



Everglades Restoration: The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)

Overview

What Is the Everglades? The Everglades is a unique network of subtropical wetlands in South Florida. Due in part to federal water supply and flood control projects (as well as agricultural and urban runoff), it has been degraded and is approximately half its historical size. The ecosystem is home to a number of unique species, including 67 species on the Federal Endangered or Threatened Species lists.

What Is CERP? The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, or CERP, was approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000; P.L. 106-541). It is a framework under which the federal government, with the State of Florida, is attempting to restore the Everglades and expand water supplies by improving the timing, distribution, and quality of the water flowing south from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades, among other things. Under CERP, the federal government (through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior) is required to fund half of the costs for restoration, with an array of state, tribal, and local agencies paying the other half. Originally, CERP was expected to include 60 projects that would be completed over a 30-year horizon at a cost of \$10 billion. More recent estimates have projected that the project will take approximately 50 years to implement, at a total cost of \$13.5 billion. To date, federal and state expenditures on CERP have been approximately \$1 billion.

Everglades restoration under CERP was approved in 2000 and is expected to take 50 years to complete.

Outside of CERP, complementary efforts to restore the Everglades (most of which predate CERP) also are ongoing. These efforts, collectively referred to as *non-CERP projects*, have cost more than \$3 billion.

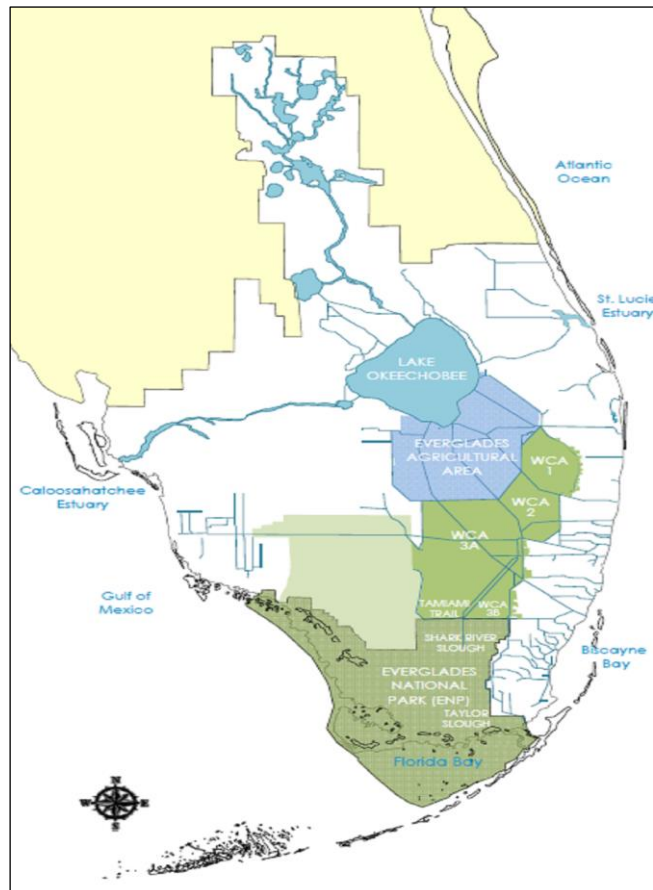
Everglades Restoration Projects Must Be Authorized by Congress

Although WRDA 2000 approved the overall CERP plan and process and authorized several pilot projects, most CERP construction projects require additional study by the Corps and congressional authorization of construction before they can receive federal appropriations, including credit or reimbursement for nonfederal work undertaken in advance. The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA 2007; P.L. 110-114) authorized three CERP construction projects, all of which are currently under way. Other CERP studies are complete and awaiting congressional construction authorization.

CEPP Is a Proposed New CERP Project That Has Not Been Congressionally Authorized

The Central Everglades Planning Project, or CEPP (area shown below in **Figure 1**), is an Everglades restoration study under the CERP framework that was initiated in 2011 by the Corps and the Department of the Interior, with the State of Florida. It was initiated due to a perceived need to prioritize restoration projects in this portion of the ecosystem to enhance the prospects for Everglades restoration overall. It recommends a suite of restoration projects in the central Everglades that would be part of the broader CERP program aiming to address problems associated with the timing and distribution of freshwater flows in the central Everglades.

Figure 1. Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Study Area



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Note: Shaded portions indicate CEPP study area.

Recent Developments

Expedited CEPP Study. Due to the interest in expediting CEPP's authorization and construction, the Corps included

CEPP among those investigations being undertaken as part of its National Planning Pilot Program. This effort aims to complete feasibility studies in less time than is traditional for Corps investigations. Among other goals, studies initiated under the pilot are expected to adhere to a “3 × 3 × 3” rule, which means that feasibility studies will be completed with no more than \$3 million in federal costs, in 3 years or less, and with the involvement of the 3 levels of Corps review (districts, divisions, and headquarters).

Due to a number of factors, the Corps did not meet its original target of completing CEPP by December 2013. The Corps released the draft project implementation report for CEPP in August 2013 and made the report available for public comment through November 2013. In April 2014, the Corps announced that the Civil Works Review Board’s release of CEPP for state and agency review would be further delayed pending unspecified changes to the final report. The Corps formally completed and approved CEPP in December 2014.

WRRDA 2014 Authorizations. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014; P.L. 113-121), enacted in June 2014, authorized four CERP projects with completed feasibility studies, but the bill did not authorize CEPP because the project was still under study at the time (see **Table 1**). As of 2015, CEPP is the only Everglades restoration project with completed studies awaiting authorization.

Table 1. Status of Major Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Projects

Project Name	Authorization	Status
Site 1 Impoundment	WRDA 2007	Under Construction
Picayune Strand	WRDA 2007	Under Construction
Indian River Lagoon-South	WRDA 2007	Under Construction
C-43 West Storage Basin	WRRDA 2014	Awaiting Appropriations
C-111 Spreader Canal	WRRDA 2014	Awaiting Appropriations
Broward County Water Preserve Areas	WRRDA 2014	Awaiting Appropriations
Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands	WRRDA 2014	Awaiting Appropriations

Project Name	Authorization	Status
Central Everglades Planning Project	Proposed	Awaiting Authorization

Source: Congressional Research Service based on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers data.

Notes: WRDA 2007 = the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-114). WRRDA 2014 = the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-121). Table does not include pilot projects authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000.

Congressional Interest

With the enactment of WRRDA 2014 and uncertain prospects for new water resources authorizing legislation in the 114th Congress, attention has focused on the status of CEPP. Absent authorization for CEPP, federal work on Everglades restoration could slow if ongoing projects wind down and the Corps is unable to expend funds and match prior state expenditures in the CEPP area. Such a scenario would potentially delay CERP relative to the current expected timeline.

In the 114th Congress, companion legislation (S. 120 and H.R. 230) has been proposed in the Senate and House to authorize CEPP. Historically, it has been unusual for Congress to authorize a Corps water resource project in standalone legislation rather than as part of a water resources development act (which typically authorizes many projects). Proponents of CEPP argue that its unique circumstances and importance to the larger Everglades restoration effort merit immediate congressional consideration.

If the aforementioned legislation is not enacted, CEPP potentially could be approved outside of the traditional authorization process for water resources projects under new processes established in WRRDA 2014. However, the prospects for these processes in the 114th Congress are unclear. (For more information on these processes, see CRS Report R41243, *Army Corps of Engineers: Water Resource Authorizations, Appropriations, and Activities*, by Nicole T. Carter and Charles V. Stern).

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