



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** 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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership. Respondents generally believed the area provides important wildlife habitat, water quality, and water storage benefits.

Additional comments included:

- The District may consider surplusing STA 1W if it is not needed for ecosystem restoration.
- The STA's are the core of the district's efforts to meet Florida and EPA's water-quality standards by filtering polluting nutrients from farm runoff discharged into the Water Conservation Areas.
- They have also proven to be "bird magnets" providing areas for forage and breeding and recreation, principally bird watching, duck and alligator hunting.
- These lands are vital for reducing phosphorous discharges to the Everglades ecosystem. The lands in question all meet (or exceed) the District's core missions of water quality, flood control, water supply and natural systems restoration. These lands are also important for regional public recreation.
- The lands are vital in protecting water supply and water quality for all of South Florida and the Everglades
- 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
- The STA 1W outparcel – sugarcane farming should not be renewed and the parcel should be used for water storage and to benefit the natural system and enhance habitat

Summary of SME comments:

**Regarding the STAs in general**

1. The STAs are critical to our water quality and natural resources protection mission and are required by the Everglades Forever Act. The STA are highly managed and monitored to ensure good phosphorus removal performance and will be expanded under the recently approve Restoration Strategies.
2. Consistent with District policy, statutory requirements, and the purposes for which the property were acquired, the STAs have provided a great resource for providing nature-based recreation. Partnerships with entities such as FWC and Audubon should continue which provide additional support of public use.
3. The Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida including over 200 species of migratory birds. Several of these migratory birds are known to nest within these wetlands. Endangered and threatened species that have utilized STAs as habitat include Florida panthers, wood storks, crested caracaras, Everglade snail kites, least terns, Florida sandhill cranes, and multiple wading bird species. Bald eagles are commonly observed within STAs. Portions of the STAs fall within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries.
4. Stormwater Treatment Areas are a critical component used to reduce phosphorus levels in surface water necessary in order to meet water quality compliance discharge levels into the Everglades Protection Area.

**Regarding the STA 1W outparcel**

1. The property was once considered as a potential sub-regional source control project as part of the Restoration Strategies Program. However, it is not feasible due to the high volume of seepage this parcel experiences and the problems that creates for agricultural use.

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

Summary of Public comments:



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Comments indicated respondents generally did not believe there is a better use for the property.

**Regarding the STA 1W outparcel**

- Only the STA 1W Outparcel could be considered for surplus, and that would be subject to a perpetual conservation easement restricting the land use to continuing agriculture and prohibiting any future development.
- The collaboration between SFWMD and Audubon Chapters for STA birding trips is excellent and should continue and be expanded where possible.
- 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

Summary of SME comments:

**Regarding the STAs in general**

1. Current use is mandated by state law and is essential to District’s water quality mission.

**Regarding the STA 1W outparcel**

1. The land may be turned over to the county for some future non-agricultural use as it is adjacent to a Palm Beach County parcel. If the land is turned over to the County, it is anticipated the seepage issues associated with this parcel would be fixed by the County.
2. The property may have potential future use for soil or water storage/treatment and its location is ideal because of its proximity to several District works but this has not been determined nor is it currently being evaluated. It may be more beneficial if used in a land trade.
3. At this time, a better use is not evident, but the potential exists for future uses that would further the District’s core missions.

Recommendation:

**Regarding the STAs in general**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.

**Regarding the STA 1W outparcel**

Staff recommends retaining ownership of the property for spoil storage in support of the STAs and/or vegetative debris staging areas in support of emergency operations. If future evaluation indicates that retention of the site is does not contribute to the District’s core mission then further evaluation of a potential transfer to another governmental entity for a public purpose may be considered.

Basis of staff recommendation:

**Regarding the STAs in general**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District’s core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding the STA 1W outparcel**

Retention of the site for spoil/vegetation disposal purposes may benefit the District in the future if excavation and/or clearing activities become necessary to enhance the operation of the STA or to respond to a storm event.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** 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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

This assessment unit received the most public comments – 107 of the 263 comments were made in regard to the FEBs. Public comments generally indicated the respondents believe the area helps meet SFWMD core missions.

Additional comments included:

- The FEBs are essential to Everglades restoration
- 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
- Flow Equalization Basins will protect the environment as well as providing flood protection by holding flood water during storms.
- The Flow Equalization Basins are essential to the core mission of the SFWMD in meeting Florida's water quality standards and those of the US Environmental Protection Agency, which apply as a result of the Everglades Consent decree and subsequent litigation
- The FEB's also have a secondary use as water storage areas for flood control and water supply within the Everglades Agricultural Area. Federal funds were used to acquire the land, originally envisioned for use as a reservoir. The A1 FEB is partially constructed; the site of the A2 FEB is being farmed while engineering designs are completed. When operable the FEBs will regulate the flow of water into STAs 2, 3 and 4 to optimize removal of phosphorus and other polluting nutrients in farm-runoff before it is discharged into the Water Conservation Areas. A third FEB in the 139 Basin is in the planning stages and similarly will assist STA's 5 and 6.
- These lands are an important part of the Environmental Protection by providing adequate flows to Storm Treatment Areas. Storm Treatment Areas need water at all times. They must not be too deep or too dry. Flow Equalization Basins provide this proper level of water. We need to retain these water levels. This land meets the core needs of the SFWMD.  
It could be better
  - not enough protection of wildlife from storm and flooding
  - limit recreational vehicles
  - The land should remain in SFWMD and should not be developed
  - The current use of the property does not secure the property so that it can be protected and restored now or in the future as a piece of the Everglades flow puzzle.

Summary of SME comments:

1. The Flow Equalization Basin properties provide habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife in South Florida. Endangered and threatened species that have utilized these areas as habitat include wood storks, Everglade snail kites, eastern indigo snakes, least terns, crested caracara, and multiple wading bird species. Thousands upon thousands of migrant birds travel through these areas annually and there are some species, such as common nighthawks, killdeer, black-necked stilts, night-herons, and least terns that use these properties as nesting areas.
2. Flow Equalization Basins (FEB's) have become an integral and critical component to the District's core missions as identified in the Restoration Strategies Regional Water Quality Plan which is currently being implemented. An FEB's primary purpose is to attenuate peak storm water flows then deliver those flows to the downstream Everglades STAs at a rate optimized to improve treatment performance of the STA. These operations contribute to the ultimate goal of attaining the Water Quality Based Effluent Limit
3. The future use of these properties as Flow Equalization Basins is a critical component needed to regulated flows to the STAs, which in turn will help the District meet downstream STA discharge water quality compliance standards.

