

## **M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** Governing Board Members

**FROM:** Cassandra Armstrong, Ph.D., Water Resources Division

**DATE:** August 14, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan: Cooperative Funding Agreement with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the South Florida Fish Habitat Assessment Program

### **Agenda Item Background:**

One of the main goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) for Florida Bay is to improve vital fisheries habitat, by increasing the species diversity and aerial extent of seagrass communities. Seagrass beds are the primary fisheries habitat in Florida Bay and Whitewater Bay. They are an important baseline for evaluating natural and anthropogenic impacts and are critical indicators of restoration success. This monitoring program is required to assess the effects of the significant restoration projects and changes in water management at the southern end of the Central & Southern Florida Flood Control Project. In addition, it is currently tracking seagrass recovery following the losses experienced in 2015. District funds in support of this monitoring come from the Florida Bay Monitoring program and the Monitoring and Assessment Program (MAP) of RECOVER.

This cooperative agreement with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is to continue seagrass and macroalgae monitoring within Florida Bay and the lower southwest coast. Data from this agreement will be used to assess estuarine changes and conditions associated with the C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project, Modified Water Deliveries, South Dade Conveyance System operations, and Florida Bay Minimum Flows and Levels. It is also tracking recovery from the 2015 seagrass die-off event. The monitoring program is specified in the RECOVER MAP as Component 3.2.3.3 and is also a component of the C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project Implementation Report monitoring plan. The proposed cooperative agreement is for three additional years of monitoring and seven months of data analysis and reporting, with the District providing \$840,576.

### **Additional Item Background:**

#### **Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:**

This item is aligned with the District mission to balance and improve water quality, flood control, and natural systems. It supports multiple objectives within Florida Bay, including the evaluation of the effects of water management and restoration projects on the natural system.

#### **Funding Source:**

Funding is from a combination of Ad Valorem and dedicated funds (State Appropriations).

#### **Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

[Resolution No. 2025-0804](#)