



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Lake Cypress NE Shore (pg. 68)

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 the area provides wildlife habitat and serves its primary purpose, which is the ability to raise water levels.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitat on this property attracts a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. There is at least one bald eagle nest on the property and these eagles likely use it as a foraging area. This property falls within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
2. These properties, within the 54 ft elevation contour, are essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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:

Public respondents indicated its current role in flood protection is the property's best use.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Currently TMDLs are being developed for Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Jackson, and Marian. The District units around these lakes have the potential to be used (on-site, sub-regional or regional projects) to reduce the loading into these lakes.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
3. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – North KCOL Marshes (pg. 72)

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 supported retaining the tract in its current use, due to its value in providing wildlife habitat and assistance with water management activities.

Additional comments included:

- SFWMD should continue to remove agricultural structures and restore the area to wetlands
- The area provides excellent opportunity for recreation, including bird watching and camping

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitats provided on these properties attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. Portions of these lands appear to offer habitat that could attract federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows. There are multiple eagle nests on these properties and the eagles likely use much to the land as a foraging areas. These properties fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
2. The portion of the project within the 54 ft elevation contour is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original C&SF project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
4. The wetland communities within this assessment unit attenuate stormwater runoff and provide water quality treatment and the site also provides a corridor between lakes Cypress and Kissimmee.
5. A NRCS Conservation Plan is under development with the Lessee for implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented when and if the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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 was a better use of the property – restoring it to a fully functioning wetland is its best use.

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. With regard to the 26.82 acre (Major Realty), 600 acre (GOAA) and 250 acre (Universal) tracts, they all provide offsite mitigation within the McKinney tract for wetland impacts. Endowment funds have been provided to SFWMD for the long-term management of these tracts. It is imperative that the SFWMD continue to manage these tracts for their wetland resource benefits, in perpetuity, in order to meet the required permit obligations. This is generally unclear, tracts not identified anywhere else, perhaps add more description of these parcels.
2. Currently TMDLs are being developed for Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Jackson, and Marian. The District units around these lakes have the potential to be used (on-site, sub-regional or regional projects) to reduce the loading into these lakes.
3. Although lands above the 54 ft elevation contour are not required directly for the Kissimmee River restoration project, maintaining ownership provides the District flexibility to investigate alternative uses including dispersed water management and STA implementation associated with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan, while also providing an additional buffering area during extreme flood events between state and privately owned lands.
4. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
5. The land use assessment information indicates that there have been incremental efforts to restore the hydrology of this marsh and wet prairie system. Additional hydrologic enhancement of the site would further contribute to the District's core missions.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – London Creek and Lower Lake Marion Creek (including pasture parcels) (pg. 79)

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 supported retaining the tract in its current use, due to its role in providing wildlife habitat and holding water.

Additional comments included:

- The area is ideal for bird watching
- The properties were mitigation purchases

Comments regarding the pasture parcel included:

- As the area is seasonally inundated, it is important to retain for completion of the Kissimmee Restoration Project and the revised operating schedule for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes structures
- The pasture uplands provide value as wildlife habitat, regardless of prior disturbance; it is reverting to prairie and is likely to be utilized by species such as the Florida Sandhill Crane, Audubon's Crested Caracara, and Bald Eagles. During high-water periods, wading birds may also use the area.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitat on these parcels attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. These parcels fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
2. The portion of the project within the 54 ft elevation contour is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
4. This assessment parcel is primarily floodplain swamps that surround the mouths of Lake Marion Creek and London Creek that flow into Lake Hatchineha; Lake Hatchineha is listed as impaired by the FDEP.
5. Pasture Parcel: While the site is primarily pasture, portions of the site contain natural river floodplain and cypress dominated shoreline of northwestern Lake Hatchineha.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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 was a better use of the property.