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

Summary of Public comments:



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# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Public comments indicated the respondents believe there is not a better use for the property and it should remain in SFWMD ownership.

Public comments included:

- prohibiting motor boats would better protect wildlife
- In the long term there is no better use for this publicly owned land than buffering Everglades habitat from the polluting nutrients in runoff from the intensely farmed Everglades Agricultural Area and the 139 Basin. Discharges of untreated EAA runoff over forty years wrought dramatic and ruinous changes to the Everglades' plant communities and the species – invertebrates, fish, birds, and wildlife -- dependent on Everglades habitat. Restoration of habitat, as has been demonstrated by the STAs, results in these areas being highly rated for conservation values. Construction of the FEBs should proceed as quickly as possible.
- more public use is not needed
- It should be used to cleanse polluted water from Lake O - permanently, and prevent release of this water into our river.
- The areas are important conservation lands and important wildlife habitat and should be protected

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. No, the FEB's reduce the pulse flow volumes of water to the Everglades STAs and improve the STAs overall treatment performance. This improvement to STA treatment performance is critical to meet state water quality standards in the Everglades Protection Area. Current use is critical and legally mandated.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties will contribute towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** 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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?**

**Summary of Public comments:**

Public comments indicated the area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership. Respondents generally believed the area provides important wildlife habitat, water quality, and water storage benefits.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The current use for a majority of the property (15,000 of the 20,000 acres) is as a mitigation site for Lake Belt mining impacts in Miami-Dade County, which is consistent with the District's core mission of natural systems protection and restoration. Mitigation funds will provide funding for land acquisition, restoration and management activities of the site.
2. The C-139 Basin is a critical component of the STA system and is needed for the core missions of water quality protection.
3. C-139 Annex property provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida. Endangered and threatened species that likely utilize these areas as habitat include wood storks, Everglade snail kites, eastern indigo snakes, crested caracara, and multiple wading bird species. There is a known eagle's nest on the property.
4. The use of the property addresses all of the District's core mission elements.

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

**Summary of Public comments:**

Comments indicated respondents generally did not believe there is a better use for the property.

Other comments included:

- Some restoration and return of this property to a more natural state may increase the benefits to wildlife and improve water retention
- 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.
- Recreation may be an option once restoration and construction are complete

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The current use for a majority of the property (15,000 of the 20,000 acres) is as a mitigation site for Lake Belt mining impacts in Miami-Dade County, which is consistent with the District's core mission of natural systems protection and restoration. Mitigation funds will provide funding for land acquisition, restoration and management activities of the site.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** 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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the area meets SFWMD core missions and respondents highly value the recreation and wildlife the area supports. Respondents indicated the land should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments included:

- The area provides important habitat for many listed species
- The CERP process will help to de-compartmentalize many of these areas to improve freshwater flows South to Everglades National Park, Biscayne Bay and other estuaries that need fresh water flows during dry periods. Without these areas the restoration of the Florida Everglades would not be possible.
- Currently, the properties are undeveloped. Therefore, they are not a source of contamination of current water supply and they are not drawing on that very same limited water supply.
- The economy of South Florida depends upon getting the water component right and having a reliable and sustainable water supply. Retention of these lands and waters in conservation and management are indispensable for the economic well-being and future of South Florida.
- The SFWMD only owns about ¼ of these lands with the remainder owned/managed by the USFWS and the FFWCC. The sites meet ALL of the District's core mission values of water quality, flood control, water supply and natural systems restoration. The lands and waters are critical components of South Florida's overall water balance, water management system and vital to Everglades restoration efforts. Their retention in conservation should not just be a District or State of Florida priority, but a national priority as well.
- Due to their proximity to highly-populated areas the WCAs are important areas for tourism

Summary of SME comments:

1. The Water Conservation Areas provide habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife in South Florida. Endangered and threatened species that have utilized these areas as habitat include Florida panthers, wood storks, Everglade snail kites, and multiple wading bird species.
2. The tree islands contained within the WCAs are extremely important areas in the WCAs for birds, reptiles, and mammal species and they attract hundreds of species of wildlife. The WCAs are a major portion of the critical habitat established for Everglade snail kites. The WCAs fall within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries.
3. The area is world renowned for its biodiversity, unique natural character and is highly valued for their recreation opportunities. The northernmost portion is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a National Wildlife Refuge, the remainder is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
4. These project lands support all of the District's mission functions. They are critical components of south Florida's water management system, and a principal beneficiary of Everglades restoration.
5. The Water Conservation Areas are the heart of the Everglades ecosystem and are needed for the critical core District missions of water supply, water quality, and resource protection.
6. The Water Conservation Areas support the District's water quality, flood control, water supply, and natural systems restoration core mission.

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

Summary of Public comments:

Comments indicated respondents generally did not believe there is a better use for the property and strongly felt the area should remain in SFWMD ownership and conservation.

