

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members
FROM: Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources
DATE: December 28, 2007
SUBJECT: Loxahatchee River Water Quality and Biological Monitoring

Background: This Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI) project is a multi-year cost-share effort with the Loxahatchee River District (LRD) for a water quality and biological monitoring program in the Loxahatchee River and its tributaries. There is an ongoing need to monitor water quality and biological communities in the Loxahatchee River watershed. In particular, it is important to monitor how ongoing LRPI projects are affecting (i.e., benefiting) the environmental health of the Loxahatchee River and Estuary. This agreement provides for the continuation of long-term monitoring efforts (e.g., water quality) and the introduction of new monitoring efforts that were recommended in the Restoration Plan for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and addressed in the recently drafted Loxahatchee River Science Plan. The resulting data would be used to (1) assess the affects of LRPI projects, (2) understand perturbations to the health of valued ecosystem components such as seagrasses and oysters, and (3) calibrate and validate water quality models.

How this helps meet the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan: This project supports the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan to work with local governments to implement coastal water body restoration projects. This project helps to explain and describe the restoration of the Loxahatchee River.

Funding Source: This is a one year cooperative agreement with the Loxahatchee River District for water quality and biological monitoring in the amount of \$356,000, of which the District's total contribution is \$267,000, for which \$178,000 in dedicated funds (state appropriations) and \$89,000 in ad valorem funds are budgeted.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: The Coastal Ecosystems Division in the Watershed Management Department is responsible for management of LRPI state appropriated funds for this project. The project is located in the Loxahatchee River and its tributaries within Palm Beach County.

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. The LRD is active in this process and has used the money for projects that restore and protect the Loxahatchee River. LRD relies on the District for administration of the state appropriations so the projects proposed can progress expeditiously.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? Projects like this one are important to the overall restoration and protection of the Loxahatchee River. The data resulting from this comprehensive water quality and biological monitoring program will be used to identify short term and long term trends in physical water quality conditions, assess the health of the biological communities in the Loxahatchee River Watershed, monitor valued ecosystem components and performance measures, and calibrate and validate hydrologic and water quality modeling efforts.

CM/bh
Attachment – Resolution, Map