

SOUTH MIAMI-DADE WATERSHED STUDY TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (TRC)

Summary Outline of TRC Comments: Meeting Seven, February 14, 2006

TRC Meeting Overview

TRC moderator Jim Murley began the day by noting that the meeting was the seventh meeting of the TRC. He also commented that Miami-Dade County's and the SFRPC's desire to have an additional TRC meeting underscored the value of the TRC to the Watershed Study. He then reviewed the role of the TRC, which is to provide objective, technical comments during the course of the TRC meeting about the project consultant's work products. Murley also highlighted the schedule for the day: the morning would focus on the test scenario assessment results and the draft preferred scenario, and the afternoon on the implementation strategies and closing TRC comments. Murley was followed by Bob Daniels, the Watershed Study Project Manager, who updated the TRC on related planning processes and issues, including the County's comprehensive plan amendment package, three Developments of Regional Impact that lie outside the Urban Development Boundary, the work of the Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team, and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

RESPONSE TO TRC MEETING SIX COMMENTS AND CONSULTANT UPDATE

Michael Davis from Keith and Schnars updated the TRC on the status of the Watershed Study: tasks one and three have been completed and tasks four and five are now in process. Davis then reviewed Keith and Schnars' response to the TRC's meeting six comments. In his comments he emphasized the value-added role of the TRC – both at the TRC meetings and between meetings. For example, Dr. Steve Nix and Dr. Pete Scarlatos met in January to review the water resources analysis, and earlier in the year, Dr. Robert Burchell and Dr. Charles Blowers reviewed the fiscal impact analysis. He also noted that Keith and Schnars' fiscal assessment bore out the findings of Dr. Burchell in his recent book *Sprawl Costs*.

In response to Davis' presentation on the consultant's response to TRC comments, Dr. Jerry Ault noted his concern that the analysis did not look at the impact of water pollutants on Biscayne Bay or at the economic impacts of the Bay. The analysis should make clear that the study looked at the land-side actions to reduce pollutant loadings, but that it did not involve a detailed analysis of what discharge is going into the Bay. Since all three scenarios tested result in unacceptable loading of the Bay, the study should look at ways to mitigate the impact (for example, acquiring additional storm water treatment and wetlands restoration). Other TRC comments included the observation that the number of agricultural jobs projected did not reflect actual employment numbers.

In closing, Davis noted that the TRC and Watershed Study Advisory Committee (WSAC) comments on the work products were very similar, with the exception that the TRC recommended setting aside lands for agriculture, whereas the WSAC said to let the market decide where agriculture would be located.

Part One: Keith and Schnars' Presentation and TRC Response

Keith and Schnars' presentation focused on the results of Subtask 3.6, Evaluating the Test Scenario Assessment Results. In their presentation, Keith and Schnars reminded the TRC that the study was at the larger macro level, and not at the detail of a small area parcel-by-parcel analysis. The focus of the Preferred Scenario is to stay at least at the baseline and, if possible, improve, pollutant loading levels on the Bay.

The TRC offered a number of comments on the test scenario evaluation.

- Relook at the tables showing remnant natural forests. The tables show two times what exists. Also look at the regulations that prevent the loss of remnant natural forests.
- Look at the 2005 population projection in relation to current limits on water supply; plus, factor in other sources of water (for example, reclaimed water, which is widely used on Florida's west coast).
- Relook at the relationship of impervious surfaces to the amount of discharge to the Bay (the figures seem to be mismatched). Also, look at the relationship between the loss of agriculture and the amount of nutrients in the water and at the projected high-rainfall events on coastal areas that will have more impervious surfaces.
- Remember that the study is successful if it has good scientific underpinnings and if the vision has the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions (e.g., a major hurricane).
- Relook at the relatively small difference in the cost of housing in the three scenarios (i.e., the higher densities do not seem to have that much impact on housing costs).
- Look at Best Management Practices (BMPs), including future rule changes, as an opportunity to improve water quality.
- Look at nodal development for water storage areas, incorporating water storage in nodal plans to reduce flooding.
- Look at Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the University of Florida Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) requirements for maximum loads.
- Be sure that CERP and the agriculture-Biscayne Bay initiative are factored in.
- Develop a way to assess or understand the "will" of residents and local government jurisdictions, e.g., their acceptance of the densities needed for transit.