Comments regarding the pasture parcel included:

- There may be opportunity for additional restoration
- There may be recreational opportunities

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain in its current state for the the numerous species within this area that utilize it.
2. Although lands above the 54-foot elevation contour are not required directly for the Kissimmee River restoration project, maintaining ownership provides the District flexibility to investigate alternative uses including dispersed water management and STA implementation associated with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan, while also providing an additional buffering area during extreme flood events between state and privately owned lands.
3. With regard to the 1387.20 acre (GOAA) and 416.50 acre (Bellalago) tracts, they provide offsite mitigation for wetland impacts. Endowment funds have been provided to SFWMD for the long-term management of these tracts that lie within the London Creek tract. It is imperative that the SFWMD continue to manage these tracts for their wetland resource benefits, in perpetuity, in order to meet the required permit obligations.
4. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention features at the site could further the District's core missions, however no dedicated funding for such efforts is known.
5. Parcel has potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

6. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hudred year flood plain.
7. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation (Pasture Parcel Included): Staff recommends that the use and management of the property continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that much of the property was acquired as mitigation for offsite wetland impact, and nearly all of the pasture parcels actually fall below the 54-foot contour. District land management staff has been including the pasture parcels in their prescribed fire rotation and they have been slowly regaining some of their former wet-prairie character. Additionally, staff recognizes that this property would be an important connection in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's planned Everglades Headwaters refuge.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Catfish Creek (pg. 86)

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 the area was fulfilling the role for which it was purchased, including providing wildlife habitat, functioning as a wildlife corridor, water storage from storm runoff, and recreation.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitat on this property attracts a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. This property falls within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
2. This Property is within the 54 ft elevation contour and is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
4. The property provides a wildlife corridor as indicated in the land use assessment information package and contains wetland communities, shoreline marshes and cypress that attenuate stormwater runoff and nutrients.
5. This site also supports the District's Water Quality protection/improvements core mission as it is located in the Lake Hatchineha watershed, a lake that is listed by the DEP as impaired.
6. Project site is currently under detailed design considerations for retention and wetland restoration as part the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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 was a better use of the property.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Currently TMDLs are being developed for Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Jackson, and Marian. The District units around these lakes have the potential to be used (on-site, sub-regional or regional projects) to reduce the loading into these lakes.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
3. additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention features at the site could further the District's core missions, however no dedicated funding for such efforts is known.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year floodplain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Rolling Meadows (pg. 91)

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 supported retaining the tract in its current use, as it meets SFWMD's core missions.

Additional comments included:

- Regardless of the disturbed former sod farm area, restoration has been underway and the tract will provide excellent habitat and water management value once completed
- The sod farm area has a deeper hydroperiod because of a break in the former farming levee, allowing water levels to equalize with Lake Hatchinea
- The area is ideally suited as a wetlands mitigation site
- It provides water retention for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project
- The area is a wildlife corridor
- The area provides water quality by removing nutrients and permitting them to settle during flooding
- The area is a direct link to Lake Kissimmee State Park

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitat on this property attracts a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. There are multiple eagle nests on the property and the eagles likely use much of the land as a foraging areas. This property falls within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
2. Most of the property is within the 54 ft elevation contour and is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original C&SF project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
4. Portion of site is under design for Catfish Creek Restoration using DWM alternatives. This project meets multiple aspects of the District's core mission.
5. There is hydrologic enhancement at the site, a portion of the site is a large-scale mitigation project and it provides a corridor between two large state properties. Therefore, this site contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
6. Project site is currently under detailed design considerations for retention and wetland restoration as part the Dispersed Water Management Program

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.
2. The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes assessment properties (Lake Cypress, N. Floodplain Marshes, Catfish Creek, London Creek/Lower Lake Marion Creek, Rolling Meadows, Lake Kissimmee Shore, and Oasis pasture) provide many fundamental functions that support the District's core missions. They provide flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin. The KCOL area is a key component in restoring the Kissimmee River 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:

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Restoration should continue
- The area should be retained to hold flood water
- Additional opportunities for public use should be explored once restoration has been completed



