025 – Jodie Hutchins and Nenad Iricanin SFWMD

A detailed presentation was given on two recent TP excursions observed in LNWR during the 12-month period. The first excursion occurred in October 2024 and coincides with the upper stage range of the LTL equation. The second excursion occurred in February 2025 and appears to suggest anomalous data at LOX8, with no apparent evidence of canal water intrusion contributing to TP at the station; this is based on stage, specific conductance, TP at surrounding stations, and phosphorus speciation. The 14-station geometric mean TP trend is not statistically significant, with a trend line hovering around 7.2 ppb, and the LTL period has an excursion rate of 5%, representing 11 of 209 events.

The presenters proposed further investigation of the LOX8 station and its data, including installation of wildlife cameras (already underway), continuous water quality monitoring (e.g., specific conductance, turbidity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and pH), and concurrent sampling within 200 meters of the station to confirm whether the current location is representative of marsh water quality.

Questions, Comments, and Discussion:

TOC reps and technical staff discussed the presentation and asked several questions. Bill Walker, consultant to DOI, commented on the trend and distributional assumptions, and recommended monitoring for turbidity, suspended solids, and chlorophyll. Jodie Hutchins noted the District is looking into the suite of parameters monitored at each station and will be adding or reinstating turbidity or total suspended solids where not already included and will consider chlorophyll. Donatto Surratt commented on the values used in the sensitivity analysis, cautioned against characterizing independent samples as outliers, and noted that he supports further investigation. In response to a question about the LOX3 sampling site being “ponded” (isolated from the remaining portion of the marsh) and associated water quality sampling protocol, Julianne LaRock indicated District staff would provide a copy of the District’s field sampling manual to Donatto Surratt.

There was discussion about the ionic composition of water in the marsh interior, the potential influence of canal water on that area, whether there may be alternate pathways for canal water to reach the interior, and the potential impact of recycling of historical loads from sediments.

Mr. Barkett urged the TOC to focus on language in the Settlement Agreement and the guiding questions provided by the Principals to determine whether the exceedance was a result of erroneous data, whether a remedy is needed and what it should be.

Rebekah Gibble indicated that algal blooms are not directly monitored in LNWR but other ecological factors (e.g., periphyton, spatial extent of cattails) are monitored and provide potential insight into impacts related to some of these dynamics. Donatto Surratt suggested the role of inflows be considered during investigation.

Rebekah Gibble requested a separate meeting to have further technical discussion. Jodie Hutchins will ask the TOC representatives who from their staff they would like to participate; Rebekah Gibble will work together with Jodie Hutchins to form the group. Mark Shafer and Ed Smith expressed their support for additional investigations. The TOC reps will defer any determination on the LNWR excursions until the technical team is formed, and further investigation is conducted.

Associated Online Documents:

- [Water Quality Conditions for Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge \(Appendix B\), Presentation](#)
- [Direction to TOC Representatives from the Principals, February 25, 2016](#)

4. S333 Working Group Update – Jodie Hutchins, SFWMD

Jodie Hutchins presented an update on the S-333 working group's activities. The schedule provided in June 2025 remains as presented. Since the last TOC meeting, Governing Board approval has been granted, allowing the construction agreement with the selected contractor to proceed. The construction agreement includes both Task 1 and Task 2, which will facilitate all aspects of the project. The notice to proceed with construction is planned for October 1. All permits for Task 1 have been received. Task 2 permit applications have been submitted to the respective agencies, are currently under review, and are expected to be issued by November.

5. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

6. TOC Closing Business – Julianne LaRock, SFWMD

The next quarterly TOC meeting was rescheduled to Tuesday, January 13.

7. Adjourn – Julianne LaRock, SFWMD

Julianne LaRock adjourned the meeting.

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

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