V. CONCLUSION

As a result of Hurricane Andrew and the Lewis Commission Report, the State of Florida recognized the necessity of providing safe hurricane evacuation shelter space for its residents during disasters. The State remains steadfast in its commitment to provide safe hurricane evacuation shelter space to all during a disaster. Through funding of the recommended 2012 Shelter Retrofit Report projects, the State will continue to see the improvements in shelter space.

The 2012 Shelter Retrofit Report shows that Florida on a statewide cumulative basis has eliminated the deficit of “safe” public hurricane evacuation shelter space. Since 1995, 943,745 hurricane evacuation shelter spaces have been identified, and created through retrofitting of existing buildings, or through new construction (e.g., EHPAs). An additional 110,394 spaces will be created if the projects in this report are funded, resulting in a total of 1,054,139 spaces gained. As the Division continues to map Florida’s coastlines through LiDAR mapping and other improved topographic survey techniques, it is estimated that the public hurricane evacuation shelter demand will continue to be reduced. Since 2004, Florida’s statewide aggregate public hurricane evacuation shelter space demand has been reduced to 835,229. In contrast, there was an estimated hurricane evacuation shelter demand of 1,776,606 shelter spaces in 2000.

However, there are still three regions of the State that currently have a deficit of hurricane evacuation shelter space, and a fourth that could slide back into a deficit if an inadequate number of spaces are added to the inventory over the next two to five years. Also, regions that currently have an adequate number of hurricane evacuation shelter spaces will need to maintain the inventory. Over time, current hurricane evacuation shelter buildings will be decommissioned due to age and other issues such as, remodeling or reuse that’s incompatible with mass care shelter operations, removal or deterioration of window protection products. There may also be changes in storm hazard maps (e.g., SLOSH, national flood insurance, etc.) that could affect their recognition as meeting hurricane safety criteria. Thus, even though the aggregate statewide deficit is eliminated in the 2012 Shelter Retrofit Report, a “maintenance level” of shelter space production will be necessary to avoid falling back into a deficit situation.