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain in its current state for the the numerous species that utilize it and use it as corridor between other wildlife habitats
2. Although lands above the 54 ft elevation contour are not required directly for the Kissimmee River restoration project, maintaining ownership provides the District flexibility to investigate alternative uses including dispersed water management and STA impletmentation associated with the Northern Everlades and Estuaries Protection Plan, while also providing an additional buffering area during extreme flood events between state and privately owned lands.
3. Part of the project site is currently under detailed design considerations for retention and wetland restoration as part the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hudred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation: Continue the use and management of the property as-is through the completion of the mitigation-funded restoration of the site.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the contributions of the property by virtue of being acquired and used for mitigation to offset wetland impacts. Staff further recognizes the potential value as a conservation link between Lake Kissimmee State Park and Catfish Creek Preserve State Park, and the value of such a large wetland property within planning area the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Everglades Headwaters planning area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Tiger Lake (pg. 95)

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 supported retaining the tract in its current use, as it meets SFWMD's core missions.

Additional comments included:

- The tract plays an important role in the ability to raise water levels in the Chain of Lakes to facilitate the Kissimmee Restoration Project
- A flowage easement would not adequately protect significant natural resources

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Only a portion (below 54 ft elevation) of the property contributes to the District's core mission: flood attenuation, water supply, and water filtration for the surrounding area and basin.
2. The habitat on this property attracts a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. This property falls within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies.
3. Most of the property is within the 54 ft elevation contour that is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
4. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
5. Currently TMDLs are being developed for Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Jackson, and Marian. The District units around these lakes have the potential to be used (on-site, sub-regional or regional projects) to reduce the loading into these lakes.
6. The property below the 54 foot contour and was acquired to obtain the rights necessary to increase water stages to make the Kissimmee River Restoration possible. Therefore, this site contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
7. The wetland communities within this assessment unit attenuate stormwater runoff and provide water quality treatment and upland forested areas provide additional wildlife habitat.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining Phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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 included:

- Some restoration of disturbed areas on the property would be beneficial
- The property seems ideal for joint use with the county or a non-profit organization to support passive recreation and/or education

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. The area above the 54 ft elevation (improved lot) could be use for staff/officer housing.
2. It could be swapped for land and/or permanent access to land that will support the District's core mission.
3. The necessary flowage easements should be maintained on the property.
4. The property should be reviewed for opportunities to be managed by another local government or agency to manage the property for any potential public recreational opportunities and lake access
5. Although lands above the 54 ft elevation contour are not required directly for the Kissimmee River restoration project, maintaining ownership provides the District flexibility to investigate alternative uses including dispersed water management and STA implementation associated with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan, while also providing an additional buffering area during extreme flood events between state and privately owned lands.
6. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention features at the site could further the District's core missions, but no funding for such activities is known. Parcel has potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hudred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation: Disposal, exchange, or surplus of the District's fee-simple interest and the retention of a flowage and/or conservation easement over the portion of the property lying below the 54-foot contour.

Basis of staff recommendation:

The fee-simple ownership of the portion of the property above the 54-foot contour level is not necessary for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, and its value to the District's mission is primarily indirect and minimal at best. The District's mission objectives would be adequately served with a flowage and/or conservation easement on the portion below the 54-foot contour. Staff recognizes that this is the only parcel around Tiger Lake that was acquired in fee-simple. The rest of the lakeshore below the 54-foot contour, which is indistinguishable from this property, was acquired as a flowage easement. The portion of the property that is above the 54-foot contour is a residential lot, with a house, yard, dock, and other structures. There is some native vegetation on the site, most of which falls below the 54-foot contour. The maintenance of this property takes time and financial resources that could be better spent elsewhere. However, there may be crediting implications related to the cost-share of the project with the Federal government that will need to be considered during the disposal/exchange/surplus process. This parcel is an orphaned outparcel lying separate and apart from any other land. The District's mission is best served by focusing management and restoration activities on landscape-scale areas of regional significance, rather than having limited management and restoration funding diluted by small isolated sites with limited resource value from a regional perspective.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Lake Kissimme (pg 100)