Other comments included:

- Collect data on activities and results of each part of your mission, and announce the availability of reports containing that data at least annually so the public can evaluate how well the district is doing in each area. This should include measures of chemicals in the environment, such as mercury, benzene, and many other toxic chemicals. University research may be included in the reports.
- Keep pollution and development out of the water conservation areas and enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- SFWMD should invest more funding in treating exotic vegetation



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## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

### Summary of *SME* comments:

1. No, the parcels contribute to the District core mission.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

### **Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Strazzulla

**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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?**

**Summary of Public comments:**

Public comments indicated the respondents believe the area helps meet SFWMD core missions and provides an important buffer for the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Additional comments included:

- The area provides important wildlife habitat
- This land is considered more pristine and undisturbed than any of the other areas east of the L-40 Canal that are currently part of the Refuge. These wetlands appear on the map that visitors to the Refuge receive; Refuge staff have long wanted to acquire these lands. Volunteers who take weekly bird counts along the L-40 Levee report that the Strazzulla Wetlands are the only place along the levee where they consistently spot a number of kestrels, a bird in serious decline. The area is also contains the greatest concentration of loggerhead shrikes, a bird that appeared on Audubon's top 10 list of formerly common birds now in decline.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The current use of the property provides a hydrological and ecological connection to the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and expands the spatial extent of protected natural areas. This land acts as a buffer between higher water stages to the west and lands to the east that must be drained.
2. The Strazzulla wetlands property provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida including many bird species. Endangered and threatened species that have utilized these areas as habitat include wood storks, Florida sandhill cranes, and multiple wading bird species. The property falls within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries.

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

**Summary of Public comments:**

Comments varied.

Public comments included:

- The property could be transferred to Fish and Wildlife to be added to the Loxahatchee Refuge. It would be suitable habitat. This would support the mission of protecting water quality and wildlife protection.
- There is no better use for the property
- The area should remain in conservation
- This property would be best managed as part of the Refuge.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. SFWMD and the Department of the Interior are in the process of developing an agreement to implement a land swap. If the swap occurs, Strazzulla Wetlands may become part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge providing effective protection for the property. The swap would be a parcel called the Snail Farm in the EAA that the District would convert to a Stormwater Treatment Area helping meet stormwater treatment/Water Quality mission objectives.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends continuing negotiations with the Department of Interior for an exchange of this property for lands within the EAA that will better support the District's core mission objectives while ensuring that this property remain in conservation.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments. A proposed exchange of lands on terms acceptable to both parties would be beneficial to both the Department of the Interior and to the District's core mission objectives.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Chingos Parcels

**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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?**

**Summary of Public comments:**

Public comments were mixed.

Comments included:

- The ~95 acre Chingos parcels do not seem to be needed for restoration
- The area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.
- The area may provide habitat for listed wildlife species
- The parcels are part of a larger area that serve as an important buffer for Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Development in this area would be detrimental.
- They should not be opened up to any purpose other than conservation, due to their proximity to ecologically rich areas

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The property is located adjacent to a bigger wetland area owned by Palm Beach County.
2. The Chingos Parcel is infested with exotics. The area is mostly Brazilian pepper but still has some cypress.

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

**Summary of Public comments:**

Comments indicated respondents were mixed.

Additional comments included:

- If the surrounding areas currently held by the county could be acquired by the District, these properties could be used for water storage and flood control. If part of a larger area, then it would make sense to try to remove the Brazilian pepper and other exotics.
- Since these parcels are surrounded by county-owned land it might seem logical to transfer them to the county, but the county's track record in preserving land in the Agricultural Reserve is not good, and conservation easements supposedly held in perpetuity seem to be able to be transferred to other properties of lesser value with a simple majority vote of the county commission.
- nonnative vegetation should be removed from the property and an ongoing nonnative vegetation control program should be implemented
- Palm Beach County's (County) Department of Environmental Resources Management requests that the South Florida Water Management District (District) consider conveying title to the Chingos parcels to the County. The Chingos parcels are disjunct from the larger Strazulla Wetlands property which would make management of these two smaller parcels difficult for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Chingos parcels adjoin a larger County-owned parcel and could be managed concurrent with that property. In exchange for the proposed conveyance, the County would grant a conservation easement to the District over the subject parcels.
- There is no better use for the property

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. It may be possible to swap or surplus the property to Palm Beach County to complete the County holdings of wetlands in the area.

**Recommendation:** Determine if there is a bona fide interest on the part of Palm Beach County or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire the site for a public purpose; if there is not, staff recommends exchange or surplus of the property.



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**Basis of staff recommendation:**

As the SME comments point out, this property is adjacent to a County property. The District no longer has an interest in the property for water management purposes, and has no other plans for the property.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Palm Beach County Ag. Reserve Reservoir

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the respondents believe the area helps meet SFWMD core missions.

Additional comments included:

- The current low-impact uses (recreation, pepper farming, and equestrian) are more desirable than high-impact uses that would impact the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge, such as those that have loud noise or light pollution
- The Palm Beach County Ag Reserve Reservoir is within the acquisition boundary of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. This property serves as important buffer between the Refuge and the development east of U.S. 441.
- Keeping this property undeveloped allows water levels in the Refuge to remain higher without fear of seepage through the L-40 Levee and without the flood controls that would have to be put in place if homes were to be developed in the area.
- 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.

Summary of SME comments:

1. The parcels consist of approximately a square mile of row crops and to the south a park facility and horse track. All parcels are currently under lease agreements. This area was previously identified as a CERP component under a long term planning horizon. The practicality of the implementation of this project is limited.

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

Summary of Public comments:

Comments were mixed.

Public comments included:

- The entire area could be used as a park as the county is currently using it. It could also be flooded to provide water retention and buffering for the Refuge. Its current use is acceptable, but development in this area would negatively impact the Refuge.
- The land could also be used for water storage
- The Refuge should acquire this land when and if funds for acquisition become available.

Summary of SME comments:

1. The property would better serve the District if used for surplus or swap

**Recommendation:** The further evaluation of these tracts will determine if there is an interest on the part of Palm Beach County or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire the land, and if not, staff will consider the exchange or surplus of the District's fee-simple interest in the sites.

Basis of staff recommendation:

This property includes a lease to Palm Beach County, it is also near the entrance to the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge, therefore staff recognizes that there may be an interest by either of those entities to acquire the property from the District. The District no longer has an interest in the property for water management purposes, and has no other plans for the property.



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the respondents believe the area is critical to meeting SFWMD core missions, provides important wildlife habitat and wetland protection, and should remain in SFWMD ownership.

