

SFWMD

Land Assessment

Everglades Region

Additional Public Comments

Aida Arik
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18001 Old Cutler Road, Suite 625
Palmetto Bay, FL 33157

Comments to SFWMD on Land Assessment
Related to Model Lands, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands
Primary interest: Natural Systems Restoration

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

Because the Model Lands are the largest eastern undeveloped coastal area in Miami-Dade County, the property provides benefits for all of the above core missions of the District. Specific benefits include:

- Providing an important land connection between other public lands, estuarine areas, and marine sanctuaries
- Surrounded completely by undeveloped lands
- Providing habitat for threatened and endangered species, especially the Florida panther, as well as containing the last remaining east coast transverse glades
- Offering critical ecosystem services including providing a buffer to salt water intrusion into the aquifer, storm surge protection, carbon sequestration, and water filtration
- The headwaters for Card Sound and Barnes Sound
- Part of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project
- Potentially have a role as a buffer zone for Phase II of the C-111 N Spreader Project

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Retaining the Model Lands is critical to maintaining the District's missions in the South Dade Wetlands. Habitat could be further advanced through removal of exotic vegetation.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

We endorse the use of the Model Lands as envisioned in the Tentatively Selected Plan for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project.
The lands will also have significant value for Phase II of the C-111 North Spreader Project.



BERTHA W. HENRY, County Administrator

115 S. Andrews Avenue, Room 409 • Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301 • 954-357-7362 • FAX 954-357-7360

July 8, 2013

Re: SFWMD Land Assessment – Everglades Region

To Whom It May Concern,

This correspondence is provided to the South Florida Water Management District (District) regarding the on-going land assessment process. It is Broward County's understanding that this process is undertaken to determine how the current use of each land parcel owned by the District contributes to the agency's core mission of balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply as a basis for considering these lands for potential alternative uses or possible surplus. With this letter, Broward County is specifically addressing its interest in the land portfolio within the Everglades Assessment Region.

Broward County Water Preserve Areas

Broward County has a long history of support for Everglades restoration, as two-thirds of Broward County consists of Everglades natural areas. Notably, on September 22, 1992, the Broward County Commission unanimously approved an agreement between the County and the District regarding the Everglades Buffer Strip – a component of the Broward County Water Preserve Areas (WPAs). The item provided for the acquisition of unprotected land outside the regional areas and the buffer strip with secured funds of \$4 million from the federal government, \$4 million from the county -- set aside from the 1989 Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) bond referendum—and an initial \$4 million from the state.

After decades of coordination and process, there is a great need to realize completion of the Broward WPAs and the preservation of all state lands associated with this critical CERP project. With the May 21, 2012, signing of a Chief of Engineer's Report and the October 2012 signing of the Record of Decision, the BCWPAs project is awaiting authorization by Congress in the next approved Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

The Broward County Water Preserve Areas project includes three of the ten initially Authorized Projects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in WRDA 2000 with project components that include the 3A/3B Seepage Management System and the C-9 and C-11 Impoundments. The primary goals of the BCWPAs are to improve water management and to provide a hydrologic buffer between the Everglades and the developed lands east. Benefits to CERP include reductions in seepage losses, restoration of wetlands, and reduced phosphorus

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loads from the urban environment. Urban benefits include storage of stormwater runoff, groundwater recharge, management of saltwater intrusion, and urban water supply.

By providing storage and water quality treatment, the BCWPAs are key to reducing poor quality water discharges and ensuring compliance with nutrient criteria established for Everglades restoration. The completion of this project will provide a critical link to other water resource management goals and restoration objectives in the Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park.

Management

This area was previously overwhelmed by aggressive growth of melaleuca. Proper management requires periodic retreatments in order to prevent these harmful plants from becoming reestablished. The District's long-term management of this area should include regular removal and control of this invasive species, even as the area returns to a more natural wetlands condition.

Public Use and Recreation Value

During the Water Preserves Area's Project Delivery Team process to develop the BCWPA Project Plan, the County, SFWMD, and the Army Corps of Engineers collaborated to develop a recreational element that fulfills CERP project goals while also enhancing the County's recreational goals. As a component of the BCWPA Project Plan, three recreational features have been proposed.

The first feature is within the 3A/3B Seepage Management Area and recreational area located immediately adjacent to Everglades Holiday Park (EHP) and includes the L-37 Levee Recreational Trail radiating north and south from the centrally-located EHP. Both components are in unincorporated Broward County. Planned amenities include a trailhead consisting of 10 parking spaces and 20 vehicle trailer parking spaces, vault toilets, benches, an information kiosk, and a footbridge over the C-11 canal to allow access to the north compartment. It also includes two canoe launches. The L-37 Levee Recreational Trail includes a 13-mile improved-surface trail.

Additional Comments Regarding Individual Parcel Assessments

Holly Lake Parcel

The Holly Lake Parcel (ca. 17 acres) lies within a residential community west of U.S. Route 27, sectioned out of the buffer strip. As such, there is a strong recommendation from the County that the SFWMD should not divest itself of this property as it was originally acquired for water storage to mitigate for any negatively impacted areas affected by higher water levels on the east side of the Water Conservation Areas.

Miramar Parkway Parcels

The District assumed ownership of these parcels (ca. 47 acres), sometimes referred to as the Pembroke Road mitigation parcels, through its regulatory function as mitigation for impacts to

other wetlands. It is recommended that the SFWMD not divest this property given their close proximity to the seepage barriers and the potential wetland mitigation east side of the Water Conservation Areas. Further, the County does not support any alternative provision for providing for wetland mitigation outside on the impacted areas.

Griffin Road Parcels

This property (ca. 33 acres) lies outside of the C-11 impoundment project footprint and is located at the corner of Griffin Rd and U.S. Route 27, both north and south of Griffin. It contains a variety of exotic trees.

The County recommends retention and improvement of these lands and coordinated management in consideration of planned improvements as part of the 3A/3B Seepage Management Area and recreational area components located immediately adjacent to Everglades Holiday Park (EHP).

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank

The Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank provides critical acreage for the managed mitigation of wetland impact and thus diverse natural system restoration and enhancement. The preservation of this managed mitigation bank helps to ensure the quality and effectiveness of required mitigation being conducted for wetland impacts realized across an extensive portion of south Florida. Broward County does not support the divesting of any of these lands by the District or their degradation in any way. To date, Broward County has permitted offsite mitigation for 16 wetland projects, totaling nearly 40 credits, to be directed toward this mitigation bank.

Site 1 Impoundment Project (Fran Reich Preserve)

Located in southeast Palm Beach County, the project involves construction of an approximately 1,600-acre, 8-foot deep, aboveground impoundment and a pump station. This project will capture and store stormwater for use during dry times that would otherwise be lost to tide, thereby preserving clean water along with other related environmental benefits. Once complete, the project will bring several benefits to the Everglades and local communities, including Broward County. Specifically, this project includes capturing and storing excess surface water runoff from the Hillsboro Watershed. This will reduce dry season and improve the quantity, quality and timing of freshwater flows to the estuarine portion of the Hillsboro Canal.

The County fully supports the completion of this important project and does not support the divesting of any associated lands within this project.

Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs)

These constructed wetlands provide important nutrient removal from urban and agricultural runoff. These lands should be fully retained and managed to ensure their highest use and efficiencies as vehicles for providing nutrient removal and water quality improvements as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The County supports this management effort and encourages their protection.

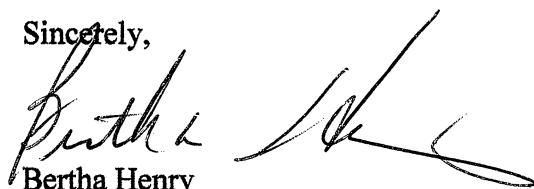
Flow-Equalization Basins

The use of Flow Equalization Basins to capture and then attenuate flows to STAs provides a vital enhancement for nutrient removal capability and water level efficiencies. The designed features allow for supplement flows southward that meet water quality criteria and the full implementation of these planned features is supported by Broward County.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our comments and recommendations. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Dr. Jennifer Jurado, Director of Natural Resources Planning and Management Division at 954-519-1464 or jjurado@broward.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bertha Henry", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bertha Henry
County Administrator

Cc: Cynthia Chambers, Director, Environmental Protection and Growth Management
Department
Dr. Jennifer Jurado, Director, Natural Resources Planning and Management Division
Henry Sniezek, Director, Planning and Environmental Regulation Division



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Biscayne National Park
9700 S. W. 328th Street
Homestead, Florida 33033-5634



N16 (5250)

June 28, 2013

Dan O'Keefe
Chairman, Governing Board
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Dear Chairman O'Keefe:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Land Assessment process that the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is currently executing. Biscayne National Park supports retaining all of the properties within the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units* and the South Broward-Miami Dade portions of the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units*. The lands in these areas further the SFWMD mission of flood protection, flood control infrastructure, protection of water resources, and restoration of impaired ecosystems. The identified properties do this by providing drinking water recharge, water treatment, hydrologic and operational flexibility, serving as a hydrologic step-down between Everglades National Park and developed or farmed areas to the east, and wildlife habitat, while in the east they additionally provide an open land buffer for storm surge, tidal flooding and sea level rise. These lands also provide important habitat protection and will be used for flow restoration as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

The lands in the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units* specifically support the District's core mission by providing water management operational flexibility, critical bird habitat, hydrologic step-down ability, and serve to provide important landscape level buffer zones between the heavily developed east coast and the Everglades. The lands in the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units* are a component of or contribute to more than nine CERP projects including the Central Everglades Planning Process (CEPP), which is currently ongoing. It is necessary to retain as much operational flexibility in these areas as possible to implement the CERP, provide for water supply, and prevent flooding in the developed east coast areas.

The lands in the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units* are critically important to water flow for Biscayne National Park, Biscayne Bay, and the Model Lands-Southern Glades areas. They are necessary for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) and for the C-111 Spreader Projects of CERP. All of the lands associated with the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project as identified in the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Unit* map are within the project area for the CERP BBCW Project, Alternative O the tentatively selected plan, and will be needed as portions of Phase I come on-line and for features identified as a part of Phase II of the BBCW. These lands are all in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) area for storm surge

and low-lying flooding, they are also in an area identified by Biscayne National Park and the Trust for Public Lands as important to the preservation of the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of Biscayne National Park. These lands additionally are critical to maintaining operational flexibility associated with the seasonal drawdown for agriculture and for combatting saltwater intrusion as well as other effects of sea level rise. These lands provide important habitat components including spatial extent and buffer features for various species.

The properties identified as part of the *Individual Parcel Assessment Unit* represent properties that were identified as part of the original Tentatively Selected Plan for BBCW and include a parcel that was mitigation for a large housing development. The southernmost parcel of the *SW 184th St. Parcels* was mitigation land associated with the development of the property once known as Shoma Homes. Both of these parcels are contiguous to the Biscayne National Park boundary and are comprised of county designated protected coastal communities. The importance of these parcels to Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay has been well documented in comments to Miami-Dade County and the SFWMD on the development of the adjacent property, Shoma Homes.

The lands within *Model Lands* and *Southern Glades* Components of the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Unit* are the last of their respective remnant habitat type east of Everglades National Park and represent the only remaining east coast transverse glades from the original historic Everglades system. They are important habitat for the Cape Sable seaside sparrow and other threatened and endangered species. They additionally provide a buffer to the impacts of the high salinity groundwater plume from the Florida Power and Light Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant and its effects on the environment and drinking water supplies.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the SFWMD in identifying and protecting these important lands under District ownership. We are attaching a more detailed list of the importance of these features by area and look forward to working further with the SFWMD in support of the agency's many missions and for the protection of Biscayne National Park. Please contact Sarah Bellmund at (786) 335-3624; sarah_bellmund@nps.gov or myself with further questions.

Sincerely,



Brian Carlstrom
Superintendent

cc: South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Members; Regan Walker, (Director, Board & Exec. Services SFWMD); Shannon Estenoz (Director of Everglades Restoration Initiatives, U.S. Department of the Interior); Dan Kimball (Superintendent, Everglades National Park, U. S. National Park Service); Pedro Ramos (Superintendent, Big Cypress National Preserve, U. S. National Park Service); Jack Osterholt (Director, Miami-Dade County Regulatory and Economic Resources)

Attachment

Attachment to Biscayne National Park Letter to SFWMD
Technical Summary of Land Importance
South Florida Water Management District Land Assessment Process
June 28, 2013

South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units:

All properties support the roles of 1) protecting water resources, 2) restoring impaired ecosystems, 3) providing flood control operational flexibility, and 4) flood protection

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Area:

- 1) All identified parcels are within the footprint for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project tentatively selected plan, Alternative O.
- 2) All parcels are located in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zone area close to coastal Biscayne Bay.
- 3) Almost all parcels have high potential species habitat richness, have rare or protected species, and are ranked high for strategic habitat conservation.
- 4) All parcels are within two miles of the boundary of Biscayne National Park.
- 5) All parcels will be heavily affected by sea level rise.
- 6) Parcels are located in an area identified as important to the protection of Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay by a joint Trust for Public Lands and Biscayne National Park process.

