

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Ken Ammon, Deputy Executive Director, CERP Resource Area

DATE: December 4, 2006

SUBJECT: Assessment of the Distribution and Abundance of Wood Storks and Other Wading Birds in the Picayune Strand Restoration Project – Contract Number 4600000558

Background:

As part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the Picayune Strand Restoration Project (PSRP) will remove canals and roads within Southern Golden Gate Estates, while maintaining existing drainage levels on surrounding private lands. This will allow restoration of a natural hydrologic regime in Picayune Strand, which will in turn facilitate the restoration of a natural fire regime and control of invasive vegetation within the Strand, as well as restoration of natural freshwater sheetflow to the downstream estuaries.

The proposed project is in response to the Picayune Strand Restoration Project's Monitoring Assessment Plan (MAP) which was created to determine how well the Picayune Strand Restoration Project is meeting its goals and objectives. The Picayune Strand Monitoring Assessment Plan is consistent with the CERP Monitoring Assessment Plan. The premise of the project is that restoring hydrology in Picayune Strand will improve conditions within the Strand and adjacent coastal habitats, restoring wading bird habitat and the wetlands they depend on for foraging. The abundance and distribution of wading birds in Picayune Strand is one of the performance measures, which will provide an assessment of the success of the PSRP and CERP at this site.

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

The Picayune Strand Restoration Project (formerly known as Southern Golden Gate Estates) is a critical part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and is an Acceler8 Project.

Funding Source:

This is a 33-month cost share agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge (TTINWR) for assessing wading birds in the Picayune Strand in the total amount of \$180,800 of which the District's total contribution is \$165,800 in dedicated funds (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Funds) of which \$50,000 are budgeted and the remainder is subject to Governing Board approval of the FY08-FY09 budgets; the TTINWR is providing \$15,000 of the total project amount as in-kind services.

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

The Picayune Strand Restoration Project is located in Collier County and is a part of the CERP. This project will establish baseline data in Picayune Strand and adjacent publicly owned lands in support of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project Monitoring Assessment Plan and the 404 permit for the road removal portion of the restoration project. Staff from the CERP Planning Department's Project Management Division will be managing this contract.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

This item could raise concerns associated with the selection of TTINWR as the contractor and the need to collect baseline data in the project area. The Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge was chosen as the partner for this project not only because it is able to provide a \$15,000 cost share of in-kind services and is a partner on the restoration, but also because TTINWR has experience in aerial wading bird surveys and is extremely familiar with the study area. The Refuge is local and is conducting other projects in the same geographic area, which allows its staff to do this work at a lower cost than a private entity or other government agency. Baseline data is necessary to assess restoration efforts in Picayune Strand.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

The establishment of baseline data is needed to better understand the current environmental state of the wading bird habitat in order to assess the performance of the restoration effort. In addition, the data is needed to support the 404 permit application for road removal and the full Acceler8 Project.

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Attachments – Resolution, Map