

Appendix 1-1: Overview of the Volume I Peer-Review Process

Stacey Ollis

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

The draft *2014 South Florida Environmental Report (SFER) – Volume I* was prepared during summer 2013 and web-posted from September–November 2013 for external peer and public review on the South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD or District) website at www.sfwmd.gov/sfer. In accordance with the Everglades Forever Act requirement for scientific peer review [Subparagraph 373.4592(4)(d)5, Florida Statutes], an expert panel reviewed the draft report. The external review was organized in accordance with (1) typical scientific review practices, (2) the independent panel review process required by Florida Statutes for evaluating Minimum Flows and Levels [Subsection 373.042 (4), Florida Statutes], and (3) Government in the Sunshine provisions of the Florida Statutes. The panel reviewed this report independently and then interacted with each other over the public-accessible SFER WebBoard linked to the District’s SFER website.

An overview of the 2014 SFER peer-review process is presented in **Table 1**. For the draft Volume I, a Statement of Work (SOW) was prepared for the specific tasks and roles assigned to the SFER panelists as part of this year’s peer-review process. Volume I chapters and their associated level of review were defined in the panel’s assignment matrix in the SOW (**Table 2**). Through purchase orders, panelists provided the following services per the SOW:

- **Read and prepare comments on assigned draft 2014 SFER – Volume I.** Broad reading of previous consolidated reports, as appropriate, was encouraged as general background for the draft 2014 SFER – Volume I review. These earlier reports and other agency reports were made available through the District’s website, as needed. Panelists reviewed their assigned draft Volume I documents and prepared chapter-specific written reviews including comments and questions to be addressed by SFER authors. Panel comments were submitted to the District via the SFER WebBoard by October 2, 2013.

To enhance the SFER peer review, a bi-level review was conducted during this year’s streamlined process. As outlined in **Table 2**, each panelist reviewed assigned portions of the draft report according to either a technical or accountability review; draft Chapters 1 and 2 were also provided as background information as part of this review.

- **Provide final comments and recommendations.** Following the written review provided by the panelists, the SFER authors posted their responses to comments on the SFER WebBoard by October 24, 2013. Subsequently, the panelists reviewed these responses and prepared their final conclusions and recommendations for each chapter, as assigned. Panel final comments were submitted to the District via the SFER WebBoard by November 8, 2013.

During the 2014 SFER peer-review process, panel and public reviews resulted in various written comments and suggestions to the report's authors. All panel and public comments received on the draft Volume I, as posted verbatim on the SFER WebBoard, are provided in Appendix 1-2 of this volume. The authors' responses to these comments are presented in Appendix 1-3 of this volume. Advice from the SFER panelists and other reviewers provided guidance to the authors through revisions while preparing the final 2014 SFER – Volume I.

2014 SFER PEER-REVIEW PANELISTS

The selection of panelists for the draft 2014 SFER – Volume I review was primarily based on preceding consolidated report reviews. Consistent with these earlier reviews and with routine practice in scientific peer review, professional expertise and experience in the major subject areas covered by this report were the main criteria used for selecting this year's panelists. Knowledge of environmental management and decision making was also an important consideration. To ensure their independence, panelists continued to be free of any professional connection to interests or organizations in South Florida. With these considerations, the following four returning panelists participated in this year's peer review of draft Volume I:

- Dr. Peter Dillon, Professor in Environmental & Resource Studies and Chemistry Departments, and Director, Water Quality Centre, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada
- Dr. Vladimir Novotny, Professor Emeritus, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, and Northeastern University, Boston, MA
- Dr. Otto R. Stein, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT
- Dr. Walter Dodds, Distinguished Professor, Division of Biology, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS

Table 1. Overview of the draft *2014 South Florida Environmental Report – Volume I* (SFER) peer-review process.



Table 2. Draft 2014 SFER – Volume I assignments of the peer-review panelists.

| PANELISTS | VOLUME I CHAPTERS AND PRIMARY LEVELS OF REVIEW | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| | Ch. 1 (Introduction) Background | Ch. 2 (Hydrology) Background | Ch. 3A (Water Quality) Accountability | Ch. 3B (Mercury/ Sulfur) Technical | Ch. 4 (Nutrient Source Controls) Accountability | Ch. 5A (Restoration Strategies) Accountability | Ch. 5B (STA Performance) Technical | Ch. 5C (Science Plan Update) Accountability | Ch. 6 (Ecological Research) Technical | Ch. 7 (Nonindigenous Species) Accountability | Ch. 8 (Lake Okeechobee) Technical | Ch. 9 (Kissimmee Basin) Technical | Ch. 10 (Coastal Ecosystems) Accountability |
| W. Dodds | B | B | | | | | | | AA | AA | A | AA | |
| P. Dillon | B | B | | | | AA | A | | A | | AA | | |
| O. Stein | B | B | | AA | | | AA | AA | | | | A | |
| V. Novotny | B | B | AA | A | AA | | | | | | | | AA |

“AA” indicates a primary reviewer for a chapter responsible for writing the review, providing questions to staff and responding to comments from other reviewers and outside parties, as needed. “A” indicates a primary reviewer to provide specific comments and questions to staff; comments were forwarded to the “AA” reviewer for consolidation. Chapters 1 and 2 were available as introductory/background information (“B” review).

Levels of Review

Technical Review: This level of review is a more traditional peer review aimed primarily at projects and products and associated methodology and findings. It is expected to provide detailed input on science and engineering and will draw more heavily on the expert’s time to complete the review.

Accountability Review: This level of review targets progress and achievements of expectations in District programs and projects that are generally descriptive or standardized in nature, and may deal with cross-cutting themes or content.