

September 2009 Governing Board

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE OCTOBER 27, 2003 VERSION OF THE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR ACHIEVING WATER QUALITY GOALS

1.0 Background

On December 19, 2003, pursuant to the Governing Board's direction, District staff submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) the application for the Section 10 Everglades Forever Act permit incorporating the provisions of the "Long-Term Plan for Achieving Water Quality Goals (Long-Term Plan)" dated October 27, 2003. The Long-Term Plan addresses the Everglades tributary basins shown in **Figure 1**. The Long-Term Plan acknowledged that achieving water quality standards would involve an adaptive management approach and that the Long-Term Plan would be revised based on new science or other information. The Long-Term Plan revision process requires Governing Board acceptance of revisions prior to submittal to FDEP, the agency that approves Long-Term Plan revisions as required in the Everglades Forever Act. Previous Long-Term Plan revisions have been approved following the required revision process. Additional revisions to the Long-Term Plan are now proposed in keeping with the adaptive implementation process.

2.0 Proposed Revision to the Long-Term Plan to include Funding for the Purchase of the C-139 Annex Basin, a Component to the River of Grass Land Acquisition Initiative

On June 24, 2008, Governor Charlie Crist announced that the District would begin negotiating an agreement to acquire as much as 187,000 acres of agricultural land owned by the United States Sugar Corporation for Everglades restoration. On December 16, 2008, following extensive negotiations, due diligence and public deliberation, the District's Governing Board voted to accept the negotiated proposal to acquire at least 180,000 of land for \$1.34 billion, contingent upon financing. On May 13, 2009, the Governing Board approved a revised land acquisition strategy that would address current economic challenges while preserving the environmental vision of this historic purchase. The amended agreement, approved by the District's Governing Board and the U.S. Sugar's Board of Directors, provides for the initial purchase of approximately 73,000 acres of strategically located land south of Lake Okeechobee. Under the approved agreement, the District would initially invest approximately \$536 million for 73,000 acres of agricultural land and have options to purchase the remaining 107,000 acres from U.S. Sugar during the next 10 years.

Included in the 73,000 acres comprising the initial purchase is approximately 17,000 acres of citrus lands located adjacent to the Compartment C STA and known as the C-139 Annex Basin. The current proposed Long-Term Plan revision request addresses the acquisition of the C-139 Annex property which has an associated debt service of approximately \$11 million per year. Acquiring the Annex tract of land presents the first of many opportunities to store and clean water flowing to the Everglades resulting from the purchase of the U.S. Sugar farm land.

The potential identified use of the C-139 Annex (shown in Figure 1) includes the construction of a reservoir, a Stormwater Treatment Area (STA), or a Reservoir-Assisted Stormwater Treatment Area (RASTA), to accept and treat runoff from the C-

September 2009 Governing Board

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE OCTOBER 27, 2003 VERSION OF THE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR ACHIEVING WATER QUALITY GOALS

139 Basin. The increased storage provided by a reservoir or the reservoir cell of a RASTA could also serve as an upstream Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) for the STA-5/6/Compartment C facilities.

The potential benefits of a reservoir, an STA and/or a RASTA on C-139 Annex include:

- Improved performance for STA-5/6/Compartment C by extending the duration of inflows to the STAs and helping reduce frequency of dry-out
- Improved performance for STA-5/6/Compartment C by attenuating peak flows and concentrations by sending major storm events to a reservoir before sending to the STAs at lower flow rates/volumes/velocities
- Removal of the C-139 Annex from agricultural production will result in a reduction in TP discharges from the property to WCA-3A

Other potential uses of the C-139 Annex include treating runoff from the S-4 Basin and/or Lake Okeechobee releases -- all of which could ultimately result in the delivery of additional treated water to the Everglades. The River of Grass initiative is currently in the early stages of the project planning process. Once conceptual plans are developed for project features on the C-139 Annex property, future Long-Term Plan revisions may include details such as the required funding for the construction, operation and maintenance of the project features.

3.0 Summary

Achieving Everglades water quality standards is required by law and is one of the District's strategic priorities. The River of Grass initiative further expands the District's and the State of Florida's commitment to provide additional clean water for the Everglades. The proposed revisions to the Long-Term Plan will enhance the District's ability to achieve the long-term water quality goals in the Everglades Protection Area.

