

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Sharon M. Trost, P.G., AICP, Director, Regulation Division

DATE: May 14, 2012

SUBJECT: Approve an Interagency Agreement between the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMDC) authorizing the SFWMDC to modify the existing Environmental Resource Permit to the recently acquired expansion of the USDA-NRCS Wetland Restoration Program Easement on a project called Santa Rosa Ranch II, located in Highlands County.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve an Interagency Agreement between the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMDC) authorizing the SFWMDC to issue a modification of an Environmental Resource Permit for the wetlands restoration project under the Wetland Reserve Program and in support of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program on the Santa Rosa Ranch II located in Highlands County.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is presently improved pasture located in Highlands County along the western bank of Arbuckle Creek. The property has been historically diked off from the remainder of the flood plain and had discharged into Arbuckle Creek through a pump, which was authorized in 1979 by SFWMDC under Permit Number 28-00135-S. The property is located within the jurisdiction of both SWFWMD and SFWMDC. The property drains via sheetflow, ditches, and pumps to Arbuckle Creek, which is located in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed within the South Florida Water Management District. The restoration of the eastern portion of the ranch was authorized by SFWMDC under Permit 28-00643-P. The first phase of the restoration is currently under construction. USDA-NRCS recently acquired a permanent conservation easement over an additional portion of the ranch.

Subsection 373.046 (6), authorizes a water management district to designate through an interagency agreement, regulatory responsibility to another water management district over a project which crosses the jurisdictional boundaries of both districts. For efficiency and effectiveness, the applicant and both districts desire to designate SFWMDC as the water management district with all regulatory responsibilities under Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S., for the Santa Rosa Ranch II Project. Both Districts propose to enter into an Interagency Agreement, directing the SFWMDC to process and regulate environmental resource permits under Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S., for those activities associated with the environmental restoration of the Santa Rosa Ranch II in Highlands County.

Staff Contacts: Benita Whalen, P.E., Director
Agriculture Water Programs (561) 682- 2957