Individual Parcel Assessment:

SW 184th Street Parcels:

- 1) The northern-most parcel is needed for the BBCW project and a specific flow-way feature described in Alternative O.
- 2) Both parcels are contiguous to Biscayne National Park boundary.
- 3) Both parcels contain protected coastal habitat species and have important habitat function.
- 4) Both parcels buffer the effects of development east of Old Cutler Road on Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay.
- 5) The southern-most parcel was received by the SFWMD as mitigation for the development originally known as "Shoma Homes". This parcel was conveyed to the SFWMD instead of Miami-Dade County for use in the BBCW project.
- 6) Conveyance of the southernmost parcel would invalidate mitigation for impacts from the development originally known as "Shoma Homes".

107th Avenue Parcels:

- 1) All of the parcels in this area are within the boundary of the BBCW project Alternative O.
- 2) All parcels are needed to provide hydrologic buffering for Phase I of the BBCW Project and for features of Phase II of the BBCW.
- 3) All parcels provide hydrologic buffering for the operations of the Agricultural Seasonal Drawdown.

- 4) Parcels contiguous to Military Canal provide hydraulic buffering for canal operations and are contiguous to the large area of land owned and operated by Miami-Dade County as a water flow feature for environmental benefit.
- 5) All parcels are located in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zone area.
- 6) The northern most parcels are located in wetlands and the southern-most parcels are identified as upland forested habitat which is rare along the coast.

Model Lands:

- 1) This area remains the largest eastern undeveloped coastal area in Miami-Dade County.
- 2) This area contains the last east coast transverse glades and associated habitat.
- 3) This area represents a significant land corridor connecting the reef, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, the North Key Largo Botanical Area, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the Southern Glades Wildlife Management Area, and Everglades National Park.
- 4) This area buffers the effects of the high salinity groundwater plume from the Florida Power and Light Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant on Everglades National Park and drinking water for Homestead, Florida City, and the Florida Keys.
- 5) This area contains productive habitat for a large number of threatened and endangered species. This area is documented to have been used by Florida panthers within the last ten years and also contains Cape Sable seaside sparrow habitat. Portions of the area are federally designed critical habitat for the American crocodile.
- 6) This area provides operational flexibility, allowing the SFWMD to successfully provide flood protection, environmental benefits, and freshwater recharge, benefiting the urban areas as well as the two national parks.
- 7) This area is the headwaters for Card Sound and Barnes Sound.
- 8) This area is part of Alternative O, the tentatively selected plan for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands.

Southern Glades:

- 1) This area combines with the Model Lands area to be a significant land corridor between the eastern protected areas of the reef, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, the North Key Largo Botanical Area, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the Southern Glades wildlife area, through to Everglades National Park.
- 2) This area has important Cape Sable seaside sparrow habitat, roseate spoonbill habitat, coastal wading bird habitat, and panther habitat. It is currently used as a recreation area.
- 3) This area is critical for water management flexibility to provide freshwater to Taylor Slough and Northeast Florida Bay.

- 4) This area also buffers the effects of the high salinity groundwater plume from the Florida Power and Light Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant on Everglades National Park and Drinking water for Homestead, Florida City, and the Florida Keys.
- 5) This area is the basis for the C-111 Spreader Project in the CERP.
- 6) This area provides water management operational flexibility that allows the SFWMD to protect Florida City, Homestead, and the area's agriculture community from flooding.

The East Coast Buffer Assessment Units:

The East Coast Buffer Assessment Unit area is comprised by components of more than eight CERP project features. This area is important to the ultimate success of the CERP and is required for the hydrologic and operational flexibility necessary to protect the Everglades, Everglades National Park, and the groundwater for Biscayne National Park. These project features result in many of the diverse benefits for the environment, developed areas, and agriculture of the CERP.

These areas are generally low lying features and many originally comprised short hydroperiod wetlands prior to disturbance. Protection of these areas results in wildlife habitat benefits, improved wading bird habitat, and improved water management operational flexibility.

From: [Gloria Cauble](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: conservation of lands
Date: Monday, July 08, 2013 1:21:12 PM

Ms. Schluter,

Through my Facebook news feed, I found that your water management district is contemplating what to do with conservation lands. I urge you to keep lands in conservation. I have lived abroad in the very Old World, and have seen what can occur when sensitive lands have not been held in conservation: dead waters, and dead environments. Certain concerned individuals are not trying to play Dr. Frankenstein and bring them back to life. Please envision a future where Florida's landscapes remain alive. Please help our own Dr. Frankenstein efforts to restore the Everglades. Not every landscape is meant to have mankind inhabit it. But that is not to say that the life it supports is not somehow vital to our life through the chain of life.

Please conserve the lands in order to save them.

Gloria Cauble
Jacksonville, FL



Audubon FLORIDA

Jane Graham, Esq.
Everglades Policy Associate
Audubon Florida
444 Brickell Avenue, Suite 850
Miami, FL 33131

What project do these comments reference? All of them. See below.

Which Assessment Unit or parcel do these comments reference? All of them. See below.

Which describes your primary interest? Natural Systems Restoration, Recreation and Public Use

Which Sites have you visited in the last two years? STAs, WCAs, Broward County Water Preserve Areas, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands

1. Stormwater Treatment Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Stormwater Treatment Areas are an essential component for the SFWMD's Everglades water quality projects, cleansing water by removing phosphorus before it flows south into the Everglades. It also has strong natural resource protection values, providing wonderful opportunities for birding. Audubon Society of the Everglades and Hendry Glades Audubon lead birding trips in these areas, viewing myriad species, including Everglade Snail Kites, Swallow Tailed Kites, Wood Storks, and a variety of wading birds. The GIS maps show high potential habitat richness, and Priority 2 for strategic habitat conservation areas. Florida panthers and deer have been sighted in the areas.

The STA 1W outparcel, 39.92 acres currently utilized for sugar cane farming, is not furthering the core mission and is in fact contributing to further water quality pollution through excess phosphorus. GIS maps show that there are areas of this parcel with strategic habitat conservation areas.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

For the STAs, no. To support the core missions of water quality improvement and natural resource protection, the sugarcane lease on the STA 1W outparcel should not be renewed. The parcel should be used for water storage or some other benefit to the natural system to enhance habitat.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

The collaboration between SFWMD and Audubon Chapters for STA birding trips is excellent and should continue and be expanded where possible.

2. Flow Equalization Basins

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Flow Equalization Basins further the core mission of water quality protection/improvements, as they are an essential component of the Everglades water quality plan to increase the performance level of phosphorus reduction for the Stormwater Treatment Areas. While these sites await completion of construction, they are at varying levels of use. A1 FEB is partially constructed. As A2 FEB remains in agricultural production until the site is needed for construction, it is important that agricultural uses do not escalate water quality problems through the addition of phosphorus and other nutrients to the land. The C-139 FEB is currently vacant land formerly used for citrus, and is not adding or reducing phosphorus levels.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

In the long term, no. In the interim between design and completion of construction, the SFWMD should explore ways to minimize the addition of nutrients to the lands currently being utilized for agriculture. Note that the FEBs abut areas that are high in strategic habitat conservation values- Priority 2 with Priority 1 mixed throughout the areas. Where water quality issues do not exist on vacant lands, the SFWMD may consider opportunities for interim habitat enhancement and water storage.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

3. C-139 Annex

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The C-139 Annex is an essential element of the SFWMD water quality plan that will stem the influx of phosphorus and other nutrients in the ecosystem, improve performance of the Stormwater Treatment Areas, and restore areas to become prime habitat for a variety of wildlife. This is also a prime region for natural resource protection. GIS maps demonstrate that sections within this parcel's boundaries are the highest and second highest priority for strategic habitat conservation areas and potential habitat richness with areas of 5-6 and up to 7 species.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

In the long term, no. In the interim between design and completion of construction, the SFWMD should explore opportunities for interim water storage. Specifically, there is area in northern part, with a mosaic of upland herbaceous, upland forested, and pasture. There is also a section on the southwestern side with upland forest, marshes and wetlands where there could be some advanced protection on the area in the interim.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

4. Water Conservation Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

As the Land Assessment document says, the Water Conservation Areas are “world renowned for its biodiversity and unique natural character.” These areas are the beneficiary of the district’s water quality and restoration programs.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

SFWMD should invest more funding in treating exotic vegetation in the refuge. While much has been invested on both the state and federal side to clear malaleuca, lygodium, and other exotics, there are still areas in the refuge that have never been effectively treated, especially in the northern part of refuge.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No. Although, benefits would be enhanced with increased focus on exotic vegetation control through these areas.

5. East Coast Buffer

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The lands in the East Coast Buffer were acquired with a variety of public funds as part of Everglades restoration planning to provide a buffer between urban communities and the restored areas for water storage and seepage management. These areas also have considerable ecological benefits, including critical bird habitat. The lands in this area are a component of or are linked to numerous CERP projects. These lands are critical to retain operational flexibility to reap the most out of our investments.

Strazulla Wetlands: The Strazulla Wetlands, acquired with a mix of Preservation 2000, water management district trust fund, and donations, were acquired for conservation purposes, and must be retained for conservation purposes. GIS maps show this area is a mix of slough and wetland hardwood forest, and sizeable portions are listed as priority 2 and 3 for strategic habitat conservation areas. The Chingos parcels are wetland hardwood forested, and also have areas with potential habitat richness.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve Reservoir: This area was originally slated to be a reservoir in CERP but progress has been significantly delayed. Note the GIS maps show a close proximity to Priority 2 strategic habitat conservation areas, with some Priority 3 sprinkled in the parcels

themselves. Sections of these parcels are within the FEMA Flood Zone Area, meaning that development would be exposed to a higher flood risk. Currently, the land is used for agriculture and recreation. The Refuge has stated some interest in acquiring the West Delray Regional Park.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: This area provides mitigation for impacts to wetlands.

Broward County Water Preserve Area: This area is land acquired for the CERP project of the same name, which will provide water quality, seepage (flood control), and wildlife habitat protection. These lands are a key buffer between urban development and the Everglades. The GIS maps show the parcels highly rank as strategic habitat conservation areas.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: This area is to increase operational flexibility to improve water flowage without detrimental impacts to flood protection or water quality.

Pennsuco Wetlands: It fulfills the mission of natural systems restoration by providing high value habitats, including short hydroperiod wetlands, wet prairies, among others, as mitigation for rock mining impacts.

C-4 Impoundment: The impoundment fulfills the core mission of flood control, and water quality improvement by capturing excess water flows from the C-4 basin and tempering its release to elevate levels of flood protection. The area also fulfills the core mission of natural resource protection, as this area is used by wildlife and wading birds for habitat: the GIS maps show that it is highly ranked for Strategic Habitat Conservation areas (Priority 2).

Bird Drive: This area was acquired for the CERP project to provide seepage, but because of a number of complexities in the land acquisition process, this CERP project has not progressed. Regardless, Bird Drive satisfies the core mission of natural resource protection, as it has areas with ecologically important short hydroperiod wetlands, providing important habitat for wading birds, and is in close proximity to sizable nesting colonies. The GIS maps show a potential habitat richness of 2-4 species and Priority 2 Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

8 ½ Square Mile: This area provides the core mission of flood control and natural resource protection as a seepage barrier from increased flows to the northeastern portion of Everglades National Park. The shallow impoundments are used by a variety of wildlife GIS maps show the area ranks high on the rare species habitat priorities, especially the individual parcels- ranking a priority 2.

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: This area provides seepage loss from Shark River Slough to Everglades National Park. It also has wildlife benefits, and appears in the GIS map as Priority 3 for Rare Species Habitat Priorities.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 flood pro):

Strazulla: We are supportive of the proposed SFWMD land swap with DOI to protect these areas as part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. For the Chingos parcels, we believe they should be retained by the SFWMD for conservation purposes. Perhaps there could be some agreement with Palm Beach County to improve the management of the Chingos parcels. Due to its proximity to ecologically rich areas, it is inappropriate to open up the Chingos parcels to any other type of land use other than for conservation purposes.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve: SFWMD could work portions of these lands into a land swap with the DOI to manage parts of these areas as part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. For water quality improvement, SFWMD should aim to reduce the amount of phosphorus or other nutrients added to the land in the agricultural and equestrian areas.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: No

Broward County Water Preserve Areas: All lands that lie within the footprint of the CERP must remain as is. The Griffin Road parcel is outside the footprint, but GIS maps show the land use is wetland hardwood forest and upland forested, as well as being well within a FEMA flood zone. We would object to this parcel being sold for development. However, the SFWMD may consider looking into a cooperative arrangement with Broward County to improve management of this land for conservation and water quality purposes.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: No

Pennsuco Wetlands: No

C-4 Impoundment: No

Bird Drive: Due to the complexity of the land interests and possibilities involved in the Bird Drive area, we look forward to participating in deeper discussions on the future of this area beyond this land assessment process to preserve the ecological integrity of the short hydroperiod wetlands in this area.