Recognitions

Following the TRC comments, Jim Murley recognized WSAC Chair Roger Carlton who thanked the TRC for its work: "Without the TRC's help and commitment, we would not be where we are today." The WSAC, Carlton noted, felt comforted because its members knew that experts in their field had reviewed the consultant's work products. He also noted that the consultants changed the work products because of the TRC's comments. Murley also recognized retiring Chuck Blowers for his many contributions to Miami-Dade County, and Carolyn Dekle, Executive Director of the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC), which is charged with managing the Watershed Study process.

Part One : Keith and Schnars' Presentation and TRC Response

The remainder of the morning focused on Sub-Task 4.1, the Fiscal Impact Analysis, and Sub-Task 4.2, the Draft Preferred Scenario. Before calling on Keith and Schnars to make their presentations, Jim Murley thanked Dr. Steve Nix and Dr. Pete Scarlatos for their review of the water resources analysis. He also thanked Dr. Robert Burchell and Dr. Charles Blowers for their review of the fiscal impact analysis.

The TRC's comments on these sub-tasks is summarized in the following.

Sub-Task 4.1, Fiscal Impact Analysis

- Relook at the school cost savings across the scenarios.
- Consider the overall economic impact of the scenarios on the county.
- The fiscal impact analysis is consistent with other similar studies.
- Look at the 2008 legislative school concurrency requirements, which may mean more funding for schools.

Sub-Task 4.2, Draft Preferred Scenario

- To make the scenario more digestible, split up the information using GIS layers in a format that shows the scenario “clicking away” over time. Bubbles and sketch maps are another way of displaying the information.
- Relook at allocating density outside the Urban Development Boundary (UDB). Also, look at the impacts of the density allocation on the study end-goal, the Bay, and on the water quality impacts in the eastern part of the study area. If density is located in that area, regional storm water planning to mitigate impacts, for example, through on-site retention, will be needed. In addition, take into consideration that density development west of the ridge is better for water quality, as pollutants will stay in the area.
- Planning principles that go back to the study's seven goals will be needed to go from the science of the study to the art of designing the Preferred Scenario. The Preferred Scenario should be grounded in what is already in place (for example, transit improvements).
- Show how the strategies in the Preferred Scenario will reduce impacts on the Bay. In addition,
 - Clarify that the Preferred Scenario is based on a very limited range of options – i.e., the study is not a carrying capacity analysis of the Bay, which means that it is not possible to see the point when more population cannot be accommodated and still maintain the quality of the Bay;
 - Look at the economic impacts of population growth on the Bay (e.g., on fishing, boating, and other water-based recreational uses);
 - If it is clear that the Preferred Scenario is not the most desirable scenario in terms of impacts on the Bay, build in a set of strategies that will further reduce impacts (for example, more acquisition or an aggressive Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or transit program). Show the results of the more aggressive strategies in a map or drawing.
- Look at the potential agricultural impacts of political changes in Cuba. (Miami-Dade could become more of an agricultural packaging and shipping center.)

- Be careful to note that the TRC did not approve a concept or strategy, as the TRC did not have information on the Bay-side impacts of what is proposed, and make the record clear that the TRC did not comment on or approve the location of the UDB. In presentations, clarify what the Watershed Study is and is not; e.g., that the data are not parcel-by-parcel data. To avoid the appearance of detailed data analysis, avoid using decimal points in the data. Also, describe the limits of the data in understanding impacts on the Bay and avoid overinterpreting what the data show. In addition, emphasize projected costs to indicate the order of magnitude of what is proposed, not the precise numbers.
- Show the Bay to the end of protected waters (not just the land-side of the study area) in study graphics, including the Preferred Scenario. Also, look at what is on the ground today, including the future use of the CSX corridor that connects some of the transit nodes to the Homestead employment center and busway.
- Develop benchmarks to measure change in four to five years, for example, to enable adjusting the plan in the future if needed.

