

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

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

DATE: February 10, 2011

SUBJECT: Authorization for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to utilize the Grassy Island property located in Okeechobee County as part of the Youth Hunting Program of Florida

Background:

The Grassy Island land tract located in Okeechobee County is designated as "Vacant Undesignated Lands" per the District's Public Use Rule (Rule 40E-7.521(30), F.A.C.). Lands within this category are purchased by the District for various water resource projects and are often open for various types of public recreation in the interim period prior to the onset of project construction.

The proposed resolution would authorize the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to utilize approximately 3400 acres of the Grassy Island property to further the Youth Hunting Program of Florida. The Youth Hunting Program of Florida is a multi-faceted program administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that exposes interested youths to a variety of experiences including hunting, camping, outdoor and environmental education, and nature appreciation. Each youth selected to participate in the program is required to be accompanied by a parent or guardian and is partnered with an experienced volunteer certified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to assist in hunting activities and implementation of the program. The program would host approximately six outings per year during established hunting seasons with five to ten youths participating per event. The specific dates of each outing would be coordinated with District staff.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is supportive of conducting the Youth Hunting Program of Florida at the Grassy Island site for the 2011 and future hunting seasons. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would coordinate closely with SFWMD staff on the implementation of this program to assure compatibility with on-going land management activities, project implementation and other public uses.

How this helps meet the District's Mission:

This will expand resource based public recreation on District lands consistent with the District's Public Recreational Access and Use Policy and legislative directives.

Funding Source:

Not applicable

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

The Grassy Island project area is located in Okeechobee County. The proposed action would affect the Land Stewardship Division within the Operations and Maintenance resource area.

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

The proposed activities would provide additional public recreation opportunities on District property as supported and identified in the District's 10-year Strategic Plan.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would increase recreational opportunities on District lands consistent with agency policy.

TS/sc