

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Kenneth G. Ammon, P.E., Deputy Executive Director, Everglades Restoration Resource Area *KS for KGA*

DATE: November 12, 2008

SUBJECT: Acceptance of Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan and St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan

Background: Senate Bill No. 392 enacted by the Legislation of the State of Florida took effect July 1st, 2007 amending section 373.4595, Florida Statutes, (known as the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act) to read "Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program". The amended section requires the development and submittal of Watershed Protection Plans for the Caloosahatchee River Watershed and the St. Lucie River Watershed by January 1st, 2009. These plans are to be developed by the District, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies (Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Department of Environmental Protection), Lee County, Martin County, and affected counties and municipalities. The objectives of these plans are to identify projects needed to achieve nutrient load reductions consistent with adopted Total Maximum Daily Loads and to identify the water storage necessary to reduce the frequency and duration of undesirable salinity ranges in the estuaries while meeting other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection.

How this helps meet the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan: The River Watershed Protection Plans include projects for the improvement of the quality, quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the northern Everglades ecosystem, which includes the Lake Okeechobee watershed, Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River watersheds and their estuaries. Strategic Plan goals for restoring Lake Okeechobee and Coastal Watersheds will be positively impacted by the implementation of the projects identified in the Protection Plans.

Funding Source: District obligations will be met by a number of sources, including but not limited to District Ad Valorem, State Appropriations, Save Our Everglades Trust Fund, Federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan funding and NRCS Wetland Reserve Program.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: The primary goal of the new legislation is to protect and restore surface water resources and achieve and maintain compliance with water quality standards in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed, and the St. Lucie River Watershed, its tributaries, and the area within which surface water flow is

directed or drains, naturally or by constructed works, to the lake, its tributaries and its corresponding estuaries. The effects of the Protection Plans cover an area that includes the counties contained within the Caloosahatchee River Watershed (Lee, Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, and Collier) and the St. Lucie River Watershed (Martin, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee). The Everglades Restoration Resource Area will lead the development and implementation of these Protection Plans, with significant support from many areas of the District, including the Watershed Management Department, Environmental Resource Regulation and Assessment Department, Hydrologic and Environmental Systems Modeling Department, Operations and Maintenance, and Government and Public Affairs.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

The Protection Plans capture a wide array of projects and programs, so there will be a variety of implementation and funding strategies utilized to move the projects forward. Many of these projects are already included in other planning or restoration efforts (e.g., CERP, Local Stormwater Master Plans). The plans assume that those projects will continue to be implemented through the existing mechanisms or programs as originally intended. For the purposes of these initial Protection Plans, costs have been estimated for the first phase of each plan based on three categories: CERP projects, which are eligible for a 50 percent cost share with the federal government; Non-CERP projects, which will be primarily funded by State and SFWMD sources; and Local Projects, which will primarily be funded by local governments or may be cost shared by the local government and state or SFWMD sources. Specific costs to the state will be dependent on final cost-sharing scenarios and timetables for implementation. Opportunities for cost-sharing, partnering and grant funding will be utilized to optimize use of resources, as required by Section 373.4595(4), F.S. Costs for each progressive phase of implementation will be developed as information from various pilot projects and studies are factored into more detailed planning design in the future. Although this is a significant financial obligation, it is clearly balanced by the value of protection and restoration of the water resources provided to a large portion of the District.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? Approval of the River Watershed Protection Plans is a critical step in the Northern Everglades initiative to protect and improve the health of the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries. These Protection Plans meet the intent of the legislative directive by identifying programs and projects that will provide significant nutrient load reductions and decreases in damaging local discharges to the estuary; building upon existing and planned programs and projects; minimizing real estate acquisition requirements by promoting involvement of private landowners as partners and emphasizing the use of state-owned lands; and accentuating both cost-effective local features and select regional projects.

KGA/tm

Attachment - Resolution