

Improving Science Communication: Developing a Communication Plan for Everglades Restoration Progress

Jessica Dell

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL, USA

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is the largest aquatic ecosystem restoration effort in the nation. Spanning over 18,000 square miles, CERP includes a series of restoration projects to alter the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water throughout south Florida with the goal of improving the health of more than 2.4 million acres of the Everglades while also providing for the region's water supply needs and flood protection. Restoration projects of all sizes depend on clear and open communication among scientists, land managers, and stakeholders; however, scientific reports often fall short in bridging the gap between restoration science and restoration practices. Communication plans can be used by restoration teams to identify their target audiences and tailor scientific reports to the needs and expertise of their audience.

RECOVER (REstoration, COordination & VERification) is a multi-agency team of scientists, modelers, planners, and resource specialists who provide essential support to the CERP effort. RECOVER applies a system-wide perspective to the planning and implementation of CERP and communicates and coordinates the results of scientific and technical evaluations and assessments to managers, decision makers, and the public. To promote effective communication, RECOVER developed a communication plan for the System Status Report which is a technical document that assesses whether the CERP goals and purposes are being achieved. CERP project managers, agency leadership, and Congress will use this information to make decisions on the planning and implementation of CERP and Everglades restoration.

RECOVER developed the communication plan by identifying the target audience and their needs, determining the communication goals and objectives, and selecting the best communication strategies to support the purpose of the report. Following the release of the report in 2024, RECOVER will survey target audience members to evaluate how well the communication goals and objectives of the report were achieved. This effort highlights the importance of developing communication plans to support restoration projects and inform stakeholders and decision makers on the status of restoration.

Contact Information: Jessica Dell, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, 701 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville, FL, USA 32207, Phone: 904-303-9903, Email: Jessica.A.Dell@usace.army.mil