

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Jennifer Reynolds, Ecosystem Restoration & Capital Projects

DATE: May 12, 2022

SUBJECT: Northern Everglades Watersheds Water Retention and Nutrient Load Reduction Projects, Request for Proposals Solicitation 6000001289, Contract Negotiations and Execution

Agenda Item Background:

To supplement the ongoing implementation of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP), the District has developed and implemented several service provider initiatives whereby private landowners manage water on private property to provide retention and/or nutrient load reduction in the northern Everglades. Environmental services provided by the proposals will complement regional water storage and treatment facilities in the northern Everglades and improve conditions in the Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee River Estuary and St. Lucie River Estuary. Several service provider contracts for storage and nutrient load reduction will be expiring near term and over upcoming fiscal years. Therefore, the District issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) solicitation to seek projects from existing and new landowners located within three NEEPP watersheds to provide quantifiable water quality and/or water storage benefits. The RFP resulted in fifteen responsive project proposals. Staff requests Governing Board approval to enter into negotiations with respondents for up to 10-year contracts and execute said contracts subject to successful negotiations and funding availability. Staff requests approval for the following not to exceed amounts:

Watershed	Not to Exceed Amount
Lake Okeechobee	\$19,000,000
Caloosahatchee River Watershed	\$107,000,000
St. Lucie River Watershed	\$28,000,000

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

Additional Item Background:

The Florida legislature passed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (Section 373.4595, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) in 2000 to establish the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program to restore and protect the Lake. Underscoring the State's commitment to the Everglades ecosystem restoration, the Florida Legislature in 2007 amended the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to serve as the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, an interagency initiative that protects and restores the three interconnected Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee, and St. Lucie watersheds. The NEEPP requires the Coordinating Agencies [District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)], to develop and implement Watershed

Protection Plans for the Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie, and Caloosahatchee watersheds. The purpose of the Watershed Protection Plans is to identify and implement programs and projects necessary to achieve water quality and quantity objectives for the watersheds. Water quality objectives are based on Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) established by the DEP.

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

The proposed NEEPP water quantity and quality projects will supplement other existing and planned projects and programs to achieve the District's core mission to safeguard and restore South Florida's water resources and ecosystems, protect our communities from flooding, meet the region's water needs, and connect with the public and stakeholders.

Funding Source:

Funding for this item is subject to Governing Board approval of future years budgets.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 2022-0513](#)

[Resolution No. 2022-0514](#)

[Resolution No. 2022-0515](#)