

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Tommy B. Strowd, Director
Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division

DATE: October 11, 2012

SUBJECT: **Authorize the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish SFWMD Tract Numbers 16100-002, 16100-003, and 16100-004 consisting of approximately 3574 acres of vacant, undesignated lands in Miami-Dade County as the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area and manage waterfowl, small game, non-native reptile and hog hunting on the property during the 2012-13 hunting season.**

Background:

As defined by the District's Public Access and Recreational Use Rule (Rule 40E-7.521(30), F.A.C.), "vacant undesignated land" means District lands which are greater than 10 acres, have legal and practical public access, and are not designated as a management area, a stormwater treatment area, an impoundment, or right-of-way.

Lands within this category have been purchased by the District for various water resource projects. In an attempt to utilize such vacant lands for public recreation, these properties were first inventoried and assessed for possible recreational use in 2006. The primary focus of the assessment was to evaluate if any of these areas could be opened for small game hunting. The assessment identified the Rocky Glades site as an area that was available for hunting related recreation provided such use did not interfere with planned construction activities.

The Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area in Miami-Dade County has expanded in size from the original 230 acre site established in 2006 to the 3873 site established for the 2011-12 hunting season. For the 2012-13 season, the boundaries of the proposed small game hunting area have been modified to exclude areas of planned construction. Based on the success of past hunting programs and the availability of property for public use, staff recommends re-establishing the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area for the purpose of hunting waterfowl, small game, non-native reptiles and hogs during the 2012-13 hunting season on an area of approximately 3574 acres. Participants of the Water Resource Advisory Commission – Recreational Issues Workshop meetings are supportive of this proposed action.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has agreed to establish the Rocky Glades site, with its revised boundaries, as a Public Small Game Hunting Area and administer waterfowl, small game, non-native reptile and hog hunting opportunities on the property during the 2012-13 hunting season in accordance with State and Federal regulations with approval from the District. Although check stations have not been operated in the past to collect harvest or public use data, reports from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissions Wildlife Officers and comments received by District

staff indicate past hunting activities provided on this area have been successful and well received by the public.

How this helps meet the District's 10-year Strategic Plan:

Approval of this item is consistent with the District's Public Recreational Access and Use Policy and demonstrates a commitment to develop and manage appropriate resource based recreation in support of the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan. Opening this land to public use will provide resource based recreational opportunities compatible with the long term management of the property.

Funding Source:

This item does not require the expenditure of District funds.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography:

This activity will take place in Miami-Dade County and will be managed by the Land Management Section of the Land Resources Bureau within the Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

Concerns of a general nature could be raised regarding opening this area to hunting. However, this site is in a remote area and hunting has been a previously authorized activity administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would continue the public use and recreation opportunities on District lands in this region for allowable recreational activities consistent with District policy and legislative directives.