

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Tommy Strowd, Deputy Executive Director,
Operations and Maintenance Resource Area

THROUGH: Dan Thayer, Department Director
Vegetation and Land Management Department

DATE: July 15, 2010

SUBJECT: **Authorize the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area and manage waterfowl hunting on approximately 1,900 acres of District vacant undesignated lands in the L-31 North Project Area, in Miami-Dade County, for the 2010-11 hunting season.**

Background:

As defined by the District's Public Access and Recreational Use Rule (Rule 40E-7.521(30), F.A.C.), "vacant undesignated land" means District lands which are greater than 10 acres, have legal and practical public access, and are not designated as a management area, a stormwater treatment area, an impoundment, or right-of-way.

Lands within this category have been purchased by the District for various water resource projects. In some cases, the projects are not scheduled to immediately go to construction and the properties within the project area are not subject to leases or other restrictions that would preclude their use, on an interim basis, for recreational purposes. In an attempt to utilize such vacant lands for public recreation, including hunting, these areas were first inventoried and assessed for possible recreational uses in 2006. The primary focus of this assessment was to evaluate if any of these areas could be opened for small game hunting. The assessment identified the Rocky Glades site as an area that was available for hunting related recreation as project construction would not occur for several years. The original Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area was established as a 230 acre site in 2006. However, this site is now required for project purposes and new opportunities have arisen to modify the boundaries and open additional lands to public use. Consequently, it is proposed the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area be re-established south of the original location and include approximately 1900 acres in the L-31 North project area in Miami-Dade County. Stakeholders are supportive of this modification and have requested that waterfowl hunting be allowed in the expanded area.

Rocky Glades was previously established as a Public Small Game Hunting Area by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission during the 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10 hunting seasons. Although check stations were not operated to collect harvest and public use data, reports from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Wildlife Officers and comments received by District staff indicate hunting activities provided on this area in the past have been successful and well received by the public.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has agreed to establish the Rocky Glades site, with its revised boundaries, as a Public Small Game Hunting Area and administer waterfowl hunting opportunities on the property during the 2010-11 hunting season in accordance with State and Federal regulations.

How this helps meet the District's Mission:

This will expand the allowable public uses on District property consistent with the District's Recreational Use Policy without compromising resource protection responsibilities as required by legislative mandates and District policy.

Funding Source:

There is no funding associated with this agenda item.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography:

This activity will take place in Miami-Dade County in the L-31N project area and will affect the Operations and Maintenance Resource Area.

How this helps meet the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan:

This project is an integral component of the District's 10-year Strategic Plan to provide public use opportunities and recreational access to District lands.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

The use of firearms in this area could be viewed as a potential safety issue, however, this site is located in a remote area and similar hunting activities have been administered in the vicinity of this area in the past without incident.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would increase public hunting opportunities on District lands and expand allowable recreational activities consistent with District policy. The Governing Board has authorized Rocky Glades to be opened as Public Small Game Hunting Area for the past four (4) years.