

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Governing Board Members

**FROM:** Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director

**DATE:** July 31, 2008

**SUBJECT:** **Approve Environmental Resource Permit Application 080710-8 for construction authorization of a 578 acre wetland restoration project known as Mecca Farms Wetland Restoration Project located (Palm Beach County)**

### RECOMMENDATION

This application is a request to authorize construction of a 578 acre wetland restoration project within the previously permitted Palm Beach County Biotechnical Research Park (Scripps) project site located in Palm Beach County. Staff recommends approval with conditions.

### BACKGROUND

The site is located south of Hungryland Slough and east of the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area in central Palm Beach County and is owned by Palm Beach County. The 578 acre portion of the previously permitted site that is proposed for the wetland restoration project includes an existing citrus grove and reservoir.

### PROPOSED PROJECT

The project will consist of the restoration/creation of 256 acres of wetland/upland habitats, enhancement of the existing reservoir (272 acres) through the removal of exotic and nuisance plant species and creation of a 50 acre open water refugia area. The wetlands will include 154 acres of herbaceous freshwater habitat, 74 acres of upland islands/buffers and 28 acres of forested wetlands. The open water refugia areas will be created with a maximum depth of 5-6 feet. In addition, the applicant proposes to conduct treatments to control and eradicate exotic and nuisance plant species within the existing reservoir. The proposed wetland restoration project is not intended to be used as mitigation for any future projects.

### CERP ISSUES

Staff is bringing this to the Governing Board's attention since the project is located adjacent to a CERP project boundary. The project area will have the ability to receive and move additional water in the future as a part of the CERP, Flow-way 2 project. Environmental Resource Regulation staff has coordinated review of this project with the CERP Project Manager, who has determined that this application is not inconsistent with this CERP project as currently envisioned. The permit will be conditioned to require the County to coordinate with the District to allow installation of connecting structures if Flow-way 2 is identified as a component of the recommended plan for the Northern Palm Beach County 1 CERP project.

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