

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: , Ecosystem Restoration & Capital Projects

DATE: May 12, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project
(Staff contact, Jennifer Reynolds)

Agenda Item Background:

As part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), staff will brief the Governing Board regarding a letter of support and certification of financial capability to the USACE for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP) Final Integrated Revised Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement (PIR/EIS). The purpose of the LOWRP is to increase water storage capacity within the watershed to improve Lake Okeechobee water levels, improve the quantity and timing of regulatory discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, restore freshwater wetlands, and improve water supply. The District is the non-federal sponsor for LOWRP.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1986 requires the Secretary of the Army to determine a non-federal sponsor's ability to pay. USACE regulations allow the non-federal sponsor to self-certify it has the ability to pay its share of the project costs. Additionally, the CERP Programmatic Regulations require a letter of support from the non-federal sponsor be included in any Final PIR/EIS. Staff plans to transmit a letter to the USACE expressing the District's support for the project and affirming financial capability to satisfy the non-federal sponsor's obligations described in the LOWRP PIR/EIS should a project partnership agreement be executed by the parties.

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

This project supports the District's core missions of protecting and restoring ecosystems, as well as improving water supply.

Funding Source:

The LOWRP is a 50/50 cost share project under the CERP. Future financial commitments are contingent on continued funding appropriations from the State of Florida Legislature and Governing Board approval of future years budgets.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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ATTACHMENTS: