
SONSHINE COMMUNICATIONS • PUBLIC MEETING NOTES



ACCOUNT: KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
PROJECT: EAA PUBLIC MEETING – NEPA SCOPING
CLIENT: DAVE STEWART
SC CLIENT REPS: COLIN MORRIS; PAM MASON
MEETING DATE: JANUARY 21, 2003 ♣ 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

The **EAA Public Meeting – NEPA Scoping** for the **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan** was held on **Tuesday, January 21, 2003** at Lake Shore Middle School in Belle Glade.

The meeting began with the translators announcing availability of Spanish and Creole translations. Welcome and introductions were moderated by **Brad Clark**, USACE. He also discussed the opportunity for public comment as well as the meeting procedures. Other presentations included: **Janet Cushing**, USACE, and **Dave Stewart** and **Angelina Fairchild**, Kimley-Horn.

An overview of the EAA Storage Reservoirs Phase 1 Project was then given by **Brad Clark**. He discussed the project background, the team leaders involved from USACE, SFWMD and others, the goals of the workshop, upcoming public involvement opportunities schedule and estimated costs. He also discussed the availability of the website for further information and how to make comments.

Janet Cushing, USACE, gave an overview of NEPA laws and the impact it has on the project. She also encouraged public input.

Dave Stewart, Kimley-Horn, gave an overview of the scope of work for the next year and a half to two years. He also gave a progress report on the services provided for the last six months.

Angelina Fairchild, Kimley-Horn, presented the EAA SR Project-Level Evaluation Criteria Hierarchy. Her presentation consisted of the project's ecological, economic values, social well being, cost risk and uncertainty as well as the system-wide evaluation criteria and finally the action steps.

The public comment portion of the meeting was held at the conclusion of Ms. Fairchild's presentation. Six individuals indicated an interest in making comments. An overview of the comments is listed below.

Name: **JP Sasser**

Affiliation: **Mayor, City of Pahokee**

Comments:

- He thanked USACE and SFWMD for coming out and providing them with this valuable information.
- He expressed concerns on holding these types of public meetings to only comply with NEPA requirements and not listening to the public's comments to be implemented on the plan.
- He indicated that their problem is immediate and two-fold: First, their primary source of employment is agriculture. The sooner they find out which lands are affected and which farms will be taken out, the sooner they can start helping the people adjust and move to other areas. All three cities are working

together in trying to find other sources of jobs for those who come to Glades. Secondly, the Corps continue to address water quality. However, the program does not take place until 2009.

- Again, he stressed the concern that the current quality of water is not drinkable. He indicated that it was a problem created by the Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management in which County Commissioner Masilotti has offered to build a regional water plant to alleviate the situation. He emphasized that if construction was to start tomorrow, it would take years to complete.
- The EAA project, even though it addresses water quality, will also take years.
- He asked if there would be a way to divert some funds to bridge the gap between tomorrow and when the entire project is completed.

Name: **Gilberto Alvarez**

Affiliation: **Latin Center**

Comments:

- Agrees with Mayor Sasser's comments.
- He said that there were only a few members of the community attending the meeting because they were not informed.
- He indicated the workshop was nice and informative, but that the plans were too technical for the public to understand.
- He also indicated that there is a great need to inform the public now through churches, and community organizations, such as the Latin Center. He asked to receive resources to inform the community and let them know that this project will be taking place and how they will be affected.
- This information needs to go out to the entire community- Latinos, African Americans and Whites that live in the farm area.
- He said that he has lived in this community his whole life. He does not want to move. He wants an informed community where all can live.

Name: **April Gromnicki**

Affiliation: **Audubon Society of Florida**

Comments:

- She thanked the Corps and South Florida Water Management for holding the public workshop.
- She is aware that the terminology is very technical but suggested using more common terms when making presentations to the public.
- She wanted to know what was the decision about a previous discussion on incorporating displaced farm workers in a training assistance program.
- She also indicated that it was her understanding that the goal of the 240,000 acre-feet was: (1) to restore the natural distribution of the flow of water to the Everglades, (2) to restore more natural planning and releases to the Everglades, (3) to improve the water quality to Lake Okeechobee, (4) reduce storm water runoff from water conservation areas, (5) enhance water benefits to the Everglades and (6) meet water supply demands to agriculture. She also mentioned that nowhere did it say that it was to store 240,000 acre-feet.
- She hopes that the numbers are guided by the evaluation and the performance measures rather than assuming what the end result will be.
- She also mentioned that the possible constrain of available acreage that is in public ownership now might affect the project. She suggests making an attempt to maximize the acreage for the best results.

Name: **Arcadio Gonzalez**

Affiliation: **Private Citizen**

Comments:

- He agrees with Mr. Alvarez and Mayor Sasser's comments about community attendance.
- He was not aware that the Corps was the one that made him pay \$70 a month for a water bill – for the water he cannot drink.
- He had a question from a previous presentation regarding aquifers. He wanted to know if the technique of cleaning, storing water and using the stored water when needed has been tested in other parts of the country and the world. He wanted to know to what extent is it safe.

Name: **Fredy Gonzalez**

Affiliation: **Latino Center, Executive Director**

Comments:

- He thanked the Corps and South Florida Water Management for the productive meeting they had.
- He agrees with everyone's comments and indicated that the people that are the most affected both positively by the good results will also be potentially harmed by what is going to take place because they are the ones that know the least about the project.
- He encouraged everyone to work together to inform the community – starting now and through the entire process.
- He also expressed concern about the number of jobs that will be lost in the entire community (Haitian, Latinos, African American and Whites).
- He stressed the importance of forming community alliances with the entire community – Haitian, Latinos, African American and Whites to inform them of the project's process.
- He indicated that the community needs to be informed now and not in 2004 when the plan will actually be implemented.

Name: **Steven Bell**

Affiliation: **Everglades Coalition, Co-Chair**

Comments:

- He also agreed with everyone's comments.
- He indicated that not much is being explained and it was difficult to keep track of what was being said.
- He stated he did not see any restoration happening. Instead, he sees "holding water in a pit."
- He thinks what should be restored as much as possible is the water flow– "the EAA is like our intestines and we've been gutted."
- He indicated there is no flow or connection. He suggested to look how to restore the historic flow whenever possible.
- He mentioned that no one wants to see anyone out of work but that everyone depends on a healthy environment.
- He suggested that instead of pumping water around "the intestines" use "the intestines". Buy lands along the canals and restore the flow.

- These were the kinds of solutions they were told that would be considered, not placing pump stations here and there designed to maintain flood protection for the EAA and avoid disruption of water supply for the EAA for agriculture.
- "Where is the restoration for the environment? The EAA should be taken care of but not at the exclusion of the environment or the environment at the exclusion of the EAA. This is not a balanced approach, it is more science driven."
- He believes that it can be measured in monetary form by having clean air and water value. This can be determined by having healthy residents and a healthy environment.
- He also made reference to the comments. He suggested that oral comments be also included in the PIR. He fears that these comments are only heard at the public meetings and not taken into consideration.
- Finally, he indicated that the process should be more user-friendly.