

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources

DATE: November 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Sandhill Crane East Restoration Project Phase II

Background: This is a Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI) project, which receives funding through state appropriations. This project addresses the problems associated with hydrological changes in the Loxahatchee Slough basin caused by ditches that were constructed in the past, and the detrimental effects of the invasive exotic vegetation that have become established in this area, by providing for ditch filling, and removal and treatment of exotic vegetation.

How this helps meet the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan: This LRPI project for Sandhill Crane Restoration supports the Coastal Watersheds Program strategy to assist local governments with implementation of coastal water body restoration projects.

Funding Source: This is a one year cost share agreement with Palm Beach County for Sandhill Crane East Restoration Phase II, in the amount of \$1,500,000, of which the District's total contribution is \$750,000 in dedicated funds (State Appropriations), for which funds are budgeted.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: Coastal Ecosystems Division staff is responsible for management of state appropriated funds for this project. The project is located in Palm Beach County within the Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area, which forms a significant portion of the headwaters and floodplain of the Loxahatchee River.

What concerns could this Board item raise? The state appropriations are allocated based on the request of the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative for specific projects. Palm Beach County is active in this process and has used the money for previous projects that restore and protect the Loxahatchee River. Palm Beach County relies on the District for administration of the state appropriations.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? This project is important to the overall restoration and protection of the Loxahatchee River. Removing exotic vegetation and filling the ditches will improve the functionality of the wetlands and allow them to store more water and help attenuate storm water surges to the Loxahatchee River while also improving the quality of the surface water reaching the river. It will also help extend base flows to the river and help re-establish suitable habitat for listed species.

CM/bhw
Attachment – Resolution, Aerial