Additional comments included:

- The Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank serves as an important buffer to the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Many of the same birds that forage and nest in the Refuge also forage and nest in this area. Restoring these wetlands supports birds and other wildlife and replenishes the aquifer, allowing water levels to remain higher in the Refuge without fear of seepage and flooding in developed areas.
- The area is critical for the managed mitigation of wetland impact and ecosystem restoration and enhancement.
- To date, Broward County has permitted offsite for 16 wetland projects, totaling nearly 40 credits to be directed toward this mitigation bank

Summary of SME comments:

1. The current use of the property for natural systems protection and restoration is consistent with the current use of the property as a mitigation bank. The SFWMD is implementing the mitigation bank in public-private contract. A conservation easement has been filed over the property to protect the use and restoration is nearing completion.
2. The parcel contributes to District's core mission of natural systems protection and restoration
3. The Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank property provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida including many bird species. Confirmed protected species that have utilized these areas as habitat include wood storks, bald eagles, and multiple wading bird species. The property falls within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries.

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

Summary of Public comments:

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there is a better use for the property.

Additional comments included:

- The most valuable use of this land is to allow it to continue to support the Everglades viability.
- Leaving it/restoring it to a natural state is the best use.

Summary of SME comments:

1. The protection of the property is required in order to maintain the amount of mitigation that the SFWMD and TetraTech, the private mitigation banker, are obligated to provide. In addition to the contractual concerns with TetraTech if the property was not used as a mitigation site, mitigation would need to be provided.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Broward WPA

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the respondents believe the area meets SFWMD core missions.

Comments included:

- The area serves as an important buffer to the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The impoundments capture and store water during dry times that would otherwise be lost to tide and prevent damaging releases of polluted water during rain events. The impoundments filter the water and slowly replenish the aquifer, allowing water levels to remain higher in the Refuge.
- The lands are a key buffer between urban development and the Everglades
- There are proposed recreational features as a component of the BCWPA Project Plan
- 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

**Regarding Site 1**

- The project should be completed

**Regarding the Miramar Parkway parcels**

- SFWMD should retain these parcels given their close proximity to the seepage barriers and the potential wetland mitigation on the east side of the water conservation areas
- Broward County does not support any alternative provision for providing for wetland mitigation outside of the impacted areas

**Regarding the Holly Lake parcel**

- SFWMD should retain 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

**Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel**

- The county should retain and improve the parcels and coordinate management in considerations of planned improvements as part of the 3A/3B seepage management area and recreational area components located adjacent to Everglades Holiday Park

Summary of SME comments:



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# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

### Regarding the Broward WPA parcels generally

1. Consider separating lands needed for Site 1 from the BCWPA so that land requirements for Site 1, Phase 2 can be tracked directly
2. The BCWPA project components are intended to restore hydropatterns and promote wildlife habitat in WCA 3A and 3B. Recreational facilities are to be designed for the seepage management area and for both impoundments and a cooperative agreement with Broward County provides county financial support toward operation and maintenance of the recreation facilities.
3. The BCWPA project completed the planning phase in 2012 when the Project Implementation Report was updated, the Chief's Report was signed and the Record of Decision was executed by the Secretary of the Army.

### Regarding Site 1

1. Construction is underway on Site 1, Phase 1.

### Regarding the Miramar Parkway parcels

1. The District assumed ownership of these three parcels (46.63 acres) through its regulatory function as mitigation for impacts to other wetlands associated with road construction, which meets a core mission to protect and restore natural systems.
2. The current use of the three tracts (200-012, 200-024 and 200-007) as a mitigation area (Century Prestige) is consistent with the use of the site for natural systems protection and restoration. The SFWMD has accepted funds as a form of mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands in this 15-acre area (see attached map). Mitigation funds have provided funding for management activities of this 40-acre parcel.

### Regarding the Holly Lake parcel

1. The Holly Lake parcel is not currently in the proposed seepage management area project footprint; however, the area may be impacted by the higher water levels that will result when the project is constructed.
2. The current CERP design does not include this parcel.

### Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel

1. Roadways separate the Griffin Road parcels from the proposed C-11 Impoundment and the WCA 3A/3B Seepage Management Areas. These parcels will not be incorporated into the project footprint. Evaluations performed during the design phase will be conducted to ensure that these parcels will not be impacted by high water tables that will result when the project is implemented. There are no other via options for this property if it is not needed for the BCWPA project.

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

### Summary of Public comments:

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there is a better use for the property.

Additional comments included:

- All lands that lie within the footprint of the CERP must remain as is.

### Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel

- 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.

### Summary of SME comments:



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# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

### Regarding the Broward WPA parcels generally

1. The project is awaiting Congressional authorization and appropriations to proceed to the design and construction phase. Lands currently identified for the project should be retained until more specific land requirements, or surplus, can be determined during the design phase.

### Regarding Site 1

1. Lands associated with Phase 2 should be retained until funding and design issues are resolved.

### Regarding the Miramar Parkway parcels

1. Parcels that are not needed for road construction may be used to meet mitigation requirements for the BCWPA project. Mitigation within or near the project are optimal, however, there may not be sufficient acreage available. The use of a portion of the Miramar Pkwy parcels may reduce the need to seek offsite mitigation outside Broward County.
2. These parcels are not recommended for donation, exchange or surplus; some of the parcels are already committed to meet mitigation requirements associated with regulatory functions and the other parcel may be suitable for inclusion in the BCWPA mitigation plan.
3. The BCWPA project completed the planning phase in 2012 when the Project Implementation Report was updated, the Chief's Report was signed and the Record of Decision was executed. Details of the mitigation plan will be worked out during the design phase of the project, which is awaiting Congressional authorization and funding.

### Regarding the Holly Lake Parcel

1. The Holly Lake parcel should be retained until assessments of seepage and groundwater impacts performed during the design phase demonstrate that there will be no adverse impacts to the parcel.
2. In its current condition, there is limited potential for other natural resource or public uses. The parcel was a wetland, but it is currently infested with exotic vegetation, providing minimal habitat value.
3. The Holly Lakes parcel should not be considered for donation, exchange or surplus until studies to be performed during the design phase determine that the area will not be adversely impacted by proximity to the proposed BCWPA seepage management component. In 2012, Project Implementation Report was completed, Chief's Report was signed and Record of Decision was executed for the CERP BCWPA project. Congressional authorization and funding is needed to proceed to the design and construction phase.

### Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel

1. The Griffin Road parcels are recommended for donation, exchange or surplus because they are not needed for the BCWPA project, and the size and location of the parcels are not adequate to support other District initiatives.

### Recommendation:

#### Regarding the Broward WPA parcels generally

Unless otherwise addressed below, staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

#### Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel

Staff recommends that the parcels be approved for exchange or surplus.

### Basis of staff recommendation:

#### Regarding the Broward WPA parcels generally

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

#### Regarding Site 1

Staff recognizes that the land needs for Phase 2 of the project has not yet been determined.

#### Regarding the Miramar Parkway parcels

Staff recognizes that these properties have been acquired for regulatory reasons and mitigation purposes.

#### Regarding the Holly Lake parcel

Staff recognizes that these parcels are not needed for the seepage management project, but it still needs to be determined whether they will be impacted by the project.

#### Regarding the Griffin Road Parcel

The District no longer has an interest in the property for project purposes, and has no other plans for the property.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** Central and Northern Lakebelt

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

**Summary of Public comments:**

Public comments indicated respondents believe this area is to increase operational flexibility to improve water flowage without detrimental impacts to flood protection or water quality.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. There are several small parcels in this group. All the parcels west and southwest of US Highway 27 fall in the WCA 3B Seepage Management Area CERP component and should be retained. The remaining parcels fall in the CERP Lake Belt projects that have very long term planning horizons and high uncertainty of implementation.

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

**Summary of Public comments:**

No public comments were received specifically for this property.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. Retain the parcels west and southwest of US 27. Consider for swap or surplus the parcels east of the US 27.
2. The practicality of the property east of the US 27 for previously identified projects is limited.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is for now.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the most of the properties contribute towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments. It is also understood that some of the properties may better serve the District's core missions if exchanged for lands with higher contributory value to mission critical objectives.



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** ECB – Pennsuco Wetlands

**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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?**

**Summary of Public comments:**

Public comments indicated the area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership. Other comments included:

- 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.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The current use of the property for natural systems protection and restoration is consistent with the current use of the property as a regional mitigation area. Since 1995 the SFWMD has accepted funds as a form of mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands in the Pennsuco area. Mitigation funds have provided funding for land acquisition, and various restoration and management activities over the years.
2. The Pennsuco ECB is the result of a large wetland restoration effort that has taken place over the last two decades under planning efforts from the Lake Belt Plan and CERP. Most of the land purchases that have allowed restoration, have come from rock mining mitigation funding. It supports the natural systems, restoration and regulatory mission objectives.

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

**Summary of Public comments:**

Comments indicated the area should remain in SFWMD ownership.

**Summary of SME comments:**

1. The protection of the property is required in order to maintain the amount of mitigation that the SFWMD is obligated to provide, otherwise mitigation for the mitigation will need to be provided.
2. No, the restoration project has increased the spatial extent of the "short hydroperiod" wetland system. With more complete hydrological restoration it could reduce seepage from Water Conservation Area 3B and parts of the remaining Everglades, at the same time providing a buffer between the Everglades and the areas drained for development to the east.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# East Coast Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** ECB - C-4 Impoundment

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

No public comments were received specifically for this property.

Summary of SME comments:

1. The property was developed for peak flood attenuation as an above-ground impoundment. Levees, inflow pumps and water control structures have been constructed to aid in reducing impacts of flood water in the C-4 Canal. This property successfully furthers the core mission objective of flood control. It was constructed to improve flood protection per the Flood Control Project, designed to provide the level of flood control service desired by the community.
2. The C4 Impoundment is needed for flood protection for the neighborhoods adjacent to the impoundment.

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

Summary of Public comments:

No public comments were received specifically for this property.

Summary of SME comments:

No SME Comments

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the use and management of the properties continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – Bird Drive Basin

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments were mixed:

Comments included:

- The current property use does not meet SFWMD core missions
- The property does meet SFWMD core missions
- The property has ecologically important short hydroperiod wetlands that provide habitat for wading birds
- This land will be critical in the future for adaptive management and continued flood control and also offers a natural buffer between the city and the Everglades.
- This area helps to keep the Miami-Dade West Well field hydrated
- Retain 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

Summary of SME comments:

1. Preliminary analysis of the Bird Drive Recharge Area (BDRA) has indicated that this entire alternative as envisioned in the Yellow Book is not implementable.
2. Modeling and detailed physical analyses have also indicated that the design and operation of the BDRA alternative is not feasible. As such, the Project Delivery Team screened out the BDRA alternative from further consideration.
3. The current use of the property for natural systems protection and restoration is consistent with the current use of a portion of the property as a mitigation area.
4. A 40-acre area of Bird Drive basin has been accepted as a form of mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands. Mitigation funds have provided one-time funding for land acquisition, restoration and management activities of this 40-acre parcel.
- 5.

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

Summary of Public comments:

Comments indicated respondents did believe there is a better use for the property.

Comments included:

- The acquisition of the other fragmented tracks will support SFWMD core missions and support nearby natural areas
- The restoration of the whole area to its natural state would help enhance SFWMD core missions. In addition, this will also assist in holding the Urban Development Boundary in place which is critical in stopping the encroachment of development to the Everglades.
- Miami-Dade County is interested in partnering with SFWMD on recreational use of these and other East Coast Buffer lands

Summary of SME comments:

1. The protection of the 40-acre mitigation funded parcel within this property is required in order to maintain the amount of mitigation that the SFWMD is obligated to provide, otherwise mitigation for the mitigation will need to be provided.
2. It is likely that many of the private landowners in the project area would be unwilling to sell their property. Considerations for exchange or sale should be considered when evaluating alternative FPL transmission line corridors and FDOT Krome Avenue expansion. Potential exchange considerations should also include consolidation of land interests.
3. Recommend exchange or sale for consolidation of land interests, potential passive recreation, and evaluation of potential FPL corridor alternatives and FDOT Krome Avenue expansion.



