

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Ernie Barnett, Director, Office of Policy and Legislation

DATE: February 15, 2007

SUBJECT: Okeechobee Utility Authority Water and Wastewater Master Plan –
Contract Number 4600000675

Background: The purpose of this cooperative agreement is to develop a water and wastewater master plan for the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) service area. A well planned centralized water and wastewater system will provide some control on how water is utilized for domestic use while eliminating potential sources of nutrient enrichment to Lake Okeechobee and portions of existing natural waters within the Kissimmee River Basin and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. The Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) was created by an inter-local agreement between the City of Okeechobee, Okeechobee County and the Okeechobee Beach Water Association. The OUA has continued to work towards combining the three service areas into a single network providing water and wastewater service to the area. In 2001, the OUA began to provide a centralized wastewater collection system for some of the homes and businesses utilizing septic tanks for the treatment and disposal of the wastewater moving closer towards the goal of a single network for the wastewater system. Elimination of septic tanks and associated drain fields have been reported to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the localized groundwater. Depending on the proximity of the drain fields to surface waters, the reduction in phosphorus also would lead to minimizing this nutrient load to Lake Okeechobee. Since the creation of the OUA in 1995, the OUA has ongoing programs to provide potable water to existing homes, improve the existing pipe network by replacing old lines and to improve water treatment facilities. As water consumption increases the potential for reuse becomes more feasible and also provides the potential for further reducing nutrient discharges in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.

How does this item help meet the District's 10 year strategic plan: Lake Okeechobee protection and restoration as well as water supply are major programs and priorities in the District's 10 year strategic plan. Strategic planning for water and wastewater in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed assists in achieving the overall Lake Okeechobee restoration and estuary protection goals.

Funding Source: The District will provide ad valorem funding in an amount not to exceed \$250,000 dedicated funds to the project. The OUA will be providing in-kind services to administrate consulting services and assure deliverables meet the project objectives.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: This is a project which will impact flows within the Lake Okeechobee and St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuary Watersheds. Resource areas include Watershed Management, CERP, and Operations.

What concerns could this Board item raise? The Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan (LOPP) addresses nonagricultural nonpoint sources of nutrient discharges in the watershed. The project involves recommendations of conversion of nonagricultural nonpoint sources specifically septic tanks to a centralized sewer system and water supply system.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? The District and its partners are committed to Lake Okeechobee restoration and estuary protection goals. The master plan will prioritize those areas in the OUA service area for expansion of wastewater systems necessary to eliminate excess nutrients to the Lake and how expansion of water supply facilities can meet the needs of future growth in the area.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at extension 2110.

EB/bmw

Attachment: Resolution