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 support preserving the area in conservation.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitats provided on these properties attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. Portions of these lands (specifically Oasis Marsh) appear to offer habitat that could attract federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows. There are multiple bald eagle nests on these properties and the eagles likely use much of the land as a foraging areas. These properties fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies. The Oasis Marsh property has a confirmed crested caracara pair that use the property for nesting and foraging.
2. These properties, within the 54 ft elevation contour, are essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.
4. Rabbit Island in Lake Kissimmee is the location of a regionally significant wading bird colony comprised of at least 9 species, 4 of which are either state- or federally-listed as threatened/endangered. Lake Kissimmee's other islands and shoreline area also have one of the highest densities of nesting bald eagles in the contiguous United States.
5. The wetland communities within this assessment unit attenuate stormwater runoff and nutrients.
6. The assessment parcels are also located in the Lake Kissimmee Watershed, a lake that has draft Total Maximum Daily Load.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of these properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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:

Public respondents indicated the property's current role as conservation lands/ preventing development is the best use.

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. Currently TMDLs are being developed for Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Jackson, and Marian. The District units around these lakes have the potential to be used (on-site, sub-regional or regional projects) to reduce the loading into these lakes.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
3. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention features at the site could further the District's core missions.
4. A NRCS Conservation Plan is under development with one of the Lessees for implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – Lake Kissimmee– Oasis Marsh Parcel, outside the floodplain (pg. 109)

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 supported retaining the tract in its current use.

Additional comments included:

- The dividing line of the 54-foot contour divides the property in a way that does not present an opportunity for a “clean” subdivision of the parcel into a marketable-size tract that lies outside the floodplain.
- Because the boundary of the 54-countor is complex, the entire property supports SFWMD's core missions
- The area likely provides important habitat for several species, including: Bald Eagle, Florida Sandhill Crane, Wood Stork, and Audubon's Crested Caracara

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The habitats provided on these properties attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. Oasis Marsh appears to offer habitat that could attract federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows. There are multiple bald eagle nests on these properties and the eagles likely use much fo the land as a foraging areas. These properties fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies. The Oasis Marsh property has a confirmed crested caracara pair that use the property for nesting and foraging.
2. The portion of the project within the 54 ft elevation contour is essential for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. Reflooded lands below 54 feet were acquired to ensure that original Central and South Florida (C&SF) project flood control objectives are maintained, while simultaneously achieving the restoration project's environmental benefits.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. The properties all serve at least one (but most provide many) of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/qauity, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region. These properties will also have increasing value as this region moves through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) process. Additional regional restoration features may need to be implemented if and when the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is not met in 2015. Many of theses properties are critical to moving forward through the remaining phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration and in achieving water quality targets for Lake Okeechobee.

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:

Public respondents supported retaining the property in its current use.

Other comments included:

- There may be some possibility for dispersed water management projects
- There may be recreational opportunities

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. Although lands above the 54 ft elevation contour are not required directly for the Kissimmee River restoration project, maintaining ownership provides the District flexibility to investigate alternative uses including dispersed water management and STA implementation associated with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan, while also providing an additional buffering area during extreme flood events between state and privately owned lands.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.

Regarding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes properties generally

1. Much of this region is still going through the BMAP process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's TMDL. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.
2. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

The fee-simple ownership of the portion of the property above the 54-foot contour level is only above that level by a matter of inches, the property lies on a very gradual slope. The District has initiated wetland restoration in the lower areas, which account for the bulk of the property. The lands above the 54-foot elevation on the west end of this property aids management of the wetlands by providing a dry staging area from which prescribed fire or vegetation management activities may be initiated.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Pool A – KICCO and Blanket Bay (pg. 116)

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 believed the parcel meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Comments included:

- The floodplain provides water storage opportunities, as well as wildlife habitat

