

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

**TO:** Governing Board Members

**FROM:** Jennifer Reynolds, Ecosystem Restoration

**DATE:** October 9, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Rafter T Realty, Inc., Northern Everglades Payment for Environmental Services Project Contract Amendment

### **Agenda Item Background:**

As part of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, the Rafter T Ranch Water Management Project, located in Highlands County, is a public-private partnership supporting the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan. The ~1,300-acre project captures rainfall and retains regional runoff in five basins and is uniquely situated to reduce discharges to Arbuckle Creek and moderate flows to the Lake Istokpoga Subwatershed. Approved by the Governing Board on October 9, 2014, it was estimated to store ~1,300 acre-feet of water annually and retain approximately 0.2 metric tons of total phosphorus (TP) and 4.4 metric tons of total nitrogen (TN) per year. The expanded project is expected to store ~3,300 acre-feet and retain 0.7 metric tons of TP and 8.8 metric tons of TN.

The existing Contract No. 4600002876 and its two subsequent amendments provided 11 years of operations at \$1,899,524.94. Staff requests Governing Board approval to amend the existing Service Agreement with Rafter T Realty, Inc., to expand the service area and extend project operations for an additional ten years in an amount not to exceed \$4,613,353, for a revised contract total not to exceed \$6,512,877.94.

The amended contract includes construction costs to increase project resiliency and efficiency, ten years of additional operation, establishes fixed annual cost including operations and maintenance responsibilities, and removes variability and uncertainty of Consumer Price Index cost increases. Annual payments over the ten-year operational term of the contract are fixed at \$416,000 for operations and maintenance as well as a one-time not-to-exceed payment of \$453,000 for construction of three culverts and a pump station refurbishment.

### **Additional Item Background:**

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

The Rafter T Ranch Project is consistent with the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan storage and water quality goals, Section 373.4595, Florida Statutes (NEEPP) and supports the District's core mission of ecosystem restoration.

#### **Funding Source:**

Funding source is from annual legislative appropriations for Dispersed Water Management and the Northern Everglades and Estuary Protection Program.

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

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

[Resolution No. 2025-1005](#)