

**DRAFT
RECOVER
REGIONAL EVALUATION AND REPORT PROCESS**

Updated April 21, 2005

1.0 Introduction

RECOVER is responsible for proposing refinements and improvements in the design and operations of the Comprehensive Plan during plan formulation, design, construction and operating phases of CERP project implementation. This paper focuses on plan formulation and evaluation during Project Implementation Report (PIR) development. The RECOVER Evaluation Team (ET) will coordinate with the project teams and other restoration project teams during the plan formulation phase to ensure consistency with the system-wide goals and objectives of CERP so that each project optimizes its contribution to system-wide performance of the Comprehensive Plan.

The ET will conduct system-wide evaluations for the following activities:

- Evaluation of CERP project alternative plans
- Refinements of the Comprehensive Plan
- Refinements to the existing and future without project conditions
- Refinements to predictive tools applied to the Comprehensive Plan

2.0 RECOVER’s Role in System-wide Evaluations for Project Teams

Guidance Memoranda (GM) 1: General format and content of PIRs and GM2: Instructions for formulation and evaluation of alternatives developed for PIRs, their cost effectiveness and impacts explain the general process for conduct of system-wide evaluations and comparisons required to describe system-wide benefits. Table 1 outlines the role RECOVER will play in the formulation and evaluation of alternatives as laid out in GM1 and GM2.

Table 1. Summary of RECOVER’s Role in Plan Formulation and Evaluation
RECOVER will provide the project teams with the latest version of the Existing and Future Without CERP conditions for the PIR.
RECOVER will review project-level performance measures to ensure consistency with CERP system-wide performance measures (See RECOVER SOP for Review of Project Level PMs)
RECOVER will evaluate alternative plans using CERP system-wide performance measures and provide an analysis of the project’s contribution toward achieving the goals and purposes of the Plan and suggestions for improving the performance of alternative plans.
RECOVER will review project monitoring plans to ensure consistency with MAP and does not duplicate system-wide monitoring activities. (See RECOVER SOP for Review of Project Monitoring Plans)

Regional evaluations conducted by RECOVER will include evaluation of project alternatives as modeled in combination with authorized and unauthorized CERP projects, the existing base condition (i.e. the no-action alternative), and the future without CERP condition. The type of review may vary depending on the evaluation tools applied, the scale of the project or its relationship to the Central and Southern Project (see Section 4.0 below).

In general, RECOVER's evaluation of CERP project alternatives fulfill the following objectives:

- Support the project teams to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives. This will include comparing the project's goals and objectives to CERP goals and objectives to ensure consistency, and when appropriate, documenting how the project fulfills CERP goals and objectives. (Please see Winsberg Farm Regional Evaluation for an example.)
- Document the performance of the project alternatives using RECOVER approved system-wide performance measures, project performance measures, and best professional judgment. The ET will describe the ability of each alternative to meet the targets established for each performance measure and describe the expected effects to the natural system.
- Where possible, RECOVER may suggest improvements to the project, which if pursued, could improve project performance or enhance benefits to the natural system.
- RECOVER will provide insight, if possible, and alert the project teams to any inconsistent modeling assumptions for the project. For example, the Strazzulla project showed benefits because of the Acme Basin B Discharge Project (ABBDP) placement in the Yellow Book, and consequently in the SFWMM. In reality, the ABBDP will not be located as laid out in the Yellow Book, so those benefits will not occur as originally envisioned.

3.0 RECOVER Team Organization for Evaluations

The ET has formed project review teams to evaluate the system-wide affects of the projects. A lead or leads for each team will be identified to coordinate the teams' evaluation in coordination with the CERP Project Managers (PM) and Planning Technical Lead (PTL).

In addition to conducting the evaluations, the Assessment Team (AT), ET, and Planning Team (PT) will work closely together to develop a process to refine the Comprehensive Plan, address changes in assumptions for the existing base and future conditions, and incorporate improvements to the modeling tools to evaluate the Comprehensive Plan.

4.0 Types of Regional Evaluations

Regional evaluations will be performed by RECOVER for CERP projects and other related restoration projects. The type of review may vary depending on the evaluation tools applied, its relationship to the Central and Southern Project, or its schedule. Adjustments to RECOVER's regional evaluation process may include changes in the scope of the evaluations, how evaluation

reports are communicated, and timing of reports. In the case of hydrologically isolated projects, RECOVER may not be able to rely on regional modeling results for their evaluations. Therefore the scope of our evaluation may be limited to reviewing project level model results and applying best professional judgment. For accelerated projects, instead of waiting until evaluation reports are finalized, it may be expeditious to communicate RECOVER's evaluation directly to the project managers through a presentation or participation in project meetings. Any adjustments to schedules or communication of reports will require coordination and agreement by the RECOVER chairs and the project managers.

5.0 RECOVER Evaluation and Report Process

The plan formulation approach applied by each project team will vary. The various approaches include developing one alternative at a time in an iterative fashion or developing all of the alternatives at the same time, which cover a broad array of conceptual designs. Another approach could be identifying single-purpose alternatives.

Although the project managers and project delivery teams decide the best plan formulation approach for their project, it is preferred that the teams develop several alternatives, then seek an evaluation by RECOVER before developing additional alternatives. RECOVER could provide useful information on performance improvements at this interim point during plan formulation that could be incorporated into the next alternative plan. This timely input would be beneficial to the project managers to help achieve the system-wide goals and objectives of CERP.