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project, the restoration project will create a backwater effect that limits the conveyance through water control structure S-65A through elimination of the C-38 canal downstream. These parcels will be inundated intermittently throughout the life of the project by the resulting higher water levels in Pool A.
2. The habitats provided on these properties attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. Dry prairies appear to offer habitat that could attract federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows. There are multiple eagle nests on these properties and the eagles likely use much of the land as a foraging areas. These properties fall within the core-foraging areas for multiple wood stork nesting colonies. Federally endangered red cockaded woodpeckers are known to exist on the properties.
3. A Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Plan is underway with lessee using Dispersed Water Management alternatives for water storage. This project meets multiple aspects of the District's core mission.
4. Lands owned by the District above the 100 year floodplain provide a buffer for the Kissimmee River Restoration area and adjacent land uses. Therefore, it contributes to the District's core missions of flood control and natural systems restoration and enhancement.
5. The KICCO assessment parcel comprises several cypress sloughs, marshes and wet prairies, in addition to natural upland communities. The site also contains some of the River's remnant oxbows. There are only small portions of the assessment area that are pasture.
6. The southern and northern most Blanket Bay assessment areas are almost all marsh, with the exception of some small areas of pasture in the northern most area. Although the marsh has been drained from its historic condition, it still provides some level of water quality treatment, habitat for native species and perhaps flood control. The southernmost parcel contains some of the River's remnant oxbows.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- Natural resources projects should continue
- The project allows access for boating, hunting, wildlife viewing, and fishing
- The area's cultural and historic heritage is associated with the area
- Property should remain in public ownership and not be transferred to a private company that would develop the lands

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. After the river restoration and subsequent monitoring, the floodplain on both sides of this pool have been proposed for water storage by using control structures and berms. This would rehydrate the historic floodplains, benefitting wildlife, storing and cleaning water and providing recreational areas for the public.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
3. Water coming from the KICCO and Blanket Bay area, specifically Blanket Bay Slough, has concentrations of total phosphorus (average is 370 ppb, average total phosphorus concentration at S65A is 58 ppb from 1/9/2006 to 1/16/2013). If a water quality improvement project is considered in the future it could be placed upstream of Blanket Bay Slough's discharge into the river to reduce concentrations leaving S65A and further reduce loading to Lake Okeechobee from the river.
4. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however no dedicated funding for this is known.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

5. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
6. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
7. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the property has to the District's core missions, as evident from the comments, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee Prairie (pg. 123)

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 property meets SFWMD core missions due to its habitat and wildlife value.

Other comments:

- Contains some of the last intact fragments of a globally imperiled habitat type – dry prairie
- The endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow occurs on site, the species is particularly impacted by habitat fragmentation
- The Kissimmee Prairie Preserve is one of the most significant natural areas in the state

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This land fulfills all of the above goals for the District and is needed for the river restoration.
2. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
3. The lands within the 100 year floodplain have been certified to the Army Corps of Engineers and are dedicated to and available for the river restoration.
4. The habitats provided on these properties attract a diverse group of fauna including several potentially protected species. Dry prairies offer habitat for the federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrows.
5. This site contains major expanses of several wet and dry prairies ranging from rare to very rare. The western portion of the site is part of the Kissimmee River restoration project and the entire site has been established as the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. Therefore, this site contributes to the District's core missions of flood control, water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property than in conservation.

Other comments:

- The property should continue to be managed as part of the larger ecosystem

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
2. Individual parcels have potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.
3. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
2. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
3. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the property has to the District's core missions, as evident from the comments, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area (pg. 127)

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 property meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments:

- The only parcels that should be considered further for potential surplusing at the Pool D Floodplain Parcel and the portions of the CR-68 Residential parcel that are located between the protected swamp and the CR-68 right-of-way. All the other parcels should be retained, despite the altered condition of some of the parcels and limited need in support of Kissimmee River restoration. They have habitat and public uses values that merit retention in public ownership for conservation purposes.

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
2. The lands within the 100 year floodplain have been certified to the Army Corps of Engineers and are dedicated to and available for the river restoration.
3. The assessment unit meets the District's core missions of flood control, water quality protection and natural systems protection.
4. The floodplains provide stormwater attenuation, water retention and nutrient retention.
5. Comments on the Kissimmee River Restoration individual parcel assessments are provided on separate forms.
6. Several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
7. This land, like most lands on the river, fulfill all of the above goals for the District. This land is needed for the river restoration and sufficient uplands are critical as ecological buffer to the floodplain.
8. These lands are heavily used by the public for a variety of recreational purposes including nature observation, hiking, camping, equestrian uses, hunting, boating, and fishing.
9. Ownership of upland buffer lands helps to prevent conflicts with District land management activities such as Rx burning, hiking and equestrian trails near ownership boundary lines, herbicide use, and hunting.
10. District lands in this area that provide dry land access for land managers is also a very important need.
11. Retaining the current fee ownership interest in lands in this area allows the District more flexibility to provide core missions of providing public use and restoring natural systems.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
2. A boardwalk has been designed by the District to replace the existing one located in the Bluff Hammock area. The construction is subject to future budget approval.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

3. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
4. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
5. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the property has to the District's core missions, as evident from the comments, and the value as a popular public use area.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – 4Es Parcel (pg. 140)

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 property meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments:

- High rankings in the data layers are likely a result of the property being used by wildlife including the Florida Sandhill Crane, Wood Stork, and Audubon's Crested Caracara.
- The pond in the description is actually a borrow pit, but it also appears to have a littoral zone in aerial photographs.
- The pond is likely an attractant for wading birds during dry periods

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The 4Es parcel south of US 98 has little value to the river restoration because it is disjunct from the river lands; hydrologically cut off from the river watershed by the highway. That portion of the 4Es parcel north of 98 is very much needed for the river restoration.
2. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
3. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
4. The habitats provided on these properties may attract some fauna including a few potentially protected species.
5. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum have a flowage easement to support the Kissimmee River Restoration project. The majority of the site is located within the 100 year floodplain. Therefore, the site contributes to the core mission of flood control and habitat preservation/restoration.
6. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Site should be restored, including removal of exotic vegetation and planting of native species
- The property could be opened to the public, via a parking area accessible from US-98 and a trail to the pond

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The parcel south of US 98 could provide more effective support for the District's core mission through revenue generation (sale, leasing) or exchanging for other needed lands.
2. The parcel south of US 98 should be surplussed precisely because it does not contribute to the District's core mission. It was acquired, so I understand, as part of the overall 4Es parcel sales agreement since it was one parcel under one owner whom did not care to divide the property.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
2. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
3. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation: Disposal, exchange, or surplus of the District's fee-simple interest and the retention of a flowage and/or conservation easement over the portion of the property lying within the 100-year floodplain.

Basis of staff recommendation:

The fee-simple ownership of the portion of the property outside of the 100-year floodplain is not necessary for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, and its value to the District's mission is primarily indirect and minimal at best. The District's mission objectives would be adequately served with a flowage and/or conservation easement on the portion within the 100-year floodplain. Staff recognizes that this parcel came as part of the much larger parcel lying to the north of Hwy 98. This parcel is an orphaned outparcel lying separate and apart from any other land. The District's mission is best served by focusing management and restoration activities on landscape-scale areas of regional significance, rather than having limited management and restoration funding diluted by small isolated sites with limited resource value from a regional perspective.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Riverwoods Parcel (pg. 140)

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 believed the parcel meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Comments included:

- Its location within the floodplain of the Kissimmee River means the property is necessary for Flood Control purposes, as well as Natural Resource Protection and Restoration

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Besides being the home of the District's Riverwoods Field Laboratory, this parcel is an important piece of the floodplain and is required for the restoration.
2. That portion to the west of Riverwoods proper has had its large ditches backfilled as part of a scrub restoration that could also become a tortoise relocation area.
3. Those parts of the Riverwoods complex that lie outside the floodplain are a vital buffer of the floodplain from development and its associated problems.
4. The habitat provided on this property may attract many faunal species including a few potentially protected species.
5. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
6. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
7. A portion of this property lies outside the 100-year floodplain, but serves as a critical base of operations for SFWMD scientists evaluating responses to the restoration project. It also serves for public outreach/education through FAU Center for Environmental Studies and should be retained.
8. The property contributes to the District's core missions of flood control and natural systems restoration and enhancement.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- Consider formalization of the site as a field station for the uses described in the staff write-up, recognizing such uses are subject to increased water levels with the Kissimmee River restoration project.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Portions outside the 100 year floodplain could be candidates for surplus assuming the District use of these areas is not needed.
2. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

3. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
4. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
5. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the site as an operational area supporting the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Ft. Basinger Parcel (pg. 147)

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 should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments:

- Property has a high degree of historical significant and historical artifacts are present on-site.

