

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Tommy Strowd, Deputy Executive Director,
Operations and Maintenance Resource Area

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

DATE: June 10, 2010

SUBJECT: **Authorize the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish a Public Small Game Hunting Area and manage small game hunting on approximately 1100 acres of vacant undesignated land in the C23/24 Project area, St. Lucie County.**

Background:

As defined by the District's Public Access and Recreational Use Rule (Rule 40E-7.521(30), F.A.C.), "vacant undesignated land" means District lands not designated as a management area, stormwater treatment area, impoundment, or right-of-way which are greater than 10 acres and have legal public access.

Lands within this category were purchased by the District for various water resource projects. In some cases, the projects are not scheduled to immediately go to construction and the properties within the project area do not have leases or other restrictions that would preclude their use for recreational purposes on an interim basis. In an attempt to utilize such lands for recreational purposes, including hunting, these areas were first inventoried and assessed for possible recreational opportunities in 2006. The primary focus of this assessment was to evaluate if any of these areas could be opened for small game hunting. One area identified in the assessment was the C23/24 project area located in St. Lucie County. The area consists of three parcels totaling approximately 1100 acres which are available for hunting related recreation as project construction will not occur for several years.

These parcels were previously established by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as a Public Small Game Hunting Area during the 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10 hunting seasons. Although check stations were not operated to collect harvest and public use data, reports from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Wildlife Officers and comments received by District staff indicate the previous hunting programs administered on this property were successful and well received by the public.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has requested and is supportive of re-establishing this area as a Public Small Game Hunting Area for the 2010-11 hunting season.

How this helps meet the District's Mission:

This will expand the allowable public uses on District property consistent with the District's Recreational Use Policy without compromising resource protection responsibilities as required by legislative mandates and District policy.

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

This activity will take place in St. Lucie County in the C-23/24 project area and will affect the Operations and Maintenance Resource Area.

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

This activity will provide public use opportunities and recreational access to District lands and is supported by the District's 10-year Strategic Plan.

What concerns could this Board item raise?

The use of firearms in these areas could be viewed as a potential safety issue. However, these sites are in remote areas and similar hunting programs have been successfully administered on this property without incident in the past.

Why should the Governing Board approve this item?

This proposal would increase public hunting opportunities on District lands and expand allowable recreational activities consistent with District policy. This area has been authorized by the Governing Board to be opened as a Public Small Game Hunting Areas for the past four years.