

**Blind Pass Restoration  
Project Update  
March 5, 2008**

**Acronyms:**

**Agencies of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

BBCS – Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems;  
CHAP –Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve;  
FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Federal Agencies:**

USACE – United States Army Corps of Engineers  
FWS – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
NMFS – National Marine Fisheries (also part of NOAA)

**Local Agencies:**

CEPD – Captiva Erosion Prevention District

**Other:**

RAI – Request for Additional Information  
BO – Biological Opinion (issued by FWS through USACE)  
JCP – Joint Coastal Permit

**Items Previously Completed:**

Prior to the month of December the state and federal agencies had conceptually agreed to the maintenance dredging project and were awaiting the specific details of the proposed work and mitigation. The main concerns were as follows:

- (1) How to separate and handle the non-beach compatible material during the dredging event and
- (2) What type of mitigation efforts would clearly satisfy all concerns the project would be in the best interest of the environment and public.

In December the BBCS stated there concerns were addressed, allowing the federal process to begin. The first step is for FWS to provide a biological opinion addressing any potential impacts to federally listed endangered species. This includes mangroves, manatee, eagles, and sawfish, and certain types of shorebirds and seagrasses.

**Progress This Month:**

FWS completed a draft project description for the BO. The description is the starting point and outlines any impacts that will need to be addressed. The draft description for Blind Pass stated all concerns had been properly addressed. Multiple agencies still have to review the BO, but this is a very good start.

Lee County and CEPD have also completed some of the mitigative efforts required to construct the project, including removal of some exotic vegetation on Captiva Island.

**Outstanding Items:**

The next process is for FWS to complete the entire BO, which will include additional standard details on how to provide further protection against unnecessary impacts and detail on measures already proposed. (The description here does not do justice to the BO, as they are typically in excess of 100 pages and cover a wide spectrum of issues with very detailed explanations.)

The draft BO should be completed by mid April, however, FWS staff has suggested it could be completed by mid March. A 60 day review,(by alternate federal agencies such as USACE, NMFS, among others), can reasonably be expected. There are multiple factors affecting this schedule not addressed here, but overall an early summer construction date is very feasible at this point.

During the federal review process, Lee County will be preparing the construction documents and contracts so the project may be bid when the state and federal permits are issued. Also, formal establishment of the no motor zone and pre-construction seagrass monitoring will be completed prior to construction.

Any additional issues with the remaining items may also be resolved while the federal review process is occurring so the project may be bid in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2008 and construction in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Construction is expected to last 6 months.