

Press Release

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FLOWWAY PROPOSED FOR EVERGLADES

A research report calling for an “overhaul” in Everglades Restoration was issued today by a group seeking to end massive discharges periodically sent from Lake Okeechobee to the east and west coasts.

The “Plan Six Concept” report was delivered by the Rivers Coalition Defense Fund to the Nine-County Coalition meeting in Okeechobee.

The report advocates that a storage flowway be developed south from the lake to alleviate discharges that totaled 855 billion gallons last year to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. The Plan Six area would cover some 230 square miles, much of which already is publicly owned and would be part of the storage flowway.

The cost of acquiring the additional farmlands is estimated at \$560 million, or approximately one-third of the amount estimated for deep storage wells that are planned over the next quarter-century.

George Cavros, a South Florida environmental attorney who assembled the report, said, “The tragic degradation of the St. Lucie estuary is a sad testament to the inadequacy of present CERP policy. Now, through CERP’s adaptive management policy, an EAA Plan Six-type flowway can and should become the focus of Everglades restoration.”

Defense Fund leaders said a flowway plan has been advocated by leading scientists going back to the formulation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan in 1993/94. Unfortunately, compromises were made to avoid restoring a flowway through the Everglades Agricultural Area, with a selected alternative being the deepwater wells which are now under considerable doubt, according to the river advocates.

“Now, it’s painfully obvious that CERP needs a major overhaul,” said Karl Wickstrom, coordinator for the Defense Fund.

Separately, the Rivers Coalition Defense Fund filed a federal lawsuit on Nov. 9 contending that the discharges by the Army Corps of Engineers are an unconstitutional “taking” of riparian rights owned by 22 private waterfront residents in Martin and St. Lucie counties. Leaders emphasized that the plaintiffs represent the interests of all Martin-St. Lucie residents and no damage awards are sought by any private citizens.

The Defense Fund is the legal entity of the Rivers Coalition. The overall group is made up of some 43 conservation, business and professional organizations dedicated to restoring and protecting the estuary.

The complete Plan Six Concept report is available online at riverscoalition.org.