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## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Recommendation:** Any recommendation on this property has been deferred to a future date to give the District an opportunity to research additional information from all available sources relative to potential alternative uses and land consolidation opportunities to better meet District mission objectives.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes that although the property will not be needed for CERP purposes, there is significant local interest in the properties that have been acquired to date.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – 8 ½ SMA

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

No public comments were received specifically for this property.

Summary of SME comments:

**Regarding the 8 ½ SMA**

1. Project features included the construction of a perimeter levee around the area, a seepage collection canal through the middle of the area, and a 575 cfs pump station south of the residential area which will pump collected seepage into a detention area located southwest of the pump station.
2. All project features needed for the implementation of the 8.5 SMA Mitigation Plan have been constructed by the USACE.
3. The property was previously approved by the Lake Belt Mitigation Committee as mitigation for wetland impacts from mining activities in Miami-Dade County however in December 2012 the LBMC voted to remove the previously approved acres from the mitigation ledger until the future direction of the project is determined. The Lake Belt Mitigation Committee will continue to evaluate whether this site provides appropriate mitigation for mining impacts in Miami-Dade County. Permits have been obtained for the restoration. The proposed use of the property as a mitigation site is consistent with the District's core mission of natural systems restoration and protection.

**Regarding the small parcels that lie outside of the project boundary (152<sup>nd</sup> St, 205<sup>th</sup> Ave, 213<sup>th</sup> Ave, 208<sup>th</sup> Ave, 202<sup>nd</sup> Ave, 212<sup>th</sup> Ave)**

1. These parcels are not needed to meet District's core missions of Flood Control, Water Quality protection/improvements, Water Supply, and Natural Systems protection and restoration.

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

Summary of Public comments:

No public comments were received specifically for this property.

Summary of SME comments:

**Regarding the 8 ½ SMA**

1. Restoration is an appropriate use; whether or not mitigation is deemed appropriate by the Lake Belt Mitigation Committee, will affect whether the site can be used for any other purpose. If the LBMC votes to utilize the site for mitigation and the District decides another use is more appropriate, then mitigation for the mitigation will need to be conducted.

**Regarding the small parcels that lie outside of the project boundary (152<sup>nd</sup> St, 205<sup>th</sup> Ave, 213<sup>th</sup> Ave, 208<sup>th</sup> Ave, 202<sup>nd</sup> Ave, 212<sup>th</sup> Ave)**

1. The parcel is recommended for donation, exchange or surplus due to its location, the cost to maintain and the potential for illegal dumping.

Recommendation:

**Regarding the 8 ½ SMA**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Regarding the small parcels that lie outside of the project boundary (152<sup>nd</sup> St, 205<sup>th</sup> Ave, 213<sup>th</sup> Ave, 208<sup>th</sup> Ave, 202<sup>nd</sup> Ave, 212<sup>th</sup> Ave)**

Staff recommends that the parcels be approved for exchange or surplus.



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## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

**Regarding the 8 ½ SMA**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding the small parcels that lie outside of the project boundary (152<sup>nd</sup> St, 205<sup>th</sup> Ave, 213<sup>th</sup> Ave, 208<sup>th</sup> Ave, 202<sup>nd</sup> Ave, 212<sup>th</sup> Ave)**

The District no longer has an interest in the property for project purposes, and has no other plans for the property.



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** East Coast Buffer – L-31 N/ Rocky Glades and Frog Pond

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of *Public* comments:

Public comments indicated the respondents believe the area is critical to meeting SFWMD core missions and should remain in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of *SME* comments:

1. These properties provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida including many bird species. Protected species that have utilized these areas as habitat include wood storks, Everglade snail kites, and multiple wading bird species. The property falls within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries.
2. Several detention areas have been constructed on the Rocky Glades lands under the C-111 South Dade Project to help improve hydrologic conditions in Taylor Slough.
3. The L-31N/Rocky Glades and Frog Pond lands fulfill the mission element Natural Systems Protection under two Federal Projects – both of which are designed to improve the hydrologic conditions with the Taylor Slough and Everglades National Park.

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

Summary of *Public* comments:

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there is a better use for the property.

Summary of *SME* comments:

1. Land must be managed and used in a manner that is consistent with the Federal Project.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** South Dade Wetlands

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

Public comments indicated the area meets SFWMD core missions and respondents highly value the recreation and wildlife the area supports.

Additional comments:

Comments pertaining to all tracts in South Dade Wetlands:

- This area was purchased specifically for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project and is an important part of the SFWMD's mission to protect and restore the natural habitat. It would not be in the public's, nor the SFWMD's interests to dispose of this property or any of the lands in the footprint of CERP's restoration projects.
- We need these fresh water areas to combat the coming sea rise and salt water intrusion.
- The South Dade Wetlands are the critical linkage between to CERP projects. The coastal parcels are important for water quality as they filter water before entering Biscayne Bay.
- It is critical to finish acquiring the remaining parcels and continue to move forward with the planning of this project. Time is critical as we are seeing huge variations in salinity from Dry to Wet season
- Broward 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, and there is an MOU for cooperative land management in place through 2020.
- Miami-Dade County has an interest in acquisitions within their Western Greenway area
- Phase 1 should be completed
- SFWMD should expedite planning and implementation of Phase 2
- Lands both in Phase 1 and 2 are rare coastal wetlands that are essential to bring back a more natural fresh water regime to rehydrate halophytic wetlands that now lie in the "white zone"

**Regarding Southern Glades specifically**

- Southern Glades is very important to the District's core missions, particularly Water Quality protection and Natural Resource protection and restoration.
- The area is a buffer protecting the Everglades National Park from surrounding development and agriculture. Highly endangered species such as the Florida panther have been seen using this area. Many people birdwatch here - the Tropical Audubon Society regularly has walks in the "Frog Pond" and nearby areas.
- The area is important for recreation
- The area provides important wildlife habitat for many rare and endangered species
- The area must not be developed
- 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.