8 ½ Square Mile: No. Please note that the individual parcel assessments, while small in size, have high habitat values as shown by the GIS maps. In addition, they are in a FEMA Flood Zone area, making development untenable.

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: No

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

Strazulla Wetlands: no. This area should remain protected for conservation purposes.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve: If the Loxahatchee Refuge acquired all or portions of these lands, they could manage it to the benefit of the refuge.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: No.

Broward County Water Preserve Areas: No. For the Griffin Road parcel, the SFWMD could explore a cooperative management agreement with Broward County.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: No. SFWMD may consider options to better manage exotics on the lands.

Pennsuko Wetlands: No.

C-4 Impoundment: No

Bird Drive: Yes, we believe a collaborative plan with multiple stakeholders to protect the valuable habitats in this area can garner the maximum benefit for this parcel. We look forward to further discussions.

8 ½ Square Mile: No

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: No.

6. South Miami Dade Wetlands

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: This area is essential for the District's mission of natural resource protection and restoration. These lands are the basis for the C-111 Spreader Canal Project in CERP and are critical for water management flexibility to flow freshwater to Taylor Slough and Northeast Florida Bay. The area is also key habitat for a variety of species, including Roseate Spoonbills, coastal wading birds, the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, and the Florida Panther. Florida Panthers in Everglades National Park tracked with radio collar devices have been reported in this area. GIS maps show that the area is in close proximity to critically imperiled rare natural communities, and the land is ranked highly as a strategic habitat conservation area (Priority 2) and highly for rare species habitat priorities (Priority 3). This area must be retained.

Model Lands: This area is essential for the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is also expect to benefit from hydrologic enhancements from CERP. The area has a wide variety of habitat for rare and endangered species, including the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, Florida Panther, and American Crocodile, as well as an abundance of wading birds. The land also functions as a wildlife corridor between the Florida Keys National Marine

Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the Southern Glades Area, and Everglades National Park. It is the headwaters for Card Sound and Barnes Sound and provides freshwater recharge for the urban areas and national parks. The GIS maps show the area ranking high under strategic habitat conservation areas (Priority 2 and 3).

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: This area is essential for the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration, as the lands for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP project to improve the ecological health of Biscayne Bay. This area has some of the highest potential habitat richness throughout the District's land holdings; GIS maps show areas with up to 8-13 species. The land also falls under Priority 1, 2, and 2 for Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. The parcels are located in an area identified as important to the protection of Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay by a joint Trust for Public Lands and Biscayne National Park process. It is also likely to be impacted by sea level rise in the future.

The SW 184 Parcel clearly provides value to the SFWMD's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is contiguous with the Biscayne National Park Boundary, and buffers the effects on development east of Old Cutler Road on Biscayne Bay. GIS maps show high quality habitat- scoring very highly in potential habitat richness, up to 8-13 species, and high priority for Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (Priority 2). It is in a FEMA Flood Zone Area, making development at higher risk for flooding, especially in light of sea level rise.

The 107th Parcel fulfills the SFWMD core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is within the boundary of BBCW project alternative O, and it is needed for the hydrologic buffering for Phase 1 and for features of Phase II of the BBCW CERP project. GIS maps show that portions of the parcel rank the highest for strategic habitat conservation areas (Priority 1), and have potential habitat richness of up to 5-6 species in certain areas. The fact that the area has a problem with exotic vegetation such as Brazilian Pepper and Australian Pines just means that if SFWMD invested more in exotics management, the habitat values would likely increase.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: No. SFWMD could invest more in exotic vegetation removal on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

Model Lands: No. SFWMD could invest more in exotic vegetation removal on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No. SFWMD could invest more in exotic vegetation removal on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: No

Model Lands: No

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No

7. Unassociated Parcels

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: This parcel is currently not furthering the District's mission, and in fact may be adding to water quality problems by the addition of fertilizer through continued agricultural practices. The border of the L-8 parcel with Dupuis is high in potential habitat richness; the GIS map shows potential habitat richness of 7 and up to 8-13 species along the border, and it well ranked as rare habitat species priorities (Priority 3).

SR 827 Parcel: This parcel is currently under sugarcane production, which is potentially furthering water quality problems through the addition of phosphorus through agricultural practices. This parcel was acquired with a mix of District, Federal, and Preservation 2000 funds, and should be used for a conservation or restoration purpose. It abuts the Snail Farm parcel, which has potential habitat richness of 2-4 species, and is a priority 2 Strategic Habitat Conservation Area.

Deer Fence: This parcel is being used for flood control and water storage. It was originally acquired to provide seepage for water from the Stormwater Treatment Area. This parcel also has relatively high values for habitat. The GIS maps show potential habitat richness between 2-4 and 5-6 species, and it ranks high as a strategic habitat conservation area (mostly Priority 2, with Priority 1 sprinkled throughout and in close proximity).

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: We understand the SFWMD has a plan to trade this parcel to achieve the STA 1W expansion for the SFWMD Everglades water quality plan. Alternatively, the SFWMD could explore water storage on the land or some type of partnership with Dupuis.

SR 827 Parcel: The SFWMD should explore options to store water on this land or operate it in conjunction with nearby land holdings for ecosystem protection.

Deer Fence: SFWMD should consider possibilities for water storage and dispersed water management.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: See above. If for some reason the trade does not go through, farming should be curtailed on this land and other options should be explored.

SR 827 Parcel: See above re: SR 827 parcel.

Deer Fence: See above re: Deer Fence parcel.

From: [McCune, Frank \(RER\)](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: Everglades Region
Date: Thursday, April 11, 2013 3:00:29 PM

Dear Andrea Schluter,

When can we expect to see the Everglades **Assessment Region documents?** I think that **region mostly affects Miami-Dade County. Staff has published the October 2012 EAR Based Amendment report and the public hearing process has begun. This Cycle will be the implementation of the Adopted Evaluation and Appraisal Report 2010 recommendations. This report will come to the Districts' attention as part of the State's departments review, once we transmit to DEO. My interest is the Tamiami Trail-Bird Drive Wetlands Basin area in western Miami-Dade County.** Land Assessment Team of South Florida Water Management District has sent out requests for comment on the **East Coast Assessment Region and that is why I am asking this question.**

Frank L. Mc Cune, Senior Planner

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Planning Division, Metropolitan Planning Section

111 NW 1 Street Suite 1220

Miami, FL 33128-1974

Phone 305-375-2835 Ext. -8751 Fax 305-375-1091

E-Mail mccune@miamidade.gov

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concerning public records. E-mail messages are covered under such laws and thus

subject to disclosure. All E-mail sent and received is captured by our servers and kept as a public record.



"The CDMP provides for sustainable development"

"

1. Stormwater Treatment Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Stormwater Treatment Areas are an essential component for Everglades water quality projects, cleansing water by removing phosphorus before it flows south into the Everglades. It also has strong natural resource protection values, providing wonderful opportunities for birding. Species existing in this are the Everglade Snail Kites, Swallow Tailed Kites, Wood Storks, and a variety of wading birds. The core mission is to remove excess phosphorus. GIS maps show that there are areas of this parcel with strategic habitat conservation areas.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

2. Flow Equalization Basins

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Flow Equalization Basins further the core mission of water quality protection/improvements, as they are an essential component of the Everglades water quality plan to increase the performance level of phosphorus reduction for the Stormwater Treatment Areas. While these sites await completion of construction, they are at varying levels of use. A1 FEB is partially constructed. As A2 FEB remains in agricultural production until the site is needed for construction, it is important that agricultural uses do not escalate water quality problems through the addition of phosphorus and other nutrients to the land. The C-139 FEB is currently vacant land formerly used for citrus, and is not adding or reducing phosphorus levels.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

Where water quality issues do not exist on vacant lands, the SFWMD may consider opportunities for interim habitat enhancement and water storage.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

3. C-139 Annex

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The C-139 Annex is an essential element of the SFWMD water quality plan that will stem the influx of phosphorus and other nutrients in the ecosystem, improve performance of the Stormwater Treatment Areas, and restore areas to become prime habitat for a variety of wildlife. This is also a prime region for natural resource protection. GIS maps demonstrate that sections within this parcel's boundaries are the highest and second highest priority for strategic habitat conservation areas and potential habitat richness with areas of 5-6 and up to 7 species. We are particularly concerned that this remain viable panther habitat.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

The SFWMD should explore opportunities for interim water storage during storm events, but retain upland areas to protect upland species during dry periods. Specifically, in the northern part, with a mosaic of upland herbaceous, upland forested, and pasture. There is also a section on the southwestern side with upland forest, marshes and wetlands where there could be some advanced protection for species.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

4. Water Conservation Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Water Conservation Areas have extensive biodiversity and unique natural character. These areas are the beneficiary of the district's water quality and restoration programs.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

SFWMD should invest more funding in treating exotic vegetation in the refuge.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

5. East Coast Buffer

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The lands in the East Coast Buffer were acquired to provide a buffer between urban communities and the restored areas for water storage and seepage management. The lands in this area are a component of or are linked to numerous CERP projects. These lands are critical to retain operational flexibility to reap the most out of our investments.

Strazulla Wetlands: The Strazulla Wetlands, acquired with a mix of Preservation 2000, water management district trust fund, and donations, were acquired for conservation purposes, and must be retained for conservation purposes. GIS maps show this area is a mix of slough and wetland hardwood forest, and sizeable portions are listed as priority 2 and 3 for strategic habitat conservation areas. The Chingos parcels are wetland hardwood forested, and also have areas with potential habitat richness.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve Reservoir: This area was originally slated to be a reservoir in CERP but progress has been significantly delayed. Sections of these parcels are within the

FEMA Flood Zone Area, meaning that development would be exposed to a higher flood risk. Currently, the land is used for agriculture and recreation. The Refuge has stated some interest in acquiring the West Delray Regional Park. This area should be preserved as a buffer and possible inclusion in the Refuge at a later date. Development in this area would be harmful to the Refuge.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: This area provides mitigation for impacts to wetlands.

Broward County Water Preserve Area: This area is land acquired for the CERP project of the same name, which will provide water quality, seepage (flood control), and wildlife habitat protection. These lands are a key buffer between urban development and the Everglades. The GIS maps show the parcels highly rank as strategic habitat conservation areas.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: This area is to increase operational flexibility to improve water flowage without detrimental impacts to flood protection or water quality.

Pennsuco Wetlands: It fulfills the mission of natural systems restoration by providing high value habitats, including short hydroperiod wetlands, wet prairies, among others, as mitigation for rock mining impacts.

C-4 Impoundment: The impoundment fulfills the core mission of flood control, and water quality improvement by capturing excess water flows from the C-4 basin and tempering its release to elevate levels of flood protection. The area also fulfills the core mission of natural resource protection, as this area is used by wildlife and wading birds for habitat: the GIS maps show that it is highly ranked for Strategic Habitat Conservation areas (Priority 2).

Bird Drive: This area was acquired for the CERP project to provide seepage, but because of a number of complexities in the land acquisition process, this CERP project has not progressed. Regardless, Bird Drive satisfies the core mission of natural resource protection, as it has areas with ecologically important short hydroperiod wetlands, providing important habitat for wading birds, and is in close proximity to sizable nesting colonies. The GIS maps show a potential habitat richness of 2-4 species and Priority 2 Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

8 ½ Square Mile: This area provides the core mission of flood control and natural resource protection as a seepage barrier from increased flows to the northeastern portion of Everglades National Park. The shallow impoundments are used by a variety of wildlife GIS maps show the area ranks high on the rare species habitat priorities, especially the individual parcels- ranking a priority 2.

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: This area provides seepage loss from Shark River Slough to Everglades National Park. It also has wildlife benefits, and appears in the GIS map as Priority 3 for Rare Species Habitat Priorities.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 flood pro):

Strazulla: We are supportive of the proposed SFWMD land swap with DOI to protect these areas as part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The Chingos parcels should be retained by the SFWMD for conservation purposes or could be leased as agriculture as part of the Palm Beach County Ag Reserve, but with close adherence to strong BMP policies to prevent nutrient pollution. Due to its proximity to ecologically rich areas, it is inappropriate to open up the Chingos parcels to any other type of land use.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve: SFWMD could work portions of these lands into a land swap with the DOI to manage parts of these areas as part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. For water quality improvement, SFWMD should aim to reduce the amount of phosphorus or other nutrients added to the land in the agricultural and equestrian areas.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: No

Broward County Water Preserve Areas: All lands that lie within the footprint of the CERP must remain as is. The Griffin Road parcel is outside the footprint, but GIS maps show the land use is wetland hardwood forest and upland forested, as well as being well within a FEMA flood zone. SFWMD may consider looking into a cooperative arrangement with Broward County to improve management of this land for conservation and water quality purposes.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: No

Pennsuco Wetlands: No

C-4 Impoundment: No

Bird Drive: Due to the complexity of the land interests and possibilities involved in the Bird Drive area, we look forward to participating in deeper discussions on the future of this area beyond this land assessment process to preserve the ecological integrity of the short hydroperiod wetlands in this area.