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum, have a flowage easement to support the KRR project. Some of this site falls within the 100 year floodplain.
2. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
3. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
4. This property includes some lands outside the 100-year floodplain. These uplands provide an undeveloped buffer to the restoration project and are being restored by SFWMD Land Stewardship. The Florida Trail crosses this parcel. Additionally, this parcel is in the process of being designated as a receptor site for endangered gopher tortises that are removed from other District projects and should be retained.
5. The habitats provided on this property attracts many faunal species including several potential protected specie

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- SFWMD should continue to explore the possibility of partnering with other agencies or nonprofits for the management of this tract.

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property is well-suited to support the District's core missions as it has been chosen to be a recipient site for gopher tortoises being displaced by other District projects. This District is actively working with Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and is very close in getting the site officially certified for that purpose. In addition, the District has been restoring pine flatwoods on portions of the property. Therefore, this site contributes to the core mission of flood control and natural systems protection and restoration.
2. If approved, several hundred threatened gopher tortoises that might need to be relocated from District lands around Kissimmee River/Lake Okeechobee Region could be moved to this property at a great benefit to the District.
3. One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within it.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
2. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
3. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the site as a gopher tortoise relocation area for tortoises that must be removed from areas where District projects are being constructed.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Pearce-Lockett Estate Parcel (pg. 147)

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 the property meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained.

Comments included:

- Property has high degree of historical significance and historic artifacts are present on-site

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum, have a flowage easement to support the Kissimmee River Restoration project. Some of this site falls within the 100 year floodplain. Therefore, these area contributes to the District's core missions of flood control and natural systems restoration and enhancement.
2. The remainder of the site has historical significance.
3. The habitat provided on this property attracts many faunal species including several potentially protected species.
4. A portion of the estate lies outside the floodplain. This property is used to access a stage monitoring site needed for evaluation of the Kissimmee River Restoration Project and provides minimally developed buffer to the project.
5. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
6. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- SFWMD should continue to explore the possibility of partnering with other agencies or nonprofits for the management of this tract

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. The floodplain portion of this parcel must be retained for the river restoration, and a proper amount of upland buffer.
2. The house and outbuildings out of the floodplain should be converted into some sort of Kissimmee River Restoration Visitor Center to highlight the world-class river restoration. If not that, then plans to construct a new visitor center, perhaps in cooperation with another federal, state or private entity should be considered on the uplands of this site.
3. The upland area of this site has great historical value. It could be managed by another entity as a historical/information for the public.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

4. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
5. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
6. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation: Staff recommends the disposal, exchange, or surplus of lands lying outside of the 100-year floodplain so long as the site remains open to the public.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the site has had many interested parties that expressed an interest in developing some sort of historic or public use facility on the property. These have included: a state park, a county park, a historic museum, an agricultural museum, a hostel for hikers using the Florida Trail, and a visitor/research center associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration. Unfortunately, none of these proposals have panned out. The District has neither the funding available nor the specialized expertise necessary to restore the historic buildings to a condition suitable to public use, and the site deteriorates further every year that a willing partner is not found.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – 52-Acre Hammock Parcel (pg. 152)

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 property meets SFWMD core mission of natural resource protection and restoration and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments:

- The oak hammock adds significant ecological value to nearby wetland areas
- The ecotones between wet and dry areas are ecologically significant

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This land provides important buffer to the restored river and its floodplain.
2. This property provides recreational activities to the public. Finally, this parcel harbors regionally important Native American mounds and artifacts, as well as the only known habitat for the Florida worm lizard (*Rhineura floridana*) on the river.
3. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
4. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
5. A portion of the property lies outside the 100-year floodplain. This section provides upland buffer for the project and will provide construction access for Reach III backfilling and therefore, should be retained.
6. The habitats provided on this property attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species.
7. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum have a flowage easement to support the KRR project. The majority of the site is located within the 100 year floodplain. Therefore, the site contributes to the core mission of flood control and habitat preservation/restoration.
8. In its current state, the site is an oak hammock and protecting this natural system contributes to Natural systems protection core mission.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Consider improvements to public access