Special Presentation

Following the TRC's comments, Subrata Basu introduced Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez who presented a certificate of appreciation to each TRC member. Mayor Alvarez thanked the TRC for its very valuable work and countless hours of dedication. He noted the importance of the TRC to the study process, particularly when working on such a complex set of issues. The TRC's comments will help the County make the right decisions, which means that, at the end of the day, the quality of life will be improved. Carolyn Dekle also recognized the importance of the TRC and thanked its members for their many contributions. The TRC, she noted, helped the SFRPC and consultants keep an eye on the big picture (the end result).

Jim Murley also recognized the partners, including Miami-Dade County, the South Florida Regional Planning Council, and the South Florida Water Management District, who came together to make the Watershed Study possible. He also noted the role of the TRC, which was to provide technical comments on the work products presented by the consultant, but not to approve the work or specific projects. When TRC members are asked to make specific comments in the future on the Watershed Study work products, they should do as individuals and not characterize their comments as those of the TRC.

Part Two: Keith and Schnars' Presentation and TRC Response

The afternoon part of the TRC meeting focused on Sub-Task 5.1, Implementation Strategies. The TRC comments are highlighted below.

- Putting residential and park uses in wellfield protection areas is appropriate. Parks can be used to link wellfields as well as recharge areas. Also, clarify what is needed to achieve 100 percent water retention in a high-rain storm.
- Clarify that the TRC's role is to provide comments on the consultant's work products and is not to decide on or approve products or where development should or should not go. Also, clarify what the study is and is not, and avoid maps with hard lines.
- Make the transit stops accessible and walkable to jobs, which means putting the employment centers on transit lines (or transit will not work).

- Look at asking elected officials to change the percent of transportation funding so that more of the money goes toward transit, which will support the concept of concentrating development on the transit corridors. Another way to promote transit is to make driving less convenient (e.g., do not always widen roads).
- Look at Collier County's sending and receiving areas used for its Transfer of Development Rights program.
- Look at local government bonding for water retention areas and allocate the costs to developers. Also, look at improvements in storm water treatment.
- Meet with local officials to drill down to determine obstacles to using the recommended implementation strategies.
- Put in place strong public sector involvement to encourage infill, which will not otherwise happen even with incentives. Consider establishing minimum densities, for example, to achieve the densities depicted in the community charrettes. Also, put a sunset on the density bonuses to create an incentive for infill; e.g., if the density bonus for infill is not used in a certain number of years, end the bonus, or, if infill is going slowly, extend the bonus. A good example of infill development is what Lennar is doing in downtown Kendall. Kendall is also a good example of how community charrettes can be used as a part of the implementation strategies.
- Make the implementation strategies, including the changes in codes and regulations, bold enough to make a difference.
- Provide flexibility in different areas in order to allow the market to decide what is built.
- Provide clean infrastructure and create a brand identity for the study area in order to promote eco-agro tourism. To do that, build on what is already in the area (two national parks, for example), and target marketing to areas interested in natural tourism (similar to what California did for wine-tourism). Also, change regulations to allow more flexibility in agricultural uses, such as fruit stands.
- Consider how the national parks, the power plants, and the future need for energy sources enter into the future of the study area. Also, consider the need for resiliency after hurricanes as part of the study area's branding.

Public Comments

During the public comments, Ed Swakon noted that the data used in the test scenarios were too homogenized, and that the WSAC had not reached consensus on Sub-Task 3.4, Water Quality, because of the limits on the models and questions about the data. Swakon agreed that the role of the TRC should be clarified and that the maps should not show hard lines because of the data limitations.

Closing TRC Comments and Next Steps

TRC and Other Meeting Participant Concluding Observations

TRC moderator Jim Murley asked TRC members to offer their parting advice, based on their area of expertise, as the study goes forward. The TRC's closing comments are highlighted below.

