



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

February 4, 2020

Colonel Andrew Kelly
District Commander – Jacksonville District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Blvd.
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Subject: Letter of Support for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project

Dear Colonel Kelly:

The purpose of this letter is to express the South Florida Water Management District's (District) support for advancing the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP) for Congressional authorization. While the District supports authorization of this critical component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), our top priorities for the future allocation of appropriations remain the continued construction of the C-44 and C-43 West reservoirs, and expedited design and construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) as part of the Central Everglades Planning Project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) previously committed to finish its review of the EAA Reservoir Project and issue necessary permits to the District to start construction in May of 2020. The District urges you to beat your deadline as the District stands ready to start construction of the STA component.

The LRWRP will restore and sustain flows of fresh water to the federally designated "National Wild and Scenic" Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (River). These flows will lower salinity in the River, conserve riverine cypress habitat, promote recovery of vital freshwater vegetation and improve estuarine habitat. The Recommended Plan also improves wetland hydrology on approximately 9,500 acres of existing natural areas and restores approximately 17,000 acres of former agricultural land. As a result of these restored habitats, the Recommended Plan will provide foraging and nesting habitat for the endangered Everglade snail kite as well as other threatened and endangered species.

The District commends the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for their outreach and coordination which resulted in a Recommended Plan. Throughout the planning process, the project team worked closely with numerous stakeholders. To maintain this direction, the District is committed to continue working in collaboration with governments and local stakeholders on regional water resource and restoration projects that meet the shared environmental needs of the region and the Loxahatchee River.

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This letter confirms our support for advancing the LRWRP for Congressional authorization. As requested, attached is a certification of financial capability that affirms our ability to satisfy the obligations of the non-federal sponsor described in the LRWRP Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement, should a Project Partnership Agreement be executed by the parties. The District is honored to serve as the local sponsor for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project and will continue to engage with local stakeholders and the public as this project is implemented.

Sincerely,



Drew Bartlett
Executive Director

DB/mj

**NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR'S
SELF-CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL CAPABILITY
FOR DECISION DOCUMENTS**

I, Candida Heater, do hereby certify that I am the Director for Administrative Services Division of the South Florida Water Management District (the "Non-Federal Sponsor"); that I am aware of the financial obligations of the Non-Federal Sponsor for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement; and that the Non-Federal Sponsor will have the financial capability to satisfy the Non-Federal Sponsor's obligations for that project. I understand that the Government's acceptance of this self-certification shall not be construed as obligating either the Government or the Non-Federal Sponsor to implement a project.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have made and executed this certification this 4 day of February, 2020.

BY: Candida Heater

TITLE: Director, Administrative Services Division

DATE: February 4, 2020