

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Deena Reppen, Director, Office of Government and Public Affairs

DATE: August 6, 2007

SUBJECT: Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project (FRESP) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Contract #4600000994)

Background: In July 2006, World Wildlife Fund, Inc. (WWF) and agency partners, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), entered into an MOU with the original four ranchers, Alderman-Deloney Ranch, Williamson Cattle Company, Buck Island Ranch (managed by a Division of Archbold Biological Station), and Lykes Bros., Inc. The purpose of this MOU is to establish a working relationship with four additional ranchers, C. M. Payne & Son, Inc., Lightsey Cattle Company, Rafter T Ranch, and Syfrett Ranch West along with WWF, SFWMD, FDACS, and FDEP ("Collaborative Partners") allowing them to implement the Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project (FRESP). The purpose of the FRESP is to design, field test and evaluate components of a performance-based program for securing on ranchlands environmental benefits of water storage, phosphorus retention, and/or habitat enhancement for the South Florida and greater Everglades ecosystem. A well designed performance-based program will produce measurable benefits to the environment and be profitable for ranchers, cost-effective for tax payers, easily administered, and replicable in other regions and watersheds.

To implement the design phase of the FRESP, WWF received a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS). The SFWMD, FDACS and WWF provided matching funds toward the implementation of the FRESP. In 2006/07 the Florida Legislature provided the SFWMD with additional funding of \$2 million to support all aspects of the FRESP including field-testing documentation protocols and expanding the number of participants in the pilot program.

Collaborating agencies will enter into contracts with individual ranchers that outline the conditions under which they will be reimbursed for the planning, design, permitting, construction and equipment, and operation and maintenance of a Water Management Alternative (WMA) they construct on their ranch. They will also be paid an annual participation fee. CIG funds and a state passed grant through SFWMD to WWF will be used by WWF to hire contractors and consultants as needed to design, install and implement a monitoring and documentation program for each WMA and develop the pay-for-performance program. WWF internal funds will be used to pay the costs related to WWF staff participating in the FRESP, consultants, outreach and communication, and other project related costs.

How does this item help meet the District's 10 year strategic plan: Northern Everglades protection and restoration is a major program and priority in the District's 10 year strategic plan. Storing and treating runoff on private lands is one alternative to assist in achieving the overall Lake Okeechobee restoration and estuary protection goals.

Funding Source: N/A.

This Board item impacts what areas of the District, both resource areas and geography: The pilot projects are all within the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Watersheds. Resource areas include Watershed Management, Northern Everglades and Estuary, Operations, and Environmental Resource Regulation.

What concerns could this Board item raise? The uncertainty of developing a viable on-ranch pay-for-performance program.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item? The District and its partners are committed to Lake Okeechobee restoration and estuary protection goals. These additional project sites will provide additional water storage and water quality treatment for Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at extension 6232.

DR/bmw

Attachment: Resolution