8 ½ Square Mile: No. Please note that the individual parcel assessments, while small in size, have high habitat values as shown by the GIS maps. In addition, they are in a FEMA Flood Zone area, making development untenable.

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: No

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

Strazulla Wetlands: no.

Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve: If the Loxahatchee Refuge acquired all or portions of these lands, they could manage it to the benefit of the refuge.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank: No.

Broward County Water Preserve Areas: No. For the Griffin Road parcel, the SFWMD could explore a cooperative management agreement with Broward County.

Central and Northern Lakebelt: No. SFWMD may consider options to better manage exotics on the lands.

Pennsuco Wetlands: No.

C-4 Impoundment: No

Bird Drive: This property is important for bird populations and needs to be protected. This area may also provide for aquifer recharge. Development would negatively impact water flows and lead to increased flooding.

8 ½ Square Mile: No.

L-31/ Rocky Glades- Frog Pond: No.

6. South Miami Dade Wetlands

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: This area is essential for the District's mission of natural resource protection and restoration. These lands are the basis for the C-111 Spreader Canal Project in CERP and are critical for water management flexibility to flow freshwater to Taylor Slough and Northeast Florida Bay. The area is also key habitat for a variety of species, including Roseate Spoonbills, coastal wading birds, the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, and the Florida Panther. The land is ranked highly as a strategic habitat conservation area (Priority 2) and highly for rare species habitat priorities (Priority 3). This area must be retained.

Model Lands: This area is essential for the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is also expect to benefit from hydrologic enhancements from CERP. The area has a wide variety of habitat for rare and endangered species, including the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, Florida Panther, and American Crocodile, as well as an abundance of wading birds. The land also functions as a wildlife corridor between the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the Southern Glades Area, and Everglades National Park. It is the headwaters

for Card Sound and Barnes Sound and provides freshwater recharge for the urban areas and national parks.

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: This area is essential for the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration, as the lands for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP project to improve the ecological health of Biscayne Bay. This area has some of the highest potential habitat richness throughout the District's land holdings; the land also falls under Priority 1, 2, and 2 for Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. The parcels are located in an area identified as important to the protection of Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay by a joint Trust for Public Lands and Biscayne National Park process.

The SW 184 Parcel clearly provides value to the SFWMD's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is contiguous with the Biscayne National Park Boundary, and buffers the effects on development east of Old Cutler Road on Biscayne Bay. It is very high in potential habitat richness, up to 8-13 species, and high priority for Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (Priority 2). It is in a FEMA Flood Zone Area, making development at higher risk for flooding.

The 107th Parcel fulfills the SFWMD core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is within the boundary of BBCW project alternative O, and it is needed for the hydrologic buffering for Phase 1 and for features of Phase II of the BBCW CERP project. It has habitat richness of up to 5-6 species in certain areas. District needs investment in the removal of exotic vegetation such as Brazilian Pepper and Australian Pines.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: No.

Model Lands: No

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

Southern Glades: No

Model Lands: No

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No

7. Unassociated Parcels

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: The border of the L-8 parcel with Dupuis is high in habitat with 7 and up to 8-13 species along the border, and it well ranked as rare habitat species priorities (Priority 3).

SR 827 Parcel: This parcel is currently under sugarcane production. This parcel should be used for a conservation or restoration purpose. It abuts the Snail Farm parcel, which has potential habitat richness of 2-4 species, and is a priority 2 Strategic Habitat Conservation Area.

Deer Fence: This parcel is being used for flood control and water storage. This parcel also has relatively high values for habitat. It ranks high as a strategic habitat conservation area.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: SFWMD could explore water storage on the land or some type of partnership with Dupuis.

SR 827 Parcel: SFWMD should explore options to store water on this land or operate it in conjunction with nearby land holdings for ecosystem protection.

Deer Fence: SFWMD should consider possibilities for water storage and dispersed water management.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

L-8 Parcel: No

SR 827 Parcel: No.

Deer Fence: No.



The mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

July 5, 2013

Ray Palmer, Real Estate Section Leader
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416

Subject: Comments on the Comprehensive Assessment of Lands in the Everglades Region

Dear Mr. Palmer:

The Florida Native Plant Society appreciates the deliberative process the South Florida Water Management District (District) is conducting to assess the complete portfolio of lands you have acquired to advance the District's statutory mission. This letter conveys our comments on the fifth and final round of assessments. We understand that the assessment process to this point has been limited to fee ownership lands and that a future assessment may target lands over which the District holds easements or other less-than-fee ownership interests. We look forward to continuing participation in the process.

Regarding the lands included within the Everglades assessment region, the Society believes these lands are extraordinarily important for water management and natural systems protection purposes and that ownership of all the lands in this region should be retained. Specifically:

- The Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs), EAA Flow Equalization Basins, and C-139 Annex are critical to all the District core missions and provide significant recreational and wildlife benefits. These areas essentially function as the kidneys of the entire downstream Everglades system. Without them, the health of the Everglades and Florida Bay would be severely compromised.
- The Water Conservation Areas, East Coast Buffer and South Miami-Dade Wetlands, together with Everglades National Park, comprise the heart of the remnant Everglades ecosystem. The conservation, preservation, and restoration of these lands will be critical to meeting the District's core missions and will play an increasingly important role in the future as we confront the impacts of sea level rise.
- The East Coast Buffer lands provide invaluable opportunities for seepage management and water storage in the form of step-down marshes and reservoirs as envisioned originally in the WPA feasibility study and subsequent investigations. None of these lands should be considered expendable, and ideally additional buffer lands will be purchased. Specifically, the District should remain committed to acquiring lands in the Pennsuco and Bird Drive Basin. We are only beginning to understand the potential effects of higher sea levels in this vulnerable part of Florida and it would be extremely short-sighted to lose the adaptive water management capabilities provided by the East Coast Buffer Lands.

Although the 40-acre STA 1W outparcel may superficially appear to be appropriate to sell as surplus since it is located outside the footprint of the STA project area, retention may still be

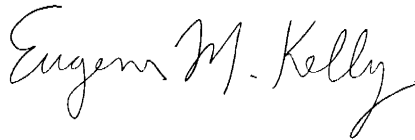
Florida Native Plant Society
Post Office Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902
Telephone: 407.862.8172

preferable to a sale. The parcel has frontage along the canal system that may provide important access for a variety of purposes, and as lands currently leased for sugar cultivation and located within an extensive agricultural area, the parcel is unlikely to hold much real estate value. Continued ownership will allow the District to retain options for future unforeseen purposes, and the income generated by the current lease will help to defray any expenses associated with continued ownership

The Strazzula Wetlands property represents the only possible exception to our position that District ownership of all the Everglades region lands should be retained, and our possible support for such a sale is predicated on it resulting in a transfer of ownership to the U..S. Fish and Wildlife Service so those lands may be incorporated into the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you for considering our concerns. Please let me know if any clarification of our position is required, or if we can be of any additional assistance.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eugene M. Kelly". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Eugene M. Kelly, Policy Chair
Florida Native Plant Society
Policy@fnps.org

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: BBCW & CEPP Support
Date: Sunday, July 07, 2013 10:05:09 PM

Andrea, please add the comments from the email below to the Region 3 public comments.
Thanks,

Ray

(sent from my tablet pc)

From: Beth Kibler [bethrkibler@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, July 07, 2013 8:12 PM
To: Batchelor, Sandy; Portuondo, Juan; Sargent, Timothy; Powers, Kevin
Cc: Palmer, Ray
Subject: BBCW & CEPP Support

Dear Miami-Dade County and At Large Governing Board Members,

Group representatives from both Cutler Bay and Palmetto Bay wrote hundreds of emails and travelled all over the state - for years - to speak the the board on behalf of the properties necessary to Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands projects. We understand that these things take time and we're very happy that phase 1 is moving forward and understand that we are all waiting on congress. But a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. Instead of waiting on phase 1 projects to be completed, please move forward on the Phase 2 projects on land that the District already owns! Miami-Dade County residents want the SFWMD to complete these projects that are so important to the health of Biscayne Bay, BNP and the local economy. During this current land assessment process and in the future we expect all the acquired lands in the watershed to remain in public hands and we expect them be used for restoration projects as intended.

We understand that focus is currently on CEPP and we understand why, but as our Miami-Dade county representatives, please do your best to make sure all the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands projects are forwarded by the District as soon as possible.

Thanks for your service towards protecting our most important resource.

Beth Kibler
Old Cutler South
7462 SW 166 Terrace
Palmetto Bay, FL

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: BBCW Component- SW 184 St. Parcels
Date: Thursday, July 04, 2013 10:03:52 PM

Andrea,
Please add to Everglades public comments.
Thanks

Ray

(sent from my tablet pc)

From: Miguel Angel Estefan Jr. [mickeyangelsong@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 04, 2013 10:45 AM
To: Palmer, Ray
Subject: Fwd: BBCW Component- SW 184 St. Parcels

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Miguel Angel Estefan Jr.** <mickeyangelsong@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jul 4, 2013 at 10:44 AM
Subject: BBCW Component- SW 184 St. Parcels
To: sbatchel@sfwmd.gov, jportun@sfwmd.gov, kpowers@sfwmd.gov, tsargent@sfwmd.gov, rpalmer@sfwmd.gov

Dear esteemed members of the governing board of SFWMD:

I am a native of South Florida and even after living decades at a time away I always find my way back here. To me the largest draw is the nature and wildlife unique my native home.

While throngs of people head east to the beaches I am usually heading west whether to ride my bike at Shark Valley or visit many of the public spots in the Everglades.

i love this iconic and unique national treasure, the wetlands of south florida.

I am writing you today to urge you to preserve our precious coastal wetlands that you are considering selling off through a Land Assessment process.

These coastal wetlands must remain in the hands of the SFWMD as they are in the footprint of future fresh water preservation/restoration projects that are vital to preserve the health of Biscayne Bay, our coastline, our natural ecosystems, and even our human communities.

I strongly urge that the SFWMD not sell off any of the lands in the footprint of CERP restoration projects of the South Dade Wetlands (BBCW), to include the parcels at SW 184 St

I sincerely thank you for your time and thoughtful review of my my message.

In the spirit of today, July 4th, I am grateful to have the liberty to express concern and voice

an opinion about this important issue affecting our home state and grateful for your time and thoughtful review of said concern.

Thank you and in the spirit of the holiday, all the best to you and yours.

Sincerely,

Mickey Angel Estefan Jr.

--

Miguel (Mickey) Angel Roman Estefan Jr.

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: Comments re Everglades Assessment Region/ Water Conservation Areas-website rejecting submission ecton
Date: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 9:19:51 AM

Additional Region 5 comments from Martha Musgrove.

From: martha musgrove [mailto:malmusgrove@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 9:52 PM
To: Palmer, Ray
Subject: Comments re Everglades Assessment Region/ Water Conservation Areas-website rejecting submission ecton

July 8, 2013

to Ray Palmer, land section leader

From: Martha Musgrove, Southern Regional Director, Florida Wildlife Federation, 2432 Edgewater Dr. , West Palm Beach, FL 33406, email: malmusgrove@yahoo.com

Re: public comments re Everglades Assessment Region/ Water Conservation Areas.

Please accept these comments. I previously submitted comments via the SFWMD district website re Stormwater Treatment Areas, Flow Equalization Basins and C 139 Annex and understood that SFWMD would continue to accept comments until Midnight July 8. However, when I attempted tonight to input and submit comments about the Water Conservation Areas and East Coast Buffer, the district Website rejected my submissions. Ergo, this e-mail, in which I am trying to conform to your prescribed format.

I have visited Water Conservation Area 1 (the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge) and Water Conservation Area 3 within the last two years. My principal interest is public recreation / bird and wildlife viewing and hiking. the last two years:

Question: In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

Comment: Comprising about 845,000 acres, the three Water Conservation Areas date back to the 1900s and the Everglades Drainage District. Today they are an integral part of the SFWMD's core mission of providing flood protection, water supply and restoring the Everglades, a natural resource of the state. Along with Everglades National Park, they are the defining feature of South Florida's landscape and often credited with moderating the region's weather and climate. FWF supports the SFWMD's efforts to maintain and improve public recreation access to the WCAs and the lease of WCA 1 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has named it the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

All of the WCAs receive and store flood waters from the Everglades Agricultural Area, convey water from Lake Okeechobee to urban areas during the dry season to replenish wellfields and to prevent salt intrusion of ground water and regional aquifers. Each WCA provides critical habitat and forage for fish and wildlife, including large numbers of wading birds, alligators, deer and the endangered Florida panther, snail kite and wood

storks. Their proximity to the state's most populous region makes them easily accessible to local residents seeking recreation and the Refuge is a particularly popular tourist site. That accessibility also makes them vulnerable to invasive animals and plants, including malaleuca, lyddodium, Burmese pythons, iguanas and other reptiles discarded/released by pet owners. Similarly the introduction of polluting nutrients from urban and agricultural runoff has spurred growth of massive cattail monocultures supplanting saw grass in vast reaches of the WCAs.

