

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Governing Board Members

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

**DATE:** September 13, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Mechanical Aquatic Harvesting Services Contracts –  
Contract Number 4600002714 - Texas Aquatic Harvesting, Inc.

### **Background:**

These contracts will provide mechanical aquatic harvesting services for day-to-day and emergency response situations. The responsive firms are Texas Aquatic Harvesting, Inc. and Weedbusters, Inc. Both firms have provided these services successfully to the SFWMD in the past. These contracts are to replace the expired mechanical harvesting services contracts. These services target floating plant aggregations and tussocks threatening the operation and maintenance of flood control project facilities, navigation and stability of the natural ecosystems of South Florida.

SFWMD's Central and South Florida Flood Control Project facilities and Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) include canals, levees, reservoirs, waterways and wetlands. Floating plant communities may be harvested when their growth is particularly threatening or when immediate removal is necessary. However, aquatic harvesting costs more than the application of herbicides, which is the industry-standard and primary method of aquatic plant control. Although more expensive than chemical weed control, mechanical harvesting quickly removes aggregations of floating vegetation which can threaten structure operation, navigation and assist with aquatic habitat restoration.

### **How this helps meet the SFWMD 10-year strategic plan:**

Florida's climate enables year-round growth of aquatic plants. Therefore, vegetation management is required to maintain efficient operation of the Flood Control Project facilities along with subsequent projects including STAs. SFWMD and State-sovereign waters include the canals, lakes and rivers from the Kissimmee chain of lakes south through the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades.

### **Funding source:**

The lowest and responsive bids for operation of mechanical harvesting equipment and services were received from Texas Aquatic Harvesting, Inc., and Weedbusters, Inc. Predicted annual need for these services is \$500,000 per year or \$2,500,000 for both contracts for the three-year contract terms with two (2) one-year renewal options. Funding has historically come from the Florida Aquatic Plant Management Trust Fund for work in State waters and SFWMD ad valorem funds for projects in SFWMD waters.

### **Board item impacts to areas of SFWMD, resource areas and geography:**

Mechanical harvesting may be used to remove dense floating plant aggregations throughout SFWMD's Operations Maintenance and Construction resource areas. These contracts are managed by the Vegetation Management section and provide harvesting services for any requesting sections.

### **What concerns could this Board item raise?**

This Request for Bids (RFB) followed standard procurement procedures and the lowest responsive and responsible bidders were selected.

**Why should the Governing Board approve this item?**

In order to be comprehensive, aquatic plant management programs require mechanical harvesting as an available option. SFWMD has outsourced much of this service although the agency owns various harvesting vessels. Such vessels can be troublesome and expensive to maintain. At times, mechanical harvesting has been a critical service for various conditions and sites within SFWMD. Without these contracts, this work could not adequately proceed with SFWMD resources alone.