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Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Interior and State of Florida partner with National Academy of Sciences on Everglades Restoration

Independent Scientific Review to be provided by special National Academy of Sciences panel

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., (June 14, 2004) –Today, another milestone was reached in the journey to restore America’s Everglades with the signing of an agreement to provide an independent scientific review panel for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). The review will be accomplished by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and will produce biennial reports on the progress of CERP to Congress.

John Paul Woodley, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Craig Manson, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Department of the Interior and Henry Dean, Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District signed an intergovernmental agreement to engage the NAS in implementation of the Everglades restoration plan. This agreement addresses requirements established by the Programmatic Regulations (33 CFR Part 385), the rules for ensuring that the objectives of the restoration plan are met.

“Ecosystem restoration is a complex undertaking,” said Assistant Secretary Woodley. “The National Academy of Sciences will provide valuable expert assistance in independently reviewing our progress in restoring the Everglades. The Department of the Army will continue to work quickly and diligently to ensure timely and successful restoration of the Everglades. “

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, will establish a cooperative agreement with the National Academy of Sciences. NAS will convene an Independent Science Review Panel composed of a diverse team of internationally recognized experts in restoration science. The panel will produce biennial reports to Congress, which will include an assessment of ecological indicators and other measures of progress in restoration of the Everglades. The National Academy of Sciences, perhaps the nation’s foremost scientific organization, was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1863 as a non-governmental entity to honor scientists and advise the nation on important matters with scientific underpinnings.

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Everglades Restoration

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“It is critical in this long-term ecosystem restoration process, which is breaking new ground, to have some of the leading scientists from throughout the country give us their input. We are glad to be part of this review process,” said Henry Dean, executive director of the South Florida Water Management District.

The costs of implementing the independent scientific review will be shared equally by the state of Florida and the federal government. The Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior will share the federal government’s financial contribution. Funds for the initiation of this effort are included in the FY 04 budget.

Independent scientific review is a wise investment," said Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Craig Manson. "Agencies engaged in restoration benefit from independent feedback and constructive advice. Meanwhile, Congress needs to be assured progress to restore the Everglades is being made."

NAS is expected to begin appointing members and to convene a meeting of the panel soon. Another Academy committee, the Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem (CROGEE), has advised the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force since 1999. CROGEE has issued five reports since its inception, and will be disbanded after the issuance of its final report this summer.

“The Academy is very pleased to be a part of this challenging and high quality effort. The Everglades system is significant to the state and nation, and its restoration is the most ambitious of its type in the world. We hope we can help it succeed,” said Stephen Parker, Director of the Academy’s Water Science and Technology Board. Parker will serve as the staff officer responsible for the new activity.

For more information, contact Nanciann Regalado, Chief, Corporate Communications Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, at (904) 232-2568. For information on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, visit the website at www.evergladesplan.org.