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Better access is needed from land.
2. Surplussing this parcel could result in development producing human activity and associated water pollution (herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer, etc.) and degradation of the scrub here.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

3. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
4. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
5. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Although it is small and has poor access from the landward side, staff recognizes that most of the site falls within the 100-year floodplain, contains a mature oak hammock over its entirety, contains cultural resources, is contiguous to other District lands, and is accessible to the public from the river.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – River Acres Floodplain Parcel (pg. 140)

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 varied as to the value of maintaining this parcel in SFWMD ownership.

Comments included:

- SFWMD should keep this property because it falls within the topographic contours of the Kissimmee River floodplain and was a property SFWMD was required to acquire under agreements with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in connection with the Kissimmee River Restoration Project
- This is one of the only properties that may be appropriate to consider for surplussing

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding. Although this parcel will not experience environmental benefits, it lies within the project topographic footprint. Therefore, acquisition was required per the same guidelines.
2. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
3. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum, have a flowage easement to support the Kissimmee River Restoration project. The majority of the site is highly disturbed water retention area, but it appears that it is located within the 5 and 100 year floodplains.
4. The habitat provided on this property may attract some limited fauna including a few potentially protected species.
5. The parcel is a management responsibility for the District and, in its current use, does not contribute to the District's core mission as originally intended.
6. This isolated circa 100 wetland offers only a small restoration and wetland benefit.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- Consider restoration of the property, including removal of exotic plants.



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Summary of *SME* comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.
2. Okeechobee Field Station requires this property for future maintenance needs.
3. Removing from District responsibility would free up land management staff to better support other areas that are more core mission-related.
4. This property has a high cost-to-benefit ratio regarding restoration vs. perpetual maintenance.
5. Selling or exchanging the 100 acre parcel to acquire property more important for District needs.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

6. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
7. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
8. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that, because most of the site falls within the 5-year floodplain, it must remain in district ownership. It is unlikely that a successful restoration of this drained and highly disturbed area could be accomplished in a manner that is feasible from a cost-benefit perspective. Staff should re-evaluate this property for the continued ownership and use of the site once all the post-restoration monitoring requirements for the Kissimmee River are fulfilled.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Chandler Slough Lofton Frontage Parcel (pg. 159)

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 should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

Other comments:

- The pasture is important to several bird species, such as Audubon's Crested Caracara, Florida Sandhill Crane, and Bald Eagle

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. These lands support all of the above-mentioned District missions. These properties are important buffers to the floodplain of the river, provide both public and District access to our properties, and act as public recreation areas.
2. This is a high-use area for public recreation; there is a trailhead established on this land that provides access to nearby camp sites.
3. The land management plan for these lands is to restore the pine overstory and to eventually restore the groundcover to native species to replace the existing improved pasture of exotic grasses.
4. The buffer provided by these lands protect the river from development and associated problems such as polluted runoff. Neighbor conflicts with District activities such as Rx burning, vegetation management, hunting and other public uses is also lessened.
5. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
6. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
7. A portion of this parcel lies outside the 100-year floodplain. It provides undeveloped upland buffer to the restoration project and is part of the Chandler Slough Public Use area established in conjunction with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and should be retained.
8. The habitats provided on this property attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species
9. As a requirement for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum have a flowage easement to support the KRR project. The majority of the site is located within the 100 year floodplain. Therefore, the site contributes to the core mission of flood control and habitat preservation/restoration.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Keep it as buffer and restore the natural systems.
2. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within this area.
3. The Okeechobee Field Station requires the property for future maintenance.
4. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.
5. The southeast portion of the assessment area outside of the 100 year floodplain could be a potential candidate for exchange or surplus.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

6. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
7. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
8. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value to land management operations of having the ownership extend to the road, and the complications to land management activities that are saved by not having a narrow strip of developed infrastructure between the natural area and the road. