

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Lawrence Glenn, Water Resources Division

DATE: September 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Cooperative Agreement for the South Florida Fisheries Habitat Assessment Program

Agenda Item Background:

One of the main goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan for Florida Bay is to improve vital fisheries habitat by increasing the species diversity and aerial extent of seagrass communities. This proposed 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, Florida Bay Minimum Flows and Levels, and recovery from the 2015 seagrass die-off event. The monitoring program is specified in the RECOVER Monitoring and Assessment Plan 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 0.5 years of data analysis and reporting, at a total cost of \$1,156,563; with the FWC providing an estimated in-kind cost share of \$305,988 and the District providing \$850,575.

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

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. The vulnerability of this habitat was demonstrated in the late 1980s and 1990s and most recently in 2015, when broad-scale seagrass die-off occurred in central and western Florida Bay, focusing public attention on water management effects on Florida Bay's health. The 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.

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 and southern Biscayne Bay, including the evaluation of the effects of water management and restoration projects on the natural system.

Funding Source:

This is a 43-month cooperative agreement with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Commission in the amount of \$850,575 for which \$160,192 from Ad Valorem funds and \$10,000 from the dedicated Alligator Alley Toll Road account funds is subject to Governing Board approval of the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Adopted Budget, and the remainder is subject to Governing Board approval of future years budgets.

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ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 2022-0909](#)