

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

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

DATE: September 13, 2012

SUBJECT: Authorization for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish SFWMD Tract No. 18201-004, (approximately 18 acres to be acquired from TNC), as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area and manage hunting activities on both the SFWMD Tract No. 18201-004 (the TNC tract) and SFWMD Tract No. 18201-002 (the 250-acre Universal land tract) currently established as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area, located in Polk County.

Background:

The agenda item proposes authorizing the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to 1) establish SFWMD Tract No. 18201-004 (18 acres in Polk County to be acquired from TNC) as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area and 2) manage hunting activities on SFWMD Tract No. 18201-004 and SFWMD Tract No. 18201-002, the 250 acre Universal land tract in Polk County which the Governing Board previously incorporated as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area. The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area is managed in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and is composed of various properties purchased to accommodate increased stage levels in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in support of the Kissimmee River restoration project. Allowed public recreational uses on the area include hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor recreational activities compatible with the purpose for which the land was originally purchased.

SFWMD Tract No. 18201-002 (the Universal property) is located on the west side of Reedy Creek and is accessible via SFWMD Tract No. 18201-004 (the TNC property) to the south. SFWMD acquired the Universal property for mitigation purposes and it was previously closed to hunting due to access restrictions. With the acquisition of the TNC property, access is now available to accommodate hunting and other recreational uses. Motorized vehicle and vessel access within the Universal tract will be restricted for resource protection purposes and will be consistent with the regulations applied to other portions of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area.

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 these lands 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:

The activity will take place in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area located in Polk County. Recreation activities and land management functions will be performed 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 is an existing authorized activity administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on the adjacent Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would increase public use and recreation opportunities on District lands and expand allowable recreational activities consistent with District policy and legislative directives.