Stronger efforts to control invasives must be made to protect a century of public investments.

Question: In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Comment: There is no "better use" of this property and there is no other available property that could replace the water conservation areas and the hydrologic and ecological services they provide that support the District's core missions. In fact, it is doubtful that urban life in South Florida could be sustained without the WCAs. It would behoove the state, which owns title to much of the lands, and the district to complete the restoration projects and increase efforts to control exotic plants and animals.

Question: In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

Comment: No, please see answer above.

MLM

Ms. Martha Musgrove
2432 Edgewater Dr.
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
561-965-9409

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: Land Assessment Process
Date: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 9:22:17 AM

Still more public comments for Region 5.

From: Deborah Green [mailto:watermediaservices@mac.com]
Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 10:23 PM
To: Palmer, Ray
Subject: Land Assessment Process

Dear Mr. Ray Palmer:

As a cut off time for receipt of comments on July 8 was not specified on the District's website, please accept these comments for the Everglades Region properties.

Name: Deborah Green
Address: 203 Honeysuckle Lane, Longwood, FL 32779
Which Project do these comments reference? all
Which describes your primary interest? Natural Systems Restoration
What type of activity do you most frequently participate in at this property?
Bird watching, Wildlife Viewing

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

Comments for all of the SFWMD Everglades area properties

- Flow Equalization Basins capture and hold water to provide an available source of consistent flow to the Stormwater Treatment Areas and may soon provide important previously lost habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. These support very well the Water Quality, Flood Control, Water Supply, and Natural Systems Restoration core missions.
- The Stormwater Treatment Areas not only reduce the amount of phosphorous entering the Everglades, but provide excellent wildlife habitat and recreational value. My family is among the many visitors to the STAS for bird watching. Projects support the District's Water Quality, Flood Control, Water Supply, and Natural Systems Restoration core missions.
- The Water Conservation Areas also support the District's Water Quality, Flood Control, Water Supply, and Natural Systems Restoration core missions. With sea level rising incrementally each year and storms becoming stronger, maintenance of all of the water retention areas is critical to the population of South Florida.
- The C-139 Annex project supports the natural systems restoration mission for the unique wet prairie and cypress domes ecosystems, as well as water supply and water quality missions
- East Coast Buffer shows that the District recognizes that the Everglades ecosystems like the transitional prairie cannot be preserved by the national park alone, that protected buffers are critical. The project provides water quality, flood protection, and natural systems management benefits.
- South Dade Wetlands -Southern Glades, Model Lands, and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands all are projects that support the District's core missions.
- Unassociated Parcels-With anticipated sea level rise and increased storms, these unassociated parcels could beneficially be managed for the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration in the future.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No. Any other use would take away from the District's long term efforts towards its core missions. The Flood Control mission is ever more important with sea level rise and worsening storms.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

Opening the Flow Equalization Basins and possibly other properties to passive recreation would expand the multiple uses of the properties.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Deborah Green

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: S dade wetlands
Date: Saturday, July 06, 2013 8:07:14 AM

Andrea,
Please save the comments in this email to the Region 5 public comments folder.
Thank you,

(sent from my tablet pc)

From: samital [samital@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, July 05, 2013 4:51 PM
To: Batchelor, Sandy; Palmer, Ray
Subject: S dade wetlands

I strongly urge the sfwmd to work expeditiously on completing phase 1 project of the s dade wetlands.

Regards Steven aj Miller

From my Android phone on T-Mobile. The first nationwide 4G network.

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: FW: Support for BBCW & CEPP
Date: Monday, July 08, 2013 9:44:06 AM

Andrea,

Please add this email content to the Region 5 public comments.

Thanks

From: Eduardo Varona [mailto:elgolfo95@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 9:12 AM
To: Batchelor, Sandy; Portuondo, Juan; Sargent, Timothy; Powers, Kevin
Cc: Palmer, Ray
Subject: Support for BBCW & CEPP

Good Morning Miami-Dade County and At Large Governing Board Members,

I am one of the local community members that fought hard for years to ensure that SFWMD followed through on land purchases destined to fulfill BBCW in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Personally and as a community we were very pleased when the district did the right thing and purchased the SW 184 St parcels a couple of years back so that these lands in the footprint of CERP would be preserved for future fresh water delivery projects to benefit the health of Biscayne Bay.

At this crucial juncture I urge the district to follow through with all plans to complete Phase 1 projects in the area of the South Dade Coastal Wetlands. And furthermore I urge the district to expedite planning and implementation of those lands/projects for Phase 2.

These lands both in Phase 1 and 2 are rare coastal wetlands that are essential, each and every one of them, to bring back a more natural fresh water regime to rehydrate hallophytic wetlands that now lie in the "white zone". Not one of these lands should be let go in a land assesment process! You might be able to do this elsewhere in the state where many more options in parcel trade offs exist, but in coastal south Miami-Dade County there are no such trade offs. What we have is what there is!

So again please move forward quickly on Phase 1 and 2. And above all, do not let any of our coastal south Miami-Dade parcels go into other hands that will not fulfill the restoration of fresh water to our Biscayne Bay coastal wetlands.

Thank you in advance for your hard work and your continued support...

Eduardo M. Varona
9271 Marine Dr.
Cutler Bay FL 33189

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Jackson [<mailto:mrankinjackson@gmail.com>]

Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 11:42 AM

To: Schluter, Andrea

Subject: Conservation of SFWMD lands

Dear Ms. Schluter,

Please save the South Florida Water Management District lands from sale and thus from development. These areas are buffers for the Everglades, habitats for wildlife, and with restoration can improve the ecosystem for wildlife and for citizens in South Florida. Continued encroachment on Everglades borders by development is unsustainable. Before more species extinctions and further degradation of the environment, now is the time to stand up for conservation of South Florida's natural heritage.

Thank you for saying NO to the sale of these lands.

Thank you for considering my position this issue.

Mary Rankin Jackson



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, Florida 33034

In Reply Refer to:

July 8, 2013

Dan O'Keefe
Chairman, Governing Board
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Dear Chairman O'Keefe:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Land Assessment process that the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is currently executing. Recognizing the important goal of the land assessment process, to assure that all public lands are being put to their highest and best use, Everglades National Park (Park) emphasizes that lands retained in the public domain have high value for the SFWMD's mission goals, including those of achieving water quality, flood protection, restoration of natural systems, and water supply. Retention of publicly owned lands also provides flexibility for future water projects and operations as the population of south Florida continues to grow during the coming, environmentally challenging century.

This letter refers to lands within the *Everglades Assessment Region*, with specific comments given for lands in the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units* and the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units*. Everglades National Park supports retaining all land parcels in the *Everglades Assessment Region* that have been identified as critical for Everglades Restoration projects, including any parcels identified within the 1999 Final Environmental Impact Statement of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP, the Yellow Book). Land parcels that have been identified as necessary for operations of the pre-CERP projects, specifically the Modified Water Deliveries and the C-111 South Dade projects, should also be retained. Lands that are part of a wetland mitigation project, whether originally purchased for this purpose or subsequently utilized as wetland mitigation, should be retained in a natural state in perpetuity.

East Coast Buffer Assessment Units

The identified properties within the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units* serve the SFWMD's goals primarily by providing hydrologic operational flexibility, serving as a hydrologic step-down between the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) and Everglades National Park in the west, and developed urban and agricultural areas to the east. These lands also assist in the recharge of wells for the urban and agricultural areas to the east, and provide important wildlife habitat on the borders of the natural system from the WCAs in the north to Everglades National Park in the south. The lands in the *East Coast Buffer Assessment Units* are a

component of or contribute to more than nine CERP projects including the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), which is currently ongoing.

Broward County Water Preserve Areas and Pennsuco Wetlands

Lands in the Broward County Water Preserve Areas (BCWPA) and the Pennsuco Wetlands support the SFMWD's goals of flood protection and natural system restoration, by providing a seepage management strip of land to assist in hydrologic step-down from restoration water levels in the WCAs to the developed areas in the east. Sufficient parcels should be retained in the BCWPA assessment unit to provide a continuous buffer strip from I-75 in the north to the south where these parcels should be contiguous with parcels in the Pennsuco (i.e, a continuous north-south buffer strip that reaches the Bird Drive Basin lands.) Everglades National Park commends the SFMWD's work to remove exotic vegetation from the area of the Pennsuco, and emphasizes that the natural value of these lands has improved greatly as a result.

Bird Drive Basin

Everglades National Park supports retaining any and all lands that support the formation of a State or SFMWD-owned 1 mile wide strip of land adjacent to and east of Krome Avenue, along the entire western border of the Bird Drive Basin (BDB). These lands should be retained for the purpose of creating a 1-mile wide hydrologic buffer between Everglades National Park to the west and developed lands to the east. This hydrologic buffer strip will allow operational flexibility, supporting the SFMWD's mission goals of flood protection, protection of water resources, and restoration of natural systems. Lands not currently adjacent to Krome Avenue within the BDB should be retained when doing so will allow for land swaps or other mechanisms to create the 1-mile wide hydrologic buffer strip.

The original Bird Drive Recharge Area (4 sq. mile reservoir) as well as other conveyance and seepage management features in the 1999 CERP plan are no longer anticipated to be built. Current conceptual restoration planning for the Central Everglades Planning Project anticipates the use of an in-ground seepage barrier to assist in reaching the goals of ecosystem restoration and flood protection in the area of the BDB. Everglades National Park technical staff anticipates that such an in-ground seepage barrier would be best combined with the 1-mile wide above-ground hydrologic buffer strip, to fully support ecosystem restoration water levels in Shark River Slough within the Park, while maintaining flood protection levels in developed areas to the east. Everglades National Park contemplates providing further comments during a subsequent detailed analysis of the lands in the BDB.

8.5 Square Mile Area

Public lands in this area are critical to achieving the restoration goals of the Modified Water Deliveries Project, a pre-CERP project whose function is essential to achieving the goals of the CERP. As U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lands are transferred to SFMWD ownership, the parcels will contribute to the

SFMWD's goals of flood protection and restoration of the natural system. These lands should be retained in perpetuity.

L-31N – Rocky Glades/ Frog Pond

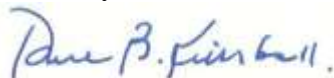
The land parcels in this assessment unit contribute to the SFMWD's goals of flood protection, water supply recharge, and restoration of the natural system. These lands are critical to the restoration goals of the Park, as they provide the hydrologic buffer between restored natural water levels in Shark/Taylor Sloughs and the agricultural lands to the east. These lands and the detention areas constructed on them are important seasonal wildlife habitat on the border of the Park. The Park would support activities on these lands that are consistent with the designated use at the time of purchase (i.e., seepage barrier or buffer), help to reduce the impact of invasive species, and support the SFMWD's goal of natural system restoration and investments made to date in support of this goal. As such, the current level of flood protection on these lands should not be increased.

South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units

SFMWD lands along the east coast and south of the Miami metropolitan area (the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units*) provide an open land buffer for storm surge, tidal flooding and the potential effects of sea level rise. These coastal lands also provide important habitat protection and will be used for flow restoration as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The critical need for individual parcels in the *South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units* has been detailed in a letter from Biscayne National Park Superintendent Brian Carlstrom, dated June 28, 2013. Everglades National Park supports the recommendations in Superintendent Carlstrom's letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the SFWMD in identifying and protecting these important lands under SFWMD ownership. Please contact Carol Mitchell at (305) 224-4253; carol_mitchell@nps.gov, or myself with any questions in regard to these comments.

Sincerely,



Dan B. Kimball
Superintendent

Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks

cc: SFWMD Governing Board Members; Regan Walker, (Director, Board & Exec. Services SFWMD); Ernie Barnett (Interim Executive Director, SFMWD); Shannon Estenoz (Director of Everglades Restoration Initiatives, U.S. Department of the Interior); Brian Carlstrom (Superintendent, Biscayne National Park, U.S. National Park Service); Pedro Ramos (Superintendent, Big Cypress National Preserve, U.S. National Park Service); Jack Osterholt (Director, Miami-Dade County Regulatory and Economic Resources); Ray Palmer (SFWMD); Joan Lawrence (DOI)



Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Environmental Resources Management

701 NW 1st Court, 4th Floor

Miami, Florida 33136-3912

T 305-372-6754 F 305-372-6759

miamidade.gov

Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor

July 8, 2013

Mr. Daniel O'Keefe, Chairman
Governing Board
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

RE: Everglades Land Assessment, South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units

Dear Chairman O'Keefe:

Please accept this letter as comments from the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, Division of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) in response to the South Florida Water Management District (District) Everglades Region Land Assessment currently in process. Encompassing the majority of the coastal and freshwater wetlands between the boundaries of Everglades National Park (EVER), and Biscayne National Park (BISC), the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units (which include the Southern Glades, Model Lands and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands) further the District's core missions for flood control, water quality protection and improvements, water supply, and natural systems protection and restoration. These Assessment Units contain the last large undeveloped wetland systems within Miami-Dade County, containing rare species in remnant transverse glades that were once part of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Additionally, these Assessment Units are within the boundaries of approved Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) components including the C-111 Spreader Canal and the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Projects.

The Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program was established in 1990 after Miami-Dade County voters approved a two-year property tax to acquire, preserve, enhance, restore, conserve, and maintain environmentally endangered lands for this and future generations. Lands acquired by the EEL Program are designated for preservation in perpetuity. The EEL Program is committed to appropriate management of its projects, with funding provided through the EEL Trust Fund dedicated to that purpose.

The County and the District share an interest in the lands within the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units because of their strategic location linking Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park. These wetlands encompass a large portion of the watersheds for, and therefore contribute freshwater flows, to Florida Bay, southern Biscayne Bay, Card Sound and Barnes Sound. Regional restoration efforts such as the C-111 Spreader Canal and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP projects are underway to restore the historic hydrologic and ecological connections among the basins. These CERP projects are planned within the Assessment Units in areas that contribute to the District's core missions. In addition, preserving and restoring the natural environments in these water bodies and the upstream watershed is also a management goal of the District's Biscayne Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan.

Originally approved for County land acquisition efforts in 1994, the South Dade Wetlands (SDW) EEL Acquisition Project includes lands within the Southern Glades and Model Lands Assessment units and is the EEL Program's largest and most ambitious project. Between 1994 and 1999, Miami-Dade County through the EEL Program, and the District through the Save Our Rivers (SOR) Program, jointly acquired conservation land in the SDW EEL Acquisition Project area under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Save Our Rivers (SOR) Program of the District was established to acquire lands necessary for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources. When SOR projects became funded under the Preservation 2000 (P2000) Program in 1990, projects for SOR acquisition also had to meet criteria

for P2000, which was intended to acquire environmentally significant land for conservation. Within the SDW, over 18,000 acres have been acquired by the EEL Program and the District with approximately 15,000 acres remaining. Another 22,000 acres of SDW consists of wetlands with conservation easements and some land in other uses. Acquisitions by the EEL Program are continuing, with the most recent EEL Program purchase in the SDW occurring in June of 2013. Although these lands were originally approved for acquisition because they met the EEL traditional criteria of manageability, vulnerability, and biological importance, it has become increasingly evident over time that these lands are also critically important for water management, flood control, strategies to mitigate against salt water intrusion, and potentially for species adaptation and migration in response to climate change and sea level rise.

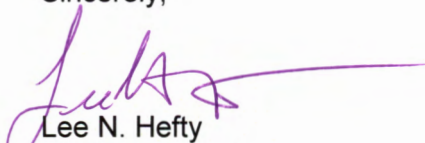
The County and the District established a cooperative land management MOU in 2005, which was renewed in 2010 and extended to 2020 and includes lands throughout the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units (Southern Glades, Model Lands, and Biscayne Coastal Wetlands). Implementation of the MOU has demonstrated that management activities are more efficient, cost effective, and require fewer staff resources when initiated as part of a cooperative effort than if the same activities had been completed by the agencies separately. The County and District continue to work cooperatively towards the primary management goal, which is to bring the area into a condition that is conducive to making long-term management feasible primarily through invasive species control and to fully support and advance the C-111 Spreader Canal and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP Projects and other hydrologic restoration projects.

As indicated in the District's Land Assessment Portfolios, the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units are important for Potential Habitat Richness, Rare Species Habitat Priorities and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. These areas have intrinsic value as habitat for wading and migratory birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals including listed species such as the American crocodile, white-crowned pigeons, roseate spoonbills, Cape Sable seaside sparrows, wood storks, snail kites and snowy egrets which have been documented in the area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers the region part of the primary Florida panther habitat and panthers have been documented as recently as 2012. In the EEL Program's SDW Acquisition Project Area alone, 141 avian species have been documented including 33 wading birds species, nine duck species, and 17 raptor species. There are also a number of documented state-listed plant species present throughout the Assessment area, including *Aletris bracteata*, *Anemia wrightii*, *Bletia purpurea*, *Phyla stoechadifolia*, *Schizaea pennula*, *Selaginella eatonii*, *Thelypteris reticulata*, and *Vanilla mexicana*.

Nearly twenty years of land management and restoration activities has enhanced a diverse natural system of tree islands, freshwater marsh, forested wetlands, saltmarsh, prairie, and mangroves within the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment area, and more restoration and enhancement is needed. Besides using dedicated funding, the EEL Program has accepted grant funds for land acquisition and various restoration and management activities over the years. The protection of these properties is required in order to meet the grant requirements of perpetual preservation. In addition, since many of these properties were acquired due to voter-approved referendum requirements, lands acquired by the EEL Program are designated for conservation in perpetuity. We look forward to continuing to expand and enhance our cooperative work with the District in protecting and preserving the lands within the South Miami-Dade Wetlands Assessment Units.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Cynthia Guerra, Program Director of our EEL Program, at 305-372-6781 or via email at guerrcy@miamidade.gov

Sincerely,



Lee N. Hefty
Assistant Director

c: Ray Palmer, SFWMD
Andrea Schluter, SFWMD



miamidade.gov

**Miami-Dade County Parks,
Recreation and Open Spaces
Department
Planning and Research Division**
275 N.W. 2 Street – 4th Floor
Miami, Florida 33128
T 305-755-7860 / F 305-755-7864

July 8, 2013

Ernie Barnett, Interim Executive Director
South Florida Water Management District
P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-4680

Re: Everglades Assessment Region Comments

Dear Mr. Barnett,

Miami-Dade County's Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department (the "Department") is submitting this letter in response to the South Florida Water Management District's (the "District") current comprehensive land assessment. The Department is interested in properties within the District's Everglades Assessment Region, for the purposes of developing a Western Greenway. We are seeking to partner in furthering the District's mission-critical responsibilities in coordination with the Department's Western Greenway initiative.

The Western Greenway compliments the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Master Recreation Plan (CERP MRP) through the development of a connected system of greenway trails, recreational lands and destinations along the County's western edge.

The Western Greenway is a part of the Department's Open Space Master Plan (OSMP) which was adopted by Miami-Dade County's Board of County Commissioners on February 19, 2008 and incorporated into the County's Comprehensive Development Master Plan Recreation and Open Space Element policies on April 28, 2010 and includes the following:

- Scenic corridors to connect the Lake Belt area to the north with the Southern Glades Wildlife Management Area to the south.
- New freshwater lakes and beaches for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, swimming and other passive resource-based recreation opportunities.
- Agri-tourism opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the unique rural and natural character of the region.
- Scenic gateways to State, Federal (such as Everglades National Park), and County lands and to the cities.

Delivering Excellence Every Day

The attached maps outline the Western Greenway area, connecting the Lake Belt area to the north with the Southern Glades Wildlife Management Area to the south and destinations of interest in between. The greenway alignment is conceptual and does not depict specific boundaries.

Once again, properties within the District's Everglades Assessment Region, including the East Coast Buffer and Southern Dade Wetlands, are of interest to the Department for integration into the Western Greenway. We look forward to partnering with the District throughout the land assessment process and advancing the western greenway.

