M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Rich Virgil, P.E., Field Operations Division

DATE: October 9, 2025

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Biological Control Implementation Project

Agenda Item Background:
The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Biological Control Implementation Project (Project) is a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which was authorized by Congress in Section 601 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-541). The intent of the CERP is to restore, preserve, and protect the South Florida ecosystem while providing for other water-related needs of the region. CERP is implemented under a partnership between the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the District. Long term suppression of highly invasive plant species is a major focus of Everglades restoration and preservation, and biological control is identified as a primary component of the District's integrated pest management approach to invasive species control.

The Project and its anticipated impacts are described in detail in the June 2010 Final Project Implementation Report (FPIR) and Environmental Assessment prepared by the CERP partner agencies in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and other state and federal agencies. In brief, the Project seeks to control the most aggressive, widespread, and problematic invasive exotic plants in South Florida including melaleuca (Melaleuca quinquenervia), Brazilian pepper (Schinus terebinthifolius) and Old World climbing fern (Lygodium microphyllum). In addition, the FPIR includes an adaptive management approach for additional insect/plant combinations should they become available for invasive non-indigenous species affecting the Everglades (FPIR Chapter 5, 5-28).

The USACE and the District entered into a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) for the Project, dated July 30, 2010, under which the USACE was responsible for construction of a Mass Rearing Annex and the District is responsible for biological control implementation, including operation and maintenance of the Annex. The PPA further allows the District to enter into an agreement with the ARS for the Project, including operation and maintenance of the Mass Rearing Annex. Specific objectives of this project include: 1) culture and release approved agents; 2) evaluate release strategies; 3) monitor field populations of insects and target plants; 4) evaluate efficacy of agents; 5) investigate opportunities for integrated pest management; and 6) operate and maintain the Mass Rearing Annex as defined in the Operation, Maintenance, Repair, Rehabilitation and Replacement Manual. This five-year agreement is a continuation of the Project, now entering its ninth year in operation.

Additional Item Background:
Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:
Containment of highly invasive weeds, such as melaleuca and Old World climbing fern, is a priority for the restoration and preservation of the South Florida ecosystem. Cost effective

control tools for the many established invasive species are needed to help ensure long-term sustainability of natural resource management programs. Using an integrative pest management approach that includes biological controls can result in reduced herbicide use and greater long-term control of non-indigenous plant species in Florida's natural areas.

Funding Source:
This is a five-year interagency agreement using Ad Valorem funds in the amount of $4,660,000, of which $660,000 is budgeted in Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and the remainder is subject to Governing Board approval of future years' budgets.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution No. 2025-1001