

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

THROUGH: George L. Horne, Deputy Executive Director, Operations and Maintenance

FROM: Dan Thayer, Department Director, Vegetation and Land Management

DATE: October 15, 2009

SUBJECT: Five year management plan update for the Allapattah Flats Management Area

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the five year update of the General Management Plan for the Allapattah Flats Management Area (2009-2014).

Background:

- Section 140.25(6)b, South Florida Water Management District Policies Code, directs the District to develop a General Management Plan that follows a designated format and provides recommended management actions for each Land Stewardship management area.
- The District, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Martin County, has jointly acquired over 21,000 acres within the Allapattah Flats project area.
- The Allapattah Flats Management Area is located in Martin County.
- This General Management Plan is an update and consolidation of the 2004–2009 management plan for the Allapattah Flats Management Area.

The management plan describes the historical, physical, and ecological aspects of the Allapattah Flats Management Area and the land stewardship activities necessary to properly manage these lands. The purpose of the management plan is to provide guidance to District land managers for the implementation of appropriate and consistent land management practices and to identify goals and objectives for the management of the property. The Governing Board's approval of the five year update of the management plan will be subject to the approval of the updated plan by Martin County.

Goal 1: Restore upland and wetland components in accordance with the Indian River Lagoon Initiative of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Wetlands Reserve Program agreement between the District/Martin County and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Objectives:

- Use habitat restoration to improve basin storage resulting in stage-storage hydrographs that are more representative of pre-development hydrologic conditions.

- Reduce nutrient loading in the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon through natural retention of stormwater and reduced discharges.
- Provide ecological conditions suitable for habitat expansion and intensified wildlife utilization.

Goal 2: Manage natural communities and modified habitats to protect and enhance water, floral, and faunal resources.

Objectives:

- Continue to regularly apply fire to fire maintained plant communities through a well-planned and documented prescribed burning program. Prescribe burn 1,000 to 1,500 acres per year, weather permitting, until the site is in a condition where it can accommodate larger aerial burns.
- Continue an aggressive, integrated exotic plant management program. Areas of treatment will be prioritized based on severity of infestation and will be integrated with burning and other land management activities. Treatments will be documented.
- Continue understory restoration by using shredding and mowing equipment to open up areas that have experienced fire exclusion.
- Continue the monitoring and evaluation of restoration activities on area vegetation and wildlife. Conduct game and non-game wildlife population surveys.
- Provide resource protection through partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Review enhanced patrol activities biweekly and review program annually.

Goal 3: Provide resource-based public use opportunities.

Objectives:

- Maintain public use program through continued coordination with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, local partners and recreation user groups.
- Maintain public-use improvements (roads, trails, signs, entrances, campgrounds, structures) using a combination of in-house maintenance, contracts, and user group involvement.
- Update and maintain information kiosks at points of public access.

Goal 4: Maintain area infrastructure

Objectives:

- Continue to maintain and manage the management area boundaries through posting, fencing, and fireline maintenance.
- Update and maintain information kiosks at points of public access.

How this helps meet the District's Mission: Each of the management goals and objectives outlined in the management plan furthers one or more of the strategies in the 10-year strategic plan that has been developed to execute the District's mission. These strategies include maximizing appropriate nature-based recreation, utilizing prescribed fire to mimic natural fire-return intervals, maintaining facilities and infrastructure, and providing effective managing of the natural resources located on the area.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: The Allapattah Flats Management Area, located in Martin County, is managed by the Land Stewardship Division within the Operations and Maintenance resource area in cooperation with Martin County and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Additionally, the major restoration works are being developed by the Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects resource area in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

The plan provides guidance for the management actions that will occur on the property for the next five years including partnerships with other agencies that are consistent with District goals, compatible public use, and natural resource management.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This action furthers the Land Stewardship Division's goals and the District's mission as defined in the ten year strategic plan.