

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources

DATE: April 28, 2006

SUBJECT: **Authorize entering into a Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for the purpose of encouraging the voluntary creation/restoration of wetlands on agricultural lands within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed area and a portion of the Indian River Watershed (PR060350)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval entering into a Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for the purpose of encouraging the voluntary creation/restoration of wetlands on agricultural lands within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and a portion of the Indian River Watershed.

Background

A key component of the Lake Okeechobee Estuary Recovery (LOER) plan involves on-ranch water management options in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. Specifically, it is anticipated that voluntarily created/restored wetlands on agricultural lands, including the resultant hydrologic enhancement of associated existing wetlands, will have inherent benefits to Lake Okeechobee as well as the coastal estuaries.

Accordingly, the agencies have developed a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes criteria for those landowners participating in the program. Additionally, the Memorandum of Understanding clearly defines responsibilities of the participating agencies and long-term responsibilities of participating landowners.

Staff recommends approval entering into a Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for the purpose of encouraging the voluntary creation/restoration of wetlands on agricultural lands within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and a portion of the Indian River Watershed.

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