OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

Although the CERP program has demonstrated a number of small restoration successes, continued trends in altered hydrology and degraded ecology continue to warrant further authenticating, conducting, and operating of more CERP restoration projects to achieve system-wide goals and objectives.

SYSTEM-WIDE HYDROLOGY

March 27 through April 15, 2014

Key Findings:

- Lake Okeechobee ecology has improved over the 2008-2012 period compared to 2000-2004 due to favorable climatic conditions and the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule reducing high lake stages (high stage is lower than normal) caused by increased lake outflow.

- Monitoring of three storage areas north of the lake indicated that all three storage areas were consistently lower than normal lake conditions over the existing 45-year period by increasing the amount of time the lake is high and decreased the amount of time the lake is lower than normal.

- Lake Okeechobee is the most important place for the recovery of the Florida Everglades because it is the main source for all the water that flows through the Everglades. The lake level has a direct impact on the amount of water that flows into and out of the wetlands, which is crucial for the survival of the Everglades ecosystem.

- The CERP project is designed to reduce the amount of water in the lake by increasing lake outflows and decreasing lake inflows. This has led to a decrease in lake levels and an increase in the amount of water flowing through the Everglades ecosystem.

- The result has been a positive response to a non-CERP hydrologic restoration project in Everglades National Park.