Sincerely,



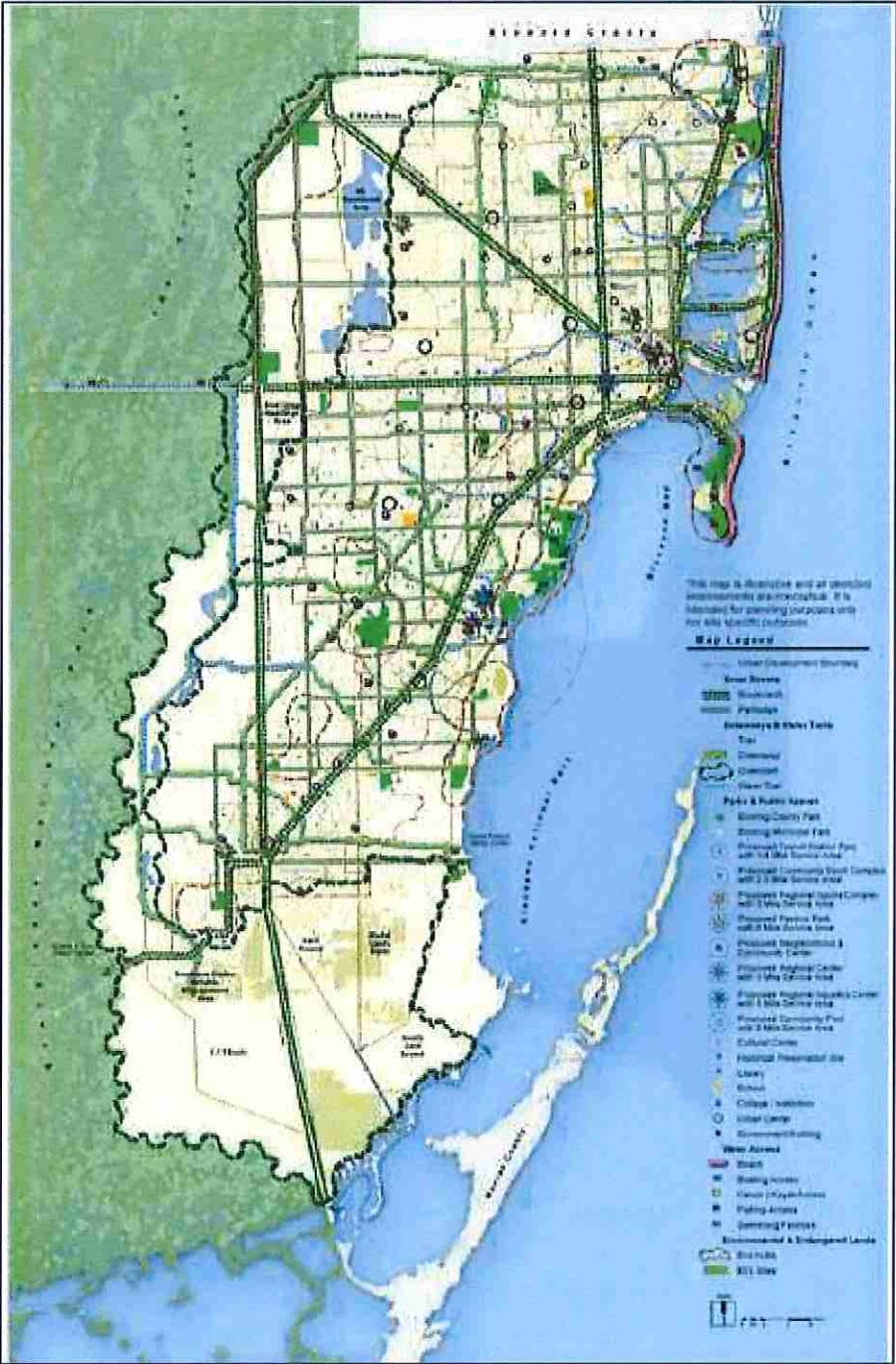
Jack Kardys
Director

CN
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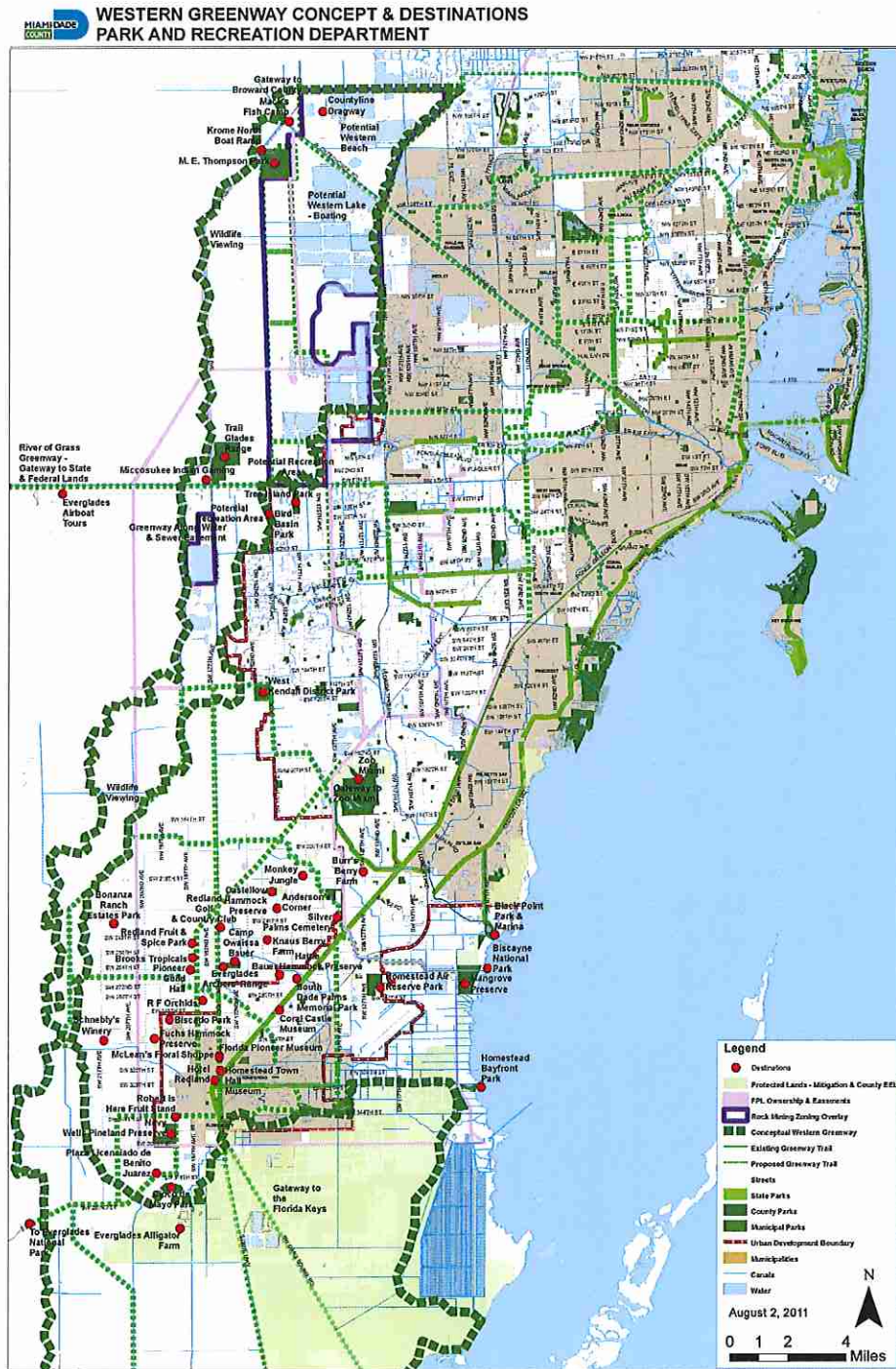
JK: at

- c: George Navarrete, Deputy Director
Maria I. Nardi, Planning and Research Division Chief
Brenda McClymonds, Trust for Public Land
Ray Palmer, South Florida Water Management District

Western Greenway (conceptual rendering)



Western Greenway –Destinations of Interest



From: [Gail Fishman](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: no surplus land
Date: Monday, July 08, 2013 10:33:02 PM

Hello Andrea, from my viewpoint Florida does not have one scrap of surplus land. We must hold on to every acre of state-owned public land we now own and buy more if we can. We do not have enough water to carry much more development.

Please do not declare any land as surplus or or sell anything.

I was born in Florida. I've watched my state go downhill for more than 6 decades.

Gail

Remember to slow down or stop for ALL WILDLIFE!

At least the war on the environment is going well.

Proud to be a 1960s Kennedy-era Florida-born LIBERAL who believes that everyone should have a choice, that social injustice is a sin against humanity, and that war never solves anything but creates more trouble.

<http://www.upf.com/book.asp?id=FISHMS01>

Make no Judgments where you have no Compassion! But sometimes I find it really difficult to tolerate intolerant people.

Use GoodSearch <http://www.goodsearch.com/Default.aspx> and choose St. Marks Refuge Association

Best Web site: <http://www.stmarksrefuge.org>

Visit the refuge on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/SMSVNWRS>



July 5, 2013

Ray Palmer
Real Estate Section Leader
Land Resources Bureau
3301 Gun Club Road, MSC 5214
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

RE: Comments on SFWMD Everglades Land Assessment Portfolio

Dear Mr. Palmer:

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida on behalf of our over 4,500 members in Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties submits the following comments on the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Everglades Land Assessment Portfolio. Our members rely upon the good stewardship of District owned lands for water supply and quality, flood protection, and other natural resource benefits, including some recreational opportunities - many of which were acquired in partnership with other organizations and interests. The Conservancy commends the SFWMD for the dedicated acquisition and management of the properties and encourages the District to approach these land assessments with a view towards not just the current status of the properties, but what future natural resource and flood control benefits can be derived from the management and use of these public lands.

Stormwater Treatment Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) managed by the SFWMD are a fundamental component of Everglades restoration efforts. The constructed wetlands within the STAs are designed to reduce the extreme levels of phosphorus runoff from agriculture and other land uses surrounding the sensitive Everglades ecosystem while simultaneously providing flood control, water supply, and natural resources restoration benefits. Both emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation are utilized to help cleanse water which is funneled into the STAs before it is released into the rest of the Everglades. In addition, the STAs provide habitat

for wildlife, including endangered species and key foraging areas for many wading bird species. Furthermore, as research evolves and improves the understanding of management techniques and the district develops new design strategies to address extreme weather events and other anomalies, the STAs ability to meet the core mission values will continue to be integral to the success of Everglades restoration.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No. The STAs are contributing to the core mission values as they are designed to do so, and there is no better use of the STA properties.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No. As outlined above, there is no better use of the STA properties.

Flow Equalization Basins

In your opinion, how well does the current use of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Flow Equalization Basins (FEBs) are still in the process of being constructed. However, this future use is a component of the restoration strategies recently agreed upon by the state and EPA to increase water storage capability and balance the flows entering the STAs. Not only will the FEBs contribute to increased storage capacity by up to 110,000 acre feet, but the shallower basins will supplement water quality improvement through some emergent vegetation and allow for a more controlled release of water into the STAs to create the most conducive environment for removing phosphorus. The FEBs contribute to the restoration of both the quantity and quality of the sheetflow entering the greater Everglades ecosystem, thereby meeting all of the core mission goals of the SFWMD.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

C-139 Annex

In your opinion, how well does the current use of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The C-139 Annex project furthers all the core missions of the SFWMD. The property is a 15,000 acre former citrus grove which will be converted into a mitigation and restoration project to offset impacts of rock mining in the region. The conversion from prior active agricultural operations to the anticipated wet prairie and slough type system referenced in the summary of this project will have a net benefit for Everglades restoration by reducing pollutant loads, creating improved native wildlife habitat, increasing the buffer and storage capacity to the adjacent STA and enhancing water flow. The new habitat types which will be restored on the property include the aforementioned wet prairie and sloughs, as well as cypress domes and depression marshes. The mix of native habitat types intended for this site will create an ecological network which will support wildlife, including endangered species such as panthers and wood storks, while simultaneously enhancing hydrology and water quality.

The agricultural land operating in the Everglades Agricultural Area is a continued challenge for Everglades restoration as the stormwater runoff from agriculture is one of the primary sources of nutrient pollution. Projects such as the C-139 are crucial steps towards recreating the historic natural flow regime and rebuilding the hydrologic connections throughout the region. Therefore, the C-139 Annex meets all the district's core mission goals of flood control, water quality protection, water supply and natural resource restoration.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No. The interim uses of this property may be variable depending on the progress of the restoration activities and its various stages.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No. However, there may be an opportunity for public recreation once the restoration of the site is completed.

Water Conservation Areas

In your opinion, how well does the current use of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) are an integral part of the current water management system of the SFWMD, in addition to being important wildlife habitat. The WCAs contain some of the last remnants of the original tall-sawgrass landscape and are managed for both water supply as impoundment areas and aquifer recharge and for wildlife resources. As noted in the land assessment portfolio summary for the WCAs, these areas meet all the district's core mission values and are a landmark of biodiversity for both flora and fauna. Many threatened and endangered species are dependent on the WCAs for habitat and foraging areas, particularly wading birds such as wood storks.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

No.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

Unassociated Parcels – Deer Fence

In your opinion, how well does the current use of the property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration? (2000 characters):

The Deer Fence parcel was acquired to provide a buffer and seepage control to STA 5, which is a use which meets the flood control and water supply portions of the district's core mission. In addition to these uses, the benefits to the functioning STA also create water quality improvements through enhancing the effectiveness of the STA's pollutant removal capabilities.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions? (2000 characters):

Not at this time. However, it could be restored in the future to improve water storage capacity onsite.

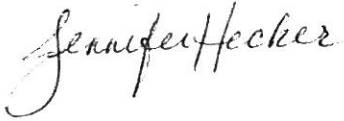
In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues? (2000 characters):

No.

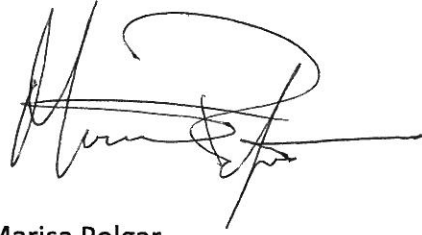
Conclusion

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida appreciates the SFWMD's attention to our concerns and comments on the Everglades Land Assessment Portfolio. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have questions pertaining to our comments.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Hecker
Director of Natural Resources Policy
(239) 262-0304 x250
jenniferh@conservancy.org



Marisa Polgar
Natural Resources Specialist
(239) 262-0304 x231
marisap@conservancy.org

From: [Palmer, Ray](#)
To: ["martha musgrove"](#)
Subject: RE: comments re Everglades Land Assessment/ East Coast Buffer
Date: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 9:53:42 AM

Martha,

We received your comments for the Everglades Assessment Region. We will include them in our analysis of all comments received. Thank you for your interest in the District's Land Assessment process.

Ray

Ray Palmer

Section Leader, Real Estate
Land Resources Bureau
South Florida Water Management District
561.682.2246
email: Ray.Palmer@sfwmd.gov

From: martha musgrove [mailto:malmusgrove@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 11:44 PM
To: Palmer, Ray
Subject: comments re Everglades Land Assessment/ East Coast Buffer

July 8, 2013

to Ray Palmer, land section leader

From: Martha Musgrove, Southern Regional Director, Florida Wildlife Federation, 2432 Edgewater Dr. , West Palm Beach, FL 33406, email:

malmusgrove@yahoo.com

Re: public comments re Everglades Assessment Region/ East Coast Buffer

Please accept these comments. I previously submitted comments via the SFWMD district website re Stormwater Treatment Areas, Flow Equalization Basins and C 139 Annex and understood that SFWMD would continue to accept comments until Midnight July 8. However, when I attempted tonight to input and submit comments about the Water Conservation Areas and East Coast Buffer, the district Website rejected my submissions. Ergo, this e-mail, in which I am trying to conform to your prescribed format.

Within the last two years I have visited the Strazulla Wetlands, the site of the once-proposed Palm Beach County Agricultural Reserve Reservoir, parts of the Broward County Water Preserve, Central and Northern Lakebelt, Pennsuco Wetlands, Bird Drive, the 8.5 Square Mile Area, L-31/Rocky Glades-Frog Pond. My principal interest is public recreation / bird and wildlife viewing and hiking, albeit each of these properties have different characteristics and uses and their acquisition involved different pots of money. My principal interest is recreation but I am very mindful that growth management is a strong factor in dealing with

lands of the East Coast buffer.

Question: In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

Comment: Taken as a whole all of these properties further the District's "core missions" of flood control, water supply and restoration of valuable natural systems/habitats. The Strazulla property is one of the last remnants of the line of cypress that once demarked the border of the Everglades. It is now a mix of slough and marsh that serves as strategic habitat for migrating birds, helps filter suburban runoff to the Loxahatchee Refuge and is a natural buffer from nearby equestrian developments. The coastal Palm Beach "ag reservoir," which is within a FEMA flood zone, has been leased and is now the site of a regional park and truck farm. The latter is consistent with Palm Beach County's effort to retain a productive and economically viable "agricultural reserve" as approved by local voters. The Broward Water Preserve is essential to protecting urban water supply and also provides storage for urban/suburban flood waters. The Central and Northern Lakebelt provides operational flexibility in dealing with seepage from WCA 3B, flood protection and water supply for Miami-Dade Water Utilities. The Pennsuco wetlands consists of valuable prairie and short-hydroperiod wetlands and legislatively designated as a mitigation area to offset the impacts of nearby rockmining. The Bird Drive property was acquired for a CERP project to provide a seepage barrier, and like the Pennsuco wetlands, provides valuable habitat for wading birds; the property was assembled through combined efforts of the district and Miami-Dade County. The 8.5 square mile area bordering Everglades National Park remains essential to seepage and flood control and the L-31/ Rocky Glades-Frog Pond are essential to controlling seepage from the Shark River Slough and provides habitat for endangered species.

Question: In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Comment: Generally speaking, there is NO better use for the property that also provides effective support for the SFWMD's core mission. All of the lands were acquired or put in public ownership to protect natural habitats, provide flood protection or to maintain water supplies. The Strazulla property probably should be incorporated into the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The unanswered questions are: How and under what terms? South Florida is a region of recurring economic "booms," during which developers would create "a market" for houses, shopping center and a university on stilts in the middle of the Everglades National Park if permitted. The lands of the "East Coast buffer" are subject to tremendous development pressure even in recession. The Lakebelt, Pennsuco, Frogpond, Broward Water Preserve Area are all incorporated into CERP/ CEPP planning and projects.