The time necessary to complete the system-wide evaluations will vary based on the complexity and number of alternatives evaluated simultaneously. For this reason the time estimates for the tasks are ranges. In addition, some tasks can occur simultaneously to ensure timely completion of the system-wide evaluations.

Task 1. Request from Project Manager.

As early as possible in the PIR process, CERP project managers will coordinate with the designated RECOVER Liaison and RECOVER Review Team lead to agree upon a scope and schedule for regional evaluations of their projects. Part of the information exchange will include the plan formulation approach for the project (iterative alternative development, develop an array alternatives at same time or some other approach) to help RECOVER determine when and how often system-wide evaluations will be needed.

Time estimate: 1 week.

Task 2. Model Assumptions for Systemwide Operations.

The most important consideration for evaluating alternative plans is model assumptions. RECOVER's Planning Team – Operation Sub-team will review and comment on the model assumptions to ensure consistency across projects for system-wide operations. Model assumptions and draft alternative plan descriptions will be provided to the RECOVER Liaison to pass along to the Operations Sub-team. Comments will be provided on the model assumptions.

Time estimate: 1 week.

Task 3. Project Description.

By the time a project is ready for system-wide evaluation, considerable time and effort will have been spent developing the alternative plans. This will include developing goals and objectives, performance measures, and narrowing the number and type of alternatives through a screening process.

Each project team should provide RECOVER with documentation of the project's goals and objectives, performance measures, results of the screening process, and a description of alternative plans (Note: AFB packages, FS, and technical reports prepared by third party contractors are all considered appropriate project documentation to be provided to RECOVER). The PM and PTL will be requested to brief the RECOVER Review Team Members and provide additional documentation on project features and special concerns.

Time estimate: 3 days.

Task 4. Regional Model Results.

In general, RECOVER assumes the project teams will request SFWMM runs and will provide those model runs to RECOVER to perform their regional evaluations. Modelers from the Interagency Modeling Center (IMC) will post results on CERP's web site or distribute results through another appropriate means and CERP PMs will notify the RECOVER Liaison and the RECOVER Review Team Lead of their availability. This information will be provided to RECOVER Review Team Members.

Time estimate: variable time depending on size and scope

Task 5. Drafting the Regional Evaluation Report.

The RECOVER Review Team Lead is charged with organizing and managing an editing team (if needed), calling team meetings (if necessary), and collecting team comments in time to produce the draft Regional Evaluation Report on schedule.

RECOVER Review Team Leads will be responsible for:

1. Scheduling completion of evaluations
2. Coordinating RECOVER Review Team geographic evaluations
3. Drafting the RECOVER Regional Evaluation
4. Coordinating and addressing RECOVER Review Team comments
5. Coordinating with the RECOVER Liaisons and the project managers

RECOVER Review Team Members will be assigned responsibility for completing evaluations for specific geographic regions based on their expertise. Each geographic area will be responsible for developing an evaluation reflecting interpretation of the model results. This responsibility includes:

1. Coordinating meetings or conference calls to complete evaluations. This will include pulling in additional expertise, if necessary, to complete evaluations.
2. Coordinating the geographic evaluation and submitting them to the RECOVER Review Team Lead. The geographic report will include:
 - A narrative describing the benefits and impacts of the alternatives

- Table(s) summarizing performance measure targets and model results
- The ecological effects expected, as a result of the project’s alternatives
- Opportunities, if any, to improve the performance of the project
- Suggestions to the PT to improve the Comprehensive Plan (Note: These are the PT’s responsibility to address through modification of the Comprehensive Plan)

Time estimate: variable time depending on size and scope

Task 6. Reviewing the draft Regional Evaluation Report

Based on the draft Regional Evaluation Report, the RECOVER Review Team Lead will decide if the ET will review the report and discuss its interpretations. If it is determined that an ET review is required, the RECOVER Review Team Lead will coordinate a meeting, teleconference or videoteleconference to discuss the report and its interpretations. The draft Regional Evaluation Report will then be emailed to the ET. Comments will be requested by a given date, usually one week after distribution. Based on the comments received, the report will be revised.

Time estimate: 2.5 to 5 weeks.

Task 7. Final Regional Evaluation Report.

The RECOVER Review Team will incorporate comments and post the final report on the CERP web site. The final “Regional Evaluation Report” will be delivered to the project managers, and RECOVER following each analysis.

Time estimate: 1 day to 1 week.

6.0 Regional Model Application

Most evaluations will compare results from the computer model simulations to the system-wide targets, analyze the implications of any changes to the regional system, and estimate the impacts of the changes. The system-wide evaluation performance measures will be applied consistently throughout a project’s evaluation. In the application of models and their performance measures or in the absence of models, best professional judgment will be applied to interpret the effects of the alternative plans.

The computer models considered for system-wide evaluations include, but are not limited to:

- South Florida Water Management Model (SFWMM)
- Natural System Model (NSM)
- Across Trophic System Simulation Model (ATLSS)
- Dynamic Model for Stormwater Treatment Areas (DMSTA)
- Lake Okeechobee Water Quality Model (LOWQM).

Part of the information to be taken into consideration in the interpretation of model results is the uncertainty associated with the tools and their application. In addition, multiple sources of information may be used (deterministic and empirical models) to confirm analyses.

7.0 Examples of RECOVER Regional Evaluation

For examples of previous RECOVER Regional Evaluations of Project Alternatives, please see http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/recover/eval_team_reports.aspx