

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Governing Board Members

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

**DATE:** July 20, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Turnpike Dairy and Williamson Ranch Dispersed Water Management Wetland Reserve Project Agreement; Contract No. 4600002710

**Background:** The Florida Legislature's intent for the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (F.S. 373.4595) is to encourage and support the development of creative partnerships to facilitate the further restoration and protection of the St. Lucie River and Estuary. The objective of the Turnpike Dairy and Williamson Ranch project is to implement a Dispersed Water Management Wetland Reserve Project in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The project will lead to improved habitat and increased water and nutrient retention from natural area hydrologic restoration on approximately 640 acres and in turn reduce regulatory releases to the St. Lucie River Estuary from the C-23 Canal.

Under this agreement, the NRCS will provide the District with an amount not to exceed \$700,000 over the term of the agreement to complete the construction phase for natural area hydrologic restoration on the Turnpike Dairy and Williamson Ranch. The NRCS will provide 100% reimbursement for construction of the subject plan components. The District will be responsible for procuring the construction contractor and Martin County is willing to observe construction progress and provide information to the District.

**Why is this action necessary?** The project will provide improvements to habitat and water and nutrient retention in the Northern Everglades to assist with meeting the water quality improvement goals of the St. Lucie River Estuary Protection Plan. The agreement will provide multi-year funding for construction of the Wetland Reserve Project to be completed by 2014.

**How this helps meet the District's 10-year Strategic Plan:** This project is a component of the Dispersed Water Management Program that is outlined in the District's Ten Year Strategic Plan. One component of the program is to re-direct or capture excess stormwater from the St. Lucie River Watershed and retain it on private and public lands in order to reduce discharge volumes to the estuary. The benefits of the project are habitat restoration, flow attenuation and water quality nutrient load reductions in the St. Lucie River Watershed.

**Funding Source:** USDA – NRCS reimbursement

**This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography:** This project is located within the Northern Everglades – St. Lucie River Estuary Watershed and impacts the Resource Areas of Everglades Restoration, Operations, and Regulation.

**What concerns could this Board item raise:** Under this Landowner Agreement, NRCS will make payments to the District on a reimbursement basis.

**Why should the Governing Board approve this item:** The approval of the referenced agreement provides 100% reimbursement funding to the District for construction of a critical project providing habitat restoration, water retention and water quality improvements in the Northern Everglades - St. Lucie River Estuary Watershed.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at ext. 6814.