

APPENDIX E
AGENCY AND PUBLIC COORDINATION

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E PUBLIC AGENCY COORDINATION

Public outreach efforts for the Winsberg Farm Wetlands Restoration project began during the Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Review Study and have continued through the compilation of the Draft Project Implementation Report and Environmental Assessment (PIR/EA).

E.1 PUBLIC/AGENCY COMMENTS FROM DRAFT REPORT

Public involvement is a process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and governmental entities are consulted and participate in the decision-making process. Public involvement in the Winsberg Farm Wetlands Restoration Project has two main functions: to inform the public about what the project team is planning and to generate input on key issues and concerns critical to resolving the challenges involved in the planning effort.

E.2 SCOPING FOR THE WINSBERG FARM WETLANDS

The scoping process for the Winsberg Farm Wetlands Restoration Project was initiated on February 13, 2002, by mailing a scoping letter to federal, state and local agencies; Native American tribes; private organizations, and interested parties to solicit their views, comments and information about resources, study objectives, alternatives and important features within the study area. Comments received (Annex B) were reviewed and incorporated in project planning.

E.3 OTHER REQUIRED COORDINATION

In addition to the scoping required by the National Environmental Policy Act, coordination required by other federal laws and regulations has been conducted with the following agencies:

E.3.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Three Planning Aid Letters dated April 15, 2002, February 10, 2003, and June 21, 2004, were received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as part of the process for developing alternative plans. Additionally, USFWS provided a list of threatened and endangered species that may be present in the project area by facsimile on March 12, 2002. These letters can be reviewed in Annex A, and the information they contain has been incorporated in the plan formulation process. The USFWS is a member of the project delivery team.

E.3.2 U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

This project has been coordinated with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981. In a letter dated September 3, 2003, the NRCS determined that Winsberg Farm, having been farmed over the past five years, is considered unique farmland and would be taken out of production if the project were implemented. In response to the September letter, USACE provided NRCS additional details related to the project in a February 7, 2005, submittal. These letters can be reviewed in Annex B.

E.3.3 Florida State Historic Preservation Officer

Based on coordination and the results of a Phase I cultural resources survey, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with USACE's determination that the Winsberg Farm Wetlands Restoration Project will have no effect on cultural resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or otherwise of historical or archaeological value. Letters documenting USACE's determination, SHPO's concurrence, and related correspondence can be reviewed in Annex B.

E.4 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires the federal government to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high adverse effects of its activities on minority or low-income populations, and by involving potentially affected minorities in the public coordination process. It requires the analysis of information such as race, national origin, and income level for areas expected to be impacted by environmental actions. Winsberg Farm is currently in agricultural production, and the surrounding areas are not low-income or minority as defined by USEPA Region 4 categories for environmental justice. Outreach in this project has not discovered any concerns from local citizens regarding impacts to low-income and minority populations. Staff members working on this project also do not envision any potential for such impacts.

E.5 REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PIR/EA

The Draft PIR/EA will be sent to numerous local, state and federal agencies, and private interest groups for review and comment in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act regulations and related USACE guidance. Comments received during the review will be considered in preparing the final study documents and by subsequent reviewers

and decision-makers in the Washington-level federal review process. The agencies, groups and individuals listed in Annex B will be sent copies of the Draft PIR/EA.

E.5.1 Comments and Responses

The Draft PIR/EA will be made available to the public and government agencies. After the 45-day review period, comments received from local, state and federal agencies, Native American tribes, private interest groups, and concerned individuals will be incorporated. The comment letters received will be on file in the Jacksonville District, US Army Corps of Engineers.