Question: In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

Comment: In general: No, but please refer to the response above regarding Strazzulla. There may also be cooperative management plans to be negotiated with Broward County and regional utilities regarding use of the water preserves. In the Bird Drive basin, however, none of the proposals that have surfaced to date propose to protect the wetlands or their ecological functions. Until the seepage issues of the CERP/CEPP projects have been worked out all of the public lands in the basin should remain available for use in those projects, flood protection and water supply.

MLM

Ms. Martha Musgrove
2432 Edgewater Dr.
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
561-965-9409

From: WineNewsAdvg@aol.com
To: Schluter, Andrea
Cc: celeste.depalma@gmail.com
Subject: Retain lands for Everglades & Water supply preservation
Date: Friday, July 05, 2013 1:06:11 PM

Dear Andrea:

Please convey to South Florida Water management District director/board...

I urge you to retain the lands critical to Conservation and Restoration of America's Everglades, and essential to a clean South Florida water supply, which is also the prime driver of our tourism economy; not to mention health factors and quality of life of our children. We simply can't afford to lose valuable lands needed for Everglades Restoration and wildlife.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Smith
Miami, Florida

From: [Mary Barfield](#)
To: [Schluter, Andrea](#)
Subject: Save the Lands
Date: Monday, July 08, 2013 2:10:21 PM

Dear Andrea,

Please do all you can to save the lands that are being considered for sale by the South Florida Water Management District. A lot of these lands were purchased with taxpayer money and should not go to developers or for other private usage. They are necessary for Conservation Projects (ex:Everglades Restoration) and they are critical habitat for birds and wildlife. They also help protect our water supply. Thank you for all you can do to help save these lands. Mary Barfield



Florida Office

3637 4th Street N, Suite 230 | St. Petersburg, Florida 33704 | tel 727.823.3888 | fax 727.823.3873
www.defenders.org

July 8, 2013

Ray Palmer
Section Leader, Real Estate
Land Resources Bureau
South Florida Water Management District
Rpalmer@sfwmd.gov

Re: SFWMD Land Assessment Comments – Everglades Assessment Region

Dear Mr. Palmer,

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on the South Florida Water Management District Land Assessment Region for the Everglades.

1. STORMWATER TREATMENT AREAS

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

All of these land holdings fulfill core mission components of Natural Resource protection and Water Quality protection and directly benefit the ecological health of the Everglades. The water is cleansed and phosphorus is removed as it flows south into the Everglades. These lands provide valuable habitat for wildlife including many species of birds, alligators, deer and the highly endangered Florida panther. All of these lands include areas that rank 5 or higher on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System which means they provide valuable habitat to species listed as Threatened and Species of Special Concern. The District should retain all of these properties.

The STA 1W Outparcel is not furthering the core mission since it is being used for sugar cane farming and should be used for natural resource protection. This parcel includes strategic habitat conservation areas and rare species habitat priorities.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

No, with exception to the STA 1W Outparcel. The sugarcane farming should not be renewed and the parcel should be used for water storage and to benefit to the natural system to enhance habitat.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

No

2. FLOW EQUALIZATION BASINS

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

These land holdings fulfill core mission components of Natural Resource protection and Water Quality protection. These lands abut areas that rank 5 or higher on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System which means they provide valuable habitat to species listed as Threatened and Species of Special Concern. The District should retain all of these properties.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

No, once construction is complete.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

No.

3. C-139 ANNEX

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

The C-139 Annex fulfills core mission components of Natural Resource protection and restoration and Water Quality protection/improvements. These lands include sections that rank 7 or higher on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System which means they provide valuable habitat to several species listed as Threatened and Species of Special Concern including the Florida panther. The land abuts other valuable wildlife habitat that is part of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The District should retain and this property and continue to restore it to improve stormwater treatment and wildlife habitat.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

The land abuts other valuable wildlife habitat that is part of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The District should retain and this property and continue to restore it to improve stormwater treatment and wildlife habitat.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

No.

4. WATER CONSERVATION AREAS

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

All of these land holdings fulfill core mission components of Natural Resource protection and restoration and Water Quality protection/improvements and directly benefit the ecological health of the Everglades. These lands provide invaluable habitat for wildlife and are an integral part to the Florida Wildlife Corridor, by creating connected wildlife habitat for animals to move north and south through the state. These lands are used by the highly endangered Florida panther. All of these lands include areas that rank 6 or higher on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System which means they provide valuable habitat to species listed as Threatened and Species of Special Concern. The District should retain all of these properties.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

More treatment of exotic vegetation

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

No

5. EAST COAST BUFFER

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

All of these land holdings fulfill core mission components of Flood Control, Natural Resource protection and restoration and Water Quality protection/improvements and directly benefit the ecological health of the Everglades. The lands live by their namesake and provide an essential buffer zone from urban development. The lands were acquired for Everglades restoration project planning and include sections that are part of or linked to several CERP projects. All of these lands include areas that rank 5 or higher on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System which means they provide valuable habitat to species listed as Threatened and Species of Special Concern. The District should retain all of these properties.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Continued restoration of agricultural land and improved management to provide ecological integrity, water quality and species richness.

6. SOUTH MIAMI DADE WETLANDS

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

Southern Glades: The area is critical for the District's mission of natural resource protection and restoration. These lands are the basis for the C-111 Spreader Canal Project in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Nearly all of the Southern Glades property scores 9 or 10 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness. The area provides important habitat for a variety of species, including the endangered Florida panther and Cape Sable seaside sparrow, roseate spoonbills and coastal wading birds. This is one of the most important parcels for wildlife in the land assessment region and must be retained.

Model Lands: The Model Lands area is essential for the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. It is also the largest eastern undeveloped coastal area in Miami-Dade County and it is expected to receive hydrologic benefits from the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The area contains diverse habitat types for rare and endangered species, such as Florida panther, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, American crocodile, as well as an abundance of wading birds. The land provides wildlife connectivity between the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Biscayne National Park, Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the Southern Glades Area, and Everglades National Park. It is the headwaters for Card Sound and Barnes Sound and provides freshwater recharge for the urban areas and national parks. The habitats found within the Model Lands area score from 5 to 9 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness.

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: These areas fulfill the District's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration and are part of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan project to improve the ecological health of Biscayne Bay. The parcels found within the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands area score 6 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness.

Individual Parcel Assessments:

The SW 184th Street and 107th Avenue Parcels provide value to the SFWMD's core mission of natural resource protection and restoration. The areas could benefit from a greater investment in exotic species removal and management.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

Southern Glades: No. SFWMD could step up efforts to remove exotic vegetation on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

Model Lands: No. SFWMD could step up efforts to remove exotic vegetation on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No. SFWMD could step up efforts to remove exotic vegetation on the lands to further enhance the ecological benefits.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

Southern Glades: No

Model Lands: No

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands: No

7. UNASSOCIATED PARCELS

In your opinion, how well does the current use of property further the District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, Natural Resource protection and restoration?

L-8 Parcel: This parcel is not currently furthering the District's mission, and in fact may be adding to water quality problems through sugarcane operations. The border of the L-8 parcel with Dupuis is high in potential habitat richness; Dupuis scores 9 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness.

SR 827 Parcel: This parcel is currently under sugarcane production, which is potentially furthering water quality problems. This parcel was acquired with District, Federal, and Preservation 2000 funds, and should be used for a conservation or restoration purpose. The parcel scores 7 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness.

Deer Fence: This parcel is being used for flood control and water storage. It has a relatively high value for habitat, scoring a 6 on the Integrated Wildlife Habitat Ranking System, with 10 being the highest score for species richness.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide more effective support for the District's core missions?

L-8 Parcel: There are a number of things the District could do to further the core missions of water quality improvement, water supply, and natural resource protection. While the

SFWMD may be looking at swapping this parcel for lands for the STA 1W expansion for the SFWMD Everglades water quality plan, the District could explore water storage on the land or some type of partnership with Dupuis.

SR 827 Parcel: SFWMD should explore options to store water on this land or operate it in conjunction with nearby land holdings for ecosystem protection.

Deer Fence: SFWMD should consider possibilities for water storage and dispersed water management.

In your opinion, is there a better use of the property that would provide support for other important natural resource or public use issues?

L-8 Parcel: There are a number of things the District could do to further the core missions of water quality improvement, water supply, and natural resource protection. While the SFWMD may be looking at swapping this parcel for lands for the STA 1W expansion for the SFWMD Everglades water quality plan, the District could explore water storage on the land or some type of partnership with Dupuis. While the District determines the fate of this land, it should heavily restrict the agricultural practices on this land to limit the addition of phosphorus and other nutrients to the land.

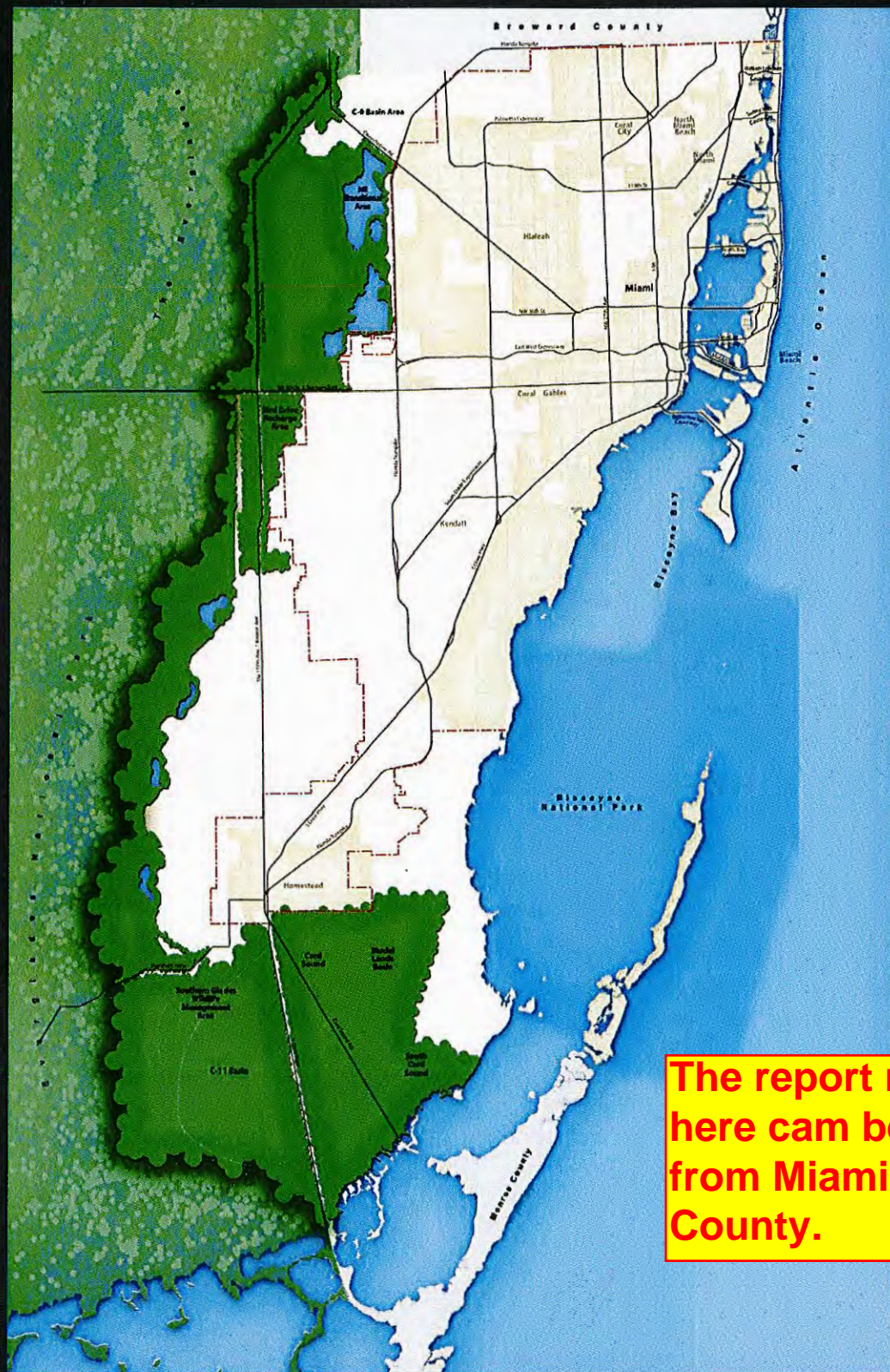
SR 827 Parcel: SFWMD should explore options to store water on this land or operate it in conjunction with nearby land holdings for ecosystem protection.

Deer Fence: SFWMD should consider possibilities for water storage and dispersed water management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Fleming". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Fleming
Florida Representative



The report referenced here can be obtained from Miami-Dade County.

WESTERN GREENWAY

Miami Dade Park and Recreation Department

2011