- The study was a good process and involved a lot of work; however the study products should note that the numbers can vary and are not at the detail level. (Pete Scarlatos)

- The water modeling numbers are reasonably okay; however, the cohorts should show that it is the surface water flow to the canals (not the Bay) that is unchanged. The cohorts should also show impacts in timing on the amount of water. (Steve Nix)
- I am not comfortable with a plan that recommends development outside of the UDB. The market should influence what is built inside the UDB. (Mahadev Bhat)
- The plan should leave options for different types of agricultural operations in the future. This requires having agricultural land available. In addition, recognize the value of agriculture to water recharge and filtration. Also, add an emphasis on looking at the power plants as generators of other energy options. (Don Pybas)
- Recognize the realities of government policies and the need to change practices (e.g., to obtain the needed densities). (Charles LaPradd)
- Highlight a disclaimer on the Preferred Scenario map and use more bubbles than hard lines (possibly using a map of the county without roads). Also, generate images and drawings that show what the proposed development could look like. In addition, emphasize strategies that will reduce automobile dependency, which in turn will improve air quality; put in place acquisition strategies to preserve the land (the most important thing to do); and look at future energy sources. (Joe Kohl)
- Look at the study as a specialized EAR (Evaluation and Appraisal Report) in which the Watershed Study provides information that can be used when considering amendments to the comprehensive plan. The longer (2050) view of the Watershed Study also enables decision-makers to think longer-term than the comprehensive plan process allows, and complements the timeframe for implementing CERP (particularly Goal 3) which also targets a 2050 horizon. The new Florida New Century Commission is also working on a 2050 time horizon in order to have the long-term view that is not achieved through the comprehensive plan process. (Jim Murley)
- Note in the record that the TRC provided feedback comments on the consultant's work products and did not sanction or approve the results or quality of the Watershed Study. In many cases, the information and model results could be made much clearer. In the case of schools, for example, make the savings cost much more transparent and clarify what are the current and proposed policies with respect to school construction. The consulting team should also make clear that there is not a link between the test scenarios and the Preferred Scenario – i.e., that the Preferred Scenario is not a data-led scenario, rather it is based on data selected from each scenario. In addition, spend more time on the graphic displays. (Gerrit Knaap)
- Remember that the next step – how the information is presented – is very important. First, be honest about shortcomings of the science – what it is and is not. Second, use compelling graphics – the bold plan that says, this is what should be acquired and these are the transit investment corridors. The graphics should also show how the process led to the concepts in the Preferred Scenario (i.e., how the process got from the science to the art of the vision) and show the benefits of sound planning principles (for example, the transit corridor on US 1). (Dave Barth)
- The study has been a good, open process. However, there is still a need to understand the impacts on the Bay, either through this study or through another study. It is also important to understand the relationship of the Bay to agro-eco tourism and to the national parks as an international tourism destination. The scenarios are not looking at what is being put at risk – the Bay and the large economic contribution it makes to Miami-Dade's and the state's economy and to CERP. The amount of dollars brought into Florida's economy from fishing (a large percentage of which is from the Bay) is growing to the point that it is exceeding the contribution of citrus. (Jerry Ault)

- The impacts on the Bay still need to be analyzed. In addition, the study needs to relook at Sub-Task 3.6 in light of regulations regarding phosphorous loading. Sub-Task 3.6 shows phosphorous and nitrogen increasing. If the loading increases by 24 percent or more, the area will be in violation of the regulations and mitigation will be required. That information might influence acquisition strategies and the Preferred Scenario footprint. Also, work out now the details of how agricultural land will be retained. Agricultural land is important to water quality. (Joel Trexler)
- The limits of the water modeling should be noted. The data should be used as a comparative, and not scientific, tool. (Evan Skonick)

Other Concluding Observations

Bob Daniels and Subrata Basu thanked the TRC for giving their time and expertise and stressed the many contributions that the TRC had made to the study. Basu also noted that the Watershed Study process has been open and inclusive and that the study is part of bigger piece of looking at how South Florida grows and develops.

Jim Murley closed the meeting by also thanking the TRC members for contributing their time and insights and for a job well done. He also noted that if individual TRC members choose to comment on the Watershed Study process or plan products in the future, they should do as individuals, and not as a member of the TRC. Following the February 14 meeting, two reports will be prepared: a summary of the TRC's Meeting Seven comments and a combined summary of all the TRC meetings.

Addendum: July 22, 2005, TRC Meeting Summary

The following summarizes the comments of Tom Daniels, a TRC member who could not attend the February 14 TRC meeting. The comments were offered in a post-TRC conference call on February 22. In addition to Daniels, call participants included Eric Silva, Keith and Schnars; Bob Daniels, South Florida Regional Planning Council; and Jean Scott, TRC coordinator.

The Draft Preferred Scenario

- Establishing the transit corridor strategy and accommodating population growth in a compact form of development is cutting-edge work. For example, in San Diego planners have concluded that a transit corridor strategy is the only way to accommodate a projected one million new people over the next 20-25 years. The transition zones also make sense and have good connections to the US corridor. (Remember that it is less expensive to provide transit through buses, unless government is investing in rail.) In addition, the UDB location is realistic. It is a matter of selective sacrifice.
- The land uses shown for the northwest part of the study area raises concern. The County's core agriculture is now located in northwest part of the study area, rather than in the southwest area where agricultural uses are less consolidated. To maintain agriculture in the northwest area, consider shifting development to the southwest area. (To have viable agriculture, a critical mass in a localized area is needed in order to have the support services and infrastructure.) Moving development to the southwest area also benefits redevelopment of the Homestead Air Reserve Base.

Implementation Strategies

- Look at the new, more stringent Phase Two National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System standards for storm water, which will impact parcels of one acre or more.
- Use the federal wetlands preserve program to buy permanent or 30-year easements in wetland areas, or the County could acquire the wetlands in fee.

- Recognize that zoning alone will not protect the agricultural industry. The County will need to come up with significant funds and match them with state and federal funds to maintain agriculture. A Purchase or Transfer of Development Rights (PDR and TDR) program will be needed in order to maintain agriculture over the long term. With the skyrocketing cost of land, more and more farm owners will turn to carving their land up into five-acre lots. Focus the PDR and/or TDR program in the northwest area by the Everglades. USGS (United States Geographic Survey) is interested in this approach. Florida has a number of funding programs (e.g., the Conservation and Recreational Lands program [CARL] and the Florida Forever program) that can be used as sources of funding. Another possibility is funding through CERP to help create a buffer between urban development and the Everglades. Those strategies can be used to create what should be a core part of the Preferred Scenario – maintaining a critical mass of land in the northwest part of the study area, coupled with a compensation mechanism for landowners who want to remain in agriculture. That combination has been used successfully all over the country.
- In addition to establishing a TDR and/or PDR program, the County should be tough on holding the UDB line from here on (after this expansion, if there is one). The public needs confidence in how often the UDB moves. Not extending services will also help maintain agriculture, as will continuing with taxing land at its agricultural value.
- Good design and good illustrations are important to making higher densities more acceptable. Also, develop and adopt a mixed-use, transit-oriented overlay zone.
- Develop performance criteria to determine where new residences can be located – e.g., in close proximity to the UDB and urban services, particularly transit, water, and sewer.

In conclusion, Daniels noted that the Preferred Scenario is a workable strategy and that the project consultant had been very flexible in its response to TRC comments.

APPENDIX : Participants in Meeting Seven of the Technical Review Committee

TRC Attending

Liz Abbott
Bill Anderson
Jerry Ault
Dave Barth
Mahadev Bhat
Bob Burchell
Joe Kohl
Gerrit Knaap
Steve Nix
Susan Markley
Don Pybas
Roy Rogers
Ed Stacker
Joel Trexler
(also Pete Scarlatos)

TRC Not Attending

David Chin
John Volin

Miami-Dade County

Subrata Basu
Cindy Dwyer
Move Blowers to here?

Chuck Blowers

Keith and Schnars

Robert Cruz
Michael Davis
Ian Miller
Rosil Saldana
Eric Silva

South Florida Water Management District

Evan Skonick

South Florida Regional Planning Council

Bob Daniels
Carolyn Dekle

CUES

Angie Grooms
Jim Murley
Jean Scott