

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Deena Reppen, Deputy Executive Director, Regulatory and Public Affairs

DATE: December 9, 2010

SUBJECT: Zoo Miami's Exhibit Development of *Florida: Mission Everglades*

Background: The Zoological Society of Florida (ZSF) is the non-profit support organization of Zoo Miami, an accredited member of the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Zoo Miami's 20-year, \$350-million Master Plan includes a new exhibit focusing on Florida flora and fauna, called *Florida: Mission Everglades*. Showcasing coastal mangroves, wetlands and grasslands—and the animals that live there—*Florida: Mission Everglades* will educate the Zoo's more than 800,000 annual visitors and more than 1,000,000 web visitors.

Opening in early 2014, the \$31-million project will immerse visitors in native Florida ecosystems, including the Everglades, pine rocklands and coastal habitats. Signature Florida species represented may include the Florida panther, flamingos, wood storks, herons, pelicans black bear, crocodiles, alligators, bay and coastal fishes, and all five of Florida's native venomous snakes.

The Zoo provides a unique opportunity to deliver an educational experience focused on the animals that depend on healthy ecosystems to survive in South Florida. Water will be the underlying theme to animal exhibits on coastal and estuary habitats, the Everglades and freshwater river uplands.

How this helps meet the District's 10-Year Strategic Plan: This item provides an educational outreach opportunity for South Florida's residents and visitors to understand the District's work to restore the Everglades ecosystem. It contributes to the ongoing goal of conveying the mission of the District to the public, emphasizing restoration benefits to Florida's natural systems and wildlife.

Funding Source: The total project cost is \$500,000 of which \$100,000 are Fiscal Year 11 Ad Valorem funds and are budgeted funds in the Department of Public information.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: This contract is administered by the Department of Public Information and implements the strategies of the Regulatory and Public Affairs resource area. Local outreach will be supported by the Miami-Dade and Broward service centers.

What concerns could this Board item raise? The District receives numerous opportunities to fund outreach projects related to water resources and environmental education. A decision to select specific projects is based on numerous factors, including a goal to diversify outreach venues, project specificity to the District's mission, population reached, secondary outreach through media activities and website links, and an opportunity to participate in developing the educational content. This item achieves these objectives but may limit funding for other outreach opportunities offering similar benefits.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? Approval of this item will allow the District to participate in developing a significant new educational exhibit focused on Florida's Everglades. Expansion of Zoo Miami, one of South Florida's unique venues, offers outreach opportunities to more than 1.8 million on-site and website visitors each year.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Barbara Ross at extension 2066.