**Regarding Model Lands specifically**

- 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 land also functions as a wildlife corridor between the Florida Keys National Marine Audubon Florida Everglades 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.
- It is the largest undeveloped eastern coastal area in Miami-Dade County and is expected to receive hydrologic benefits from CERP.
- The property provides a buffer to impacts of the high salinity groundwater plume from the FP&L Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant and its effects on the environment and drinking water supplies



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## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

### Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands

- Ownership of this property fits with BBCW and furthers SFWMD's core missions
- The parcel provides important wildlife habitat
- The parcel provides flood protection for surrounding homeowners
- The parcel enhances water quality and natural water flows
- The property is critical to the restoration of the everglades
- Including the land as part (Phase 2) of the Everglades restoration plan and allowing fresh water to flow across the land will directly support of the District's mission to increase the recreational value of the area by restoring life to the bay including many endangered and protected species found on or associated with the property.
- The property should remain in SFWMD ownership
- The parcel is adjacent to Biscayne Bay National Park and are composed of county-designated coastal communities

### Summary of SME comments:

#### Regarding the South Dade Wetlands generally

1. This is a very important component of CERP. Increasing fresh water flows into the Bay will help protect natural systems.

#### Regarding Southern Glades specifically

1. This property provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in South Florida including many migratory bird species. Protected species that have utilized these areas as habitat include wood storks, Florida panthers, American crocodiles, Cape Sable seaside sparrows, Everglade snail kites, and multiple wading bird species. These properties fall within the core foraging areas of multiple wood stork rookeries. The area is known to host nesting Cape Sable seaside sparrows.
2. The Southern Glades area provides mitigation for several parcels, the protection of these parcels is required in order to maintain the amount of mitigation that the SFWMD is obligated to provide as the long-term management entity of the parcels, otherwise mitigation for the mitigation will need to be provided.
3. The Southern Glades lands fulfill the mission element of Natural Systems protection under one or more Federal Projects – all of which result in enhancement and protection of the natural wetland features within the Southern Glades, as well as improving the hydrologic conditions with the Taylor Slough and Everglades National Park; these lands are highly likely to be needed for a Federal Project. If the USACE does not support certification and crediting of the Southern Glades under the C-111 South Dade Project, then the land will be necessary for the C-111 Spreader Canal Project.

#### Regarding Model Lands specifically

1. Within the Model Lands area a developer provided the fee title to 80-acres, more or less, of marsh wetlands in section 9, township 59S and range 39E as mitigation for wetland impacts. The protection of this land is consistent with the use of the land for natural systems. The protection of the property is required in order to maintain the amount of mitigation that the SFWMD is obligated to provide as the long-term management entity of the parcel, otherwise mitigation for the mitigation will need to be provided.
2. The Model Lands will fulfill the Natural Systems Protection mission element under two future Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Projects - C-111 Spreader Canal Project and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands – Phase 2; These two projects will be the subject of a future detailed planning efforts and Project Implementation Reports. At some future date, SFWMD will certify the Model Lands to the Corps for the Federal Projects, and will receive credit toward the 50-50 cost-share under CERP for the fair market value of these lands as of the date of certification.

#### Regarding the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Specifically

1. the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project (BBCW) is planned to provide regional benefits that include groundwater recharge, redistributing freshwater flow, minimizing point source discharges, preserving and restoring coastal glades habitat, increasing connectivity between coastal and adjacent wetlands and improving near shore salinity regimes in Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park.

#### Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands

1. This 209.81 acre parcel is predominately mangroves and includes some transitional uplands on the western portion of the property. This parcel is located outside of the BBCW Phase I Project boundary, however resides within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) BBCW Watershed Plan boundary defined by Alternative O in the BBCW Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement

#### Regarding the SW 107<sup>th</sup> Ave. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands

1. This parcel is located outside of the BBCW Phase I Project boundary, but resides within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) BBCW Watershed Plan boundary defined by Alternative O in the BBCW Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement.



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

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

Summary of *Public* comments:

Comments indicated respondents generally did not believe there is a better use for the property and should remain in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments included:

- The only potential improvement would be to allow another agency or organization that is better equipped for the continued maintenance of any of the properties being considered for disposal to be given the authority to do so. Perhaps a local agency that can prioritize such a continued monitoring and maintenance program would better serve the long term goals of the District's core missions.
- These properties need to be kept for environmental restoration projects. The District needs to start planning for BBCW and C-111 Phase two so that all these parcels can be used to their fullest potential.

**Regarding Southern Glades specifically**

- Restoration efforts, including removal of exotic vegetation, should be undertaken

**Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

- Lands such as these, that SFWMD owns show should be used for Phase 2, rather than waiting for Phase 1 to be completed
- The area should remain undeveloped
- Several years ago, area residents fought to protect wetlands on property at Old Cutler Road and 184th Street.
- As the only nearby piece of undeveloped land along the coast, this property is an important component in the South Florida Management District's project to restore and protect our coastal wetlands. The property was eventually purchased by SFWMD and phase 1 of the project began.
- The best use of the property is to include it in the Everglades Restoration Plan. Due to the rampant development in the area this property this is one of the last open spaces available for the District to realize its mandated mission. The restoration of the Bay requires water to flow across land not in burst at single locations. Logically, to succeed the District will require multiple locations along the coastline. As stated, very few lands are not developed so no replacement option is available.

**Regarding Model Lands specifically**

- 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.

Summary of *SME* comments:

**Regarding the South Dade Wetlands generally**

1. This is a very important component of CERP. Increasing fresh water flows into the Bay will help protect natural systems.

**Regarding Southern Glades specifically**

1. The Land must be managed and used in a manner that is consistent with the Federal Project.

**Regarding Model Lands specifically**

1. These wetlands will be restored/enhanced under future Federal Projects and once the Project Cooperation Agreements are signed, these lands will need to be managed and used in a manner that is consistent with the Federal Projects.
2. These lands should not be surplus or donated because they will be certified and credited under future Federal Projects.

**Regarding the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Specifically**

1. No, the parcels contribute to the District core mission.

**Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

1. Although this parcel contributes to the District core mission, it should be considered for exchange or donation with Miami-Dade County

**Regarding the SW 107<sup>th</sup> Ave. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

1. Although this parcel does contribute to the District core mission, considerations for potential exchange or surplus should be considered due to Federal Aviation Regulation Part 139 – Airport Operations – Wildlife Hazard Management.



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# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Recommendation:**

**Regarding Southern Glades specifically**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Regarding Model Lands specifically**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Regarding the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands generally**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

**Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is and continue to coordinate efforts with Miami-Dade County, the Town of Cutler Bay, and the National Park Service regarding opportunities to restore and maintain the coastal wetlands.

**Regarding the SW 107<sup>th</sup> Ave. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is for now with continued coordination with Miami-Dade County or other governmental entity regarding opportunities to restore and maintain the site.

**Basis of staff recommendation:**

**Regarding Southern Glades specifically**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding Model Lands specifically**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the properties have contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands generally**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property has contributed towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding the SW 184<sup>th</sup> St. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

The use of this property to meet the freshwater-distribution goals of the CERP project may not be practical or feasible. The site has substantial frontage on Biscayne Bay, and the coastal wetlands should be protected, restored, and maintained with the assistance of a willing partner.

**Regarding the SW 107<sup>th</sup> Ave. parcel within Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands**

The property lies within the current boundary of the project but may have limited use as part of the proposed project objectives. The District prefers to see the property remain in public use of some type.



# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Region Being Reviewed:** Everglades Region

**Select Area Name:** Unassociated Parcels

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, and Natural Systems protection and restoration?

Summary of Public comments:

**Regarding the SR 827 Parcel**

- It is essential to SFWMD's core mission
- 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.

**Regarding the L-8 Parcel**

- The area should be retained in SFWMD ownership
- The area should not be leased
- The area is vital to Everglades restoration
- These lands are within the EAA, but are apparently not part of an ongoing water resource development project.
- 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.

Summary of SME comments:

**Regarding the SR 827 Parcel**

1. The parcel is critical to achieving our water quality goals as defined in Restoration Strategies and as required by a consent order with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This parcel is anticipated to be incorporated into the STA-1W Expansion Phase II. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2020.

**Regarding the L-8 Parcel**

1. The EAA L-8 Parcel was purchased by the District in 2010. During the negotiations for the Restoration Strategies Regional Water Quality Plan, the parcel was identified for potential use if needed. Currently, the EAA L-8 parcel is not part of a Restoration Strategies project footprint, but may be necessary for the expansion project of STA-1W: either as part of a land swap to attain the parcels necessary for the STA-1W expansion, or a potential shallow storage feature.
2. Currently the parcel is in active sugar cane production and provides little to no wildlife habitat and no public use

**Regarding the Deer Fence Parcel**

1. The Deer Fence Parcel because it supports the District's water quality, flood control, water supply, and natural systems restoration core mission.
2. Prior to purchase by the District, this land was previously used as a cattle grazing pasture. Elimination of the cattle grazing and conversion to non-cattle grazing flood plain has improved the water quality of the surface stormwater runoff to the L-3 canal from this parcel.

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

Summary of Public comments:



sfwmd.gov

# Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

### Regarding the L-8 Parcel

- This property could be surplused with a perpetual conservation easement that restricts all future use to agriculture and prohibits any future development.
- 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.

### Regarding the SR 827 Parcel

- This property could be surplused with a perpetual conservation easement that restricts all future use to agriculture and prohibits any future development, pending an assessment of any restrictions on doing so with respect to the various funding sources used to acquire it.
- There is no better use for the property – it should remain in public ownership and undeveloped
- SFWMD should explore options to store water on this land or operate it in conjunction with nearby land holdings for ecosystem protection

### Regarding the Deer Fence Parcel

- This tract looks like it has some good natural resource values and native habitats and connects to other such areas to the north and east. This property could be surplused with a perpetual conservation easement that restricts all future use to cattle grazing and hunting but prohibits any future development.
- SFWMD should consider possibilities for water storage and dispersed water management

### Summary of SME comments:

#### Regarding all parcels

- Properties should be used for public recreation
- properties that are essential habitat for wildlife and rank high in GIS science-based ecological evaluations should not be disposed of

#### Regarding the SR 827 Parcel

1. This water quality mission is critical and is required by consent order with the Florida Department of Protection.

#### Regarding the L-8 Parcel

1. The L-8 parcel is still being considered as part of a land trade for the STA-1W expansion.
2. Any portion of the property which falls within 15 feet of the toe of the L-8 Levee is required for compliance with USACE inspection protocols.

#### Regarding the Deer Fence Parcel

1. This parcel is somewhat unique in that it is located immediately adjacent to, and just west of the Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 5/6 complex, and immediately adjacent to, and just north of the proposed Restoration Strategies Programs' Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) project slated to begin design/construction 2018. It could be used to augment either of these projects which would serve to enhance all of the District's core missions.
2. In addition to the above, this site has been considered as a potential location of a small STA/Nutrient Binding facility to treat stormwater flows from the S&M canal prior to discharge to the L-3 canal. This would represent an improvement in Water Quality to the L-3 canal.
3. It also has potential to be a site for a Dispersed Water Management (DWM) project, sited on District lands, designed to detain/retain stormwater runoff from the S&M and/or Deer Fence Canals prior to discharge to the L-3 Canal yielding both flood control and Water Quality benefits.
4. In light of the above, it is highly recommended that this parcel be retained until further evaluation of its potential contributions to the District's core missions can be made.

### Recommendation:

#### Regarding the SR 827 Parcel

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

#### Regarding the L-8 Parcel

Staff recommends that the parcels be approved for exchange or surplus to facilitate the expansion of STA1W stormwater treatment facilities.

#### Regarding the Deer Fence Parcel

Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

### Basis of staff recommendation:



## Everglades Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

**Regarding the SR 827 Parcel**

Staff recognizes the benefits that the property will contribute towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.

**Regarding the L-8 Parcel**

This was part of the U.S. Sugar land acquisitions. The intent for these properties has always been to hold as a land asset in the EAA until project planning determined where the optimal location for water quality and storage properties would be. An expansion to the stormwater treatment facilities in STA 1W provides a better location and project purpose that will contribute greatly to the District's core missions.

**Regarding the Deer Fence Parcel**

Staff recognizes the high potential for benefits that the property may contribute towards the District's core missions, as evident from the comments.