

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Jennifer Reynolds, Ecosystem Restoration

DATE: February 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Benthic Habitat and Substrate Mapping of the Northern Estuaries

Agenda Item Background:

By seeking to restore natural water flow, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) aims to increase the total spatial extent of natural areas, improve habitat and functional quality, and improve the abundance and diversity of native plant and animal species. The Restoration, Coordination, Verification (RECOVER) program supports CERP through its Monitoring and Assessment Plan (MAP), which tracks ecological responses to restoration across the South Florida region, including the Northern Estuaries (Caloosahatchee, Loxahatchee, and St. Lucie Estuaries). Since the early 2000s, the eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) has been monitored as a key biological indicator of environmental change, particularly in response to salinity stress in the Northern Estuaries region. CERP implementation in the area is expected to improve the management of freshwater flows through increased water storage capacity, thus improving salinity balance and water quality to the benefit of oyster habitats and other regional indicators.

This agenda item supports RECOVER assessment of the Northern Estuaries by providing consistent, repeatable surveys of oyster resources and benthic substrates within each system to determine if CERP Interim Goals are being met, or likely to be met (CERP Programmatic Regulations, 2003). A Request for Proposals solicited technical proposals from qualified firms for benthic habitat and substrate mapping of the Northern Estuaries. Two proposals were received and deemed responsive and responsible. They were then evaluated and ranked in order, as shown on Table 1 below. Contract award is requested for a duration of one year.

Table 1: Proposals in Ranked Order

Proposal Rank	Contractor
1	AECOM Technical Services, Inc.
2	Aptim Environmental & Infrastructure, LLC

Additional Item Background:

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

The firm is selected to provide ecological mapping expertise that supports the District's core mission of ecosystem protection and restoration while also aligning with the key goals and objectives of the CERP.

Funding Source:

Funding for this contract is from dedicated funds (State Grant MN052 for RECOVER Data, Mapping, and Model Acquisition to support CERP Adaptive Assessment and Monitoring), for

which funds are budgeted in Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

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ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 2026-0208](#)