

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Tommy B. Strowd, Director
Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division

DATE: August 9, 2012

SUBJECT: Authorization for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish approximately 1800 acres of the Rolling Meadows land tract as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area for the 2012-13 fall hunting season

Background:

The agenda item proposes authorizing the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to incorporate approximately 1800 acres of the Rolling Meadows land tract into the existing Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area. The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area is managed in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and is composed of various properties purchased to accommodate increased stage levels in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in support of the Kissimmee River restoration project.

The Rolling Meadows property is located in Polk County on the south shore of Lake Hatchineha. The property will be restored in accordance with an agreement among water utilities in Central Florida and the District to fulfill wetland mitigation requirements. Construction activities to implement the restoration plan are scheduled to begin in the latter part of 2013. In order to accommodate public use prior to the on-set of construction, staff recommends incorporating this area into the existing Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area to provide hunting and other recreational uses during the 2012-13 fall hunting season. Site specific rules for the interim use of this area would allow hunting and other uses to occur on weekends only during the 2012-13 fall hunting season and would prohibit the use of motorized vessels and vehicles, center-fire and rim-fire rifles, and the use of dogs for hog hunting. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would remove the property from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area following the close of the 2012-13 hunting season in response to planned construction activities. Future recreation opportunities and area specific regulations would be evaluated upon completion of the restoration project.

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

Approval of this item is consistent with the District's Public Recreational Access and Use Policy and demonstrates a commitment to develop and manage appropriate resource based recreation in support of the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan. Opening this land to public use will provide resource based recreational opportunities compatible with the long term management of the property.

Funding Source:

This item does not require the expenditure of District funds.

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

This activity will take place in Polk County and will be managed by the Land Management Section of the Land Resources Bureau within the Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

Concerns of a general nature could be raised regarding opening this area to hunting. However, this site is in a remote area and hunting is an existing authorized activity administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on the adjacent Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Managed Area.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would increase public use and recreation opportunities on District lands and expand allowable recreational activities consistent with District policy and legislative directives.