Hole-in-the-Donut Restoration Project
TARGET RESTORATION TEAM

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The TARGET RESTORATION TEAM, in case you're wondering, is the band of individuals who are interested in research related to the "restoration" of the Hole-in-the-Donut (HID) in Everglades National Park and all the issues related to ecological resotration of wetland and associated wetland communites of the Everglades. I realize the word "team" has been overused and often has a trite bureaucratic connotation. But, according to Webster's, there are several viable, non-bureaucratic definitions that include: 1) draft animals with a harness pulling a vehicle; 2) a brood of pigs or ducks; 3) a number of persons associated together in work or activity; 4) collaborate. While I may agree with some of you who see merit in definitions one and two, the message I impart here arguably has more to do with the latter two definitions. I hope you'll agree.

The purpose of the TARGET RESTORATION TEAM is to bring scientists working on the HID restoration and other related Everglades restoration efforts together to ensure consistency and compatability throughout the research being conducted. The Target Team will serve as the nexus for ensuring congruity of research effort, eliminate duplication, and provide a forum for scientists woking on related areas to talk about their research, learn about and hopefully from others' research, and to collaborate and coordinate their individual and collective efforts. In order to accomplish this the Park is developing a research plan to guide the short and long-term research and monitoring studies. Developing this research program entails organizing numerous scientific specialties and research questions into an integrated whole. A whole that, through this team coordination and synergy, will, we hope, be greater than the sum of its parts. This team needs to be flexible; to increase or decrease participants as research focuses on new or different questions; to regularly adapt the findings of the integrated research program to resource management needs and changes in direction; and to incorporate new information and new ideas into the research program to provide new directions to the existing program; to interact with other professionals in appropriate and complementary fields of expertise; to conduct quality research; to collaborate; and to cooperate.

In order to accomplish the tasks ahead the Target Restoration Team will have to

be able to ask; what is the big picture in this restoration program, are we focused on expectation not methods, do we have the right resources identified, and are we focused on actions and products? Only through these coordinated interactions will individual scientists working on a large but integral project be able to take advantage of team synergy to be resourceful and proficient.

The scientific approach advocated embraces a closely linked and integrated program of monitoring, research, modeling, and adaptive management. Through monitoring, we can track critical ecosystem parameters and provide baseline data and model parameterization. Through research, we can develop an understanding of the physical and biological process regulating succession, and their underlying causal relationships. Through modeling, we can develop predictive tools to assess system response to change, to hindcast to historical conditions, and to develop, adapt and select management alternatives.

In order to provide extramural oversight to this loose and potentially large team of scientific investigators, an interdisciplinary panel of nationally recognized scientists will be invited to become members of a Department of the Interior chartered, Scientific Peer Review Panel, members of which will have no financial stake or research investment in the project. The review panel's role will be to provide periodic, broad, technical review of the overall research plan and program, individual research project elements of the program, program priorities and direction and research results. Members of the panel will have to forego subsequent research as investigators funded under this program.

No one organization has sufficient management control or scientific expertise to independently answer the broad research questions in wetland restoration. Only through an instrument of the Target Restoration Team and Scientific Peer Review Panel can we expect to find a way to make complementary contributions and encourage synergy in the scientific enterprise entailed in this precedent setting project. Everglades National Park has the principal responsibility for leading deliberations on the HID restoration planning, for setting research-restoration goals and for coordinating the science programs. The Park intends to carry out this responsibility by encouraging and developing a collegial and integrated program of research leading to the restoration of the Hole-in-the-Donut and a comprehensive understanding of the scientific questions underlying the concept(s) of restoration. It will be the Park's job to develop this restoration-research-management program, to implement it, to adapt it, to make it successful and, perhaps, a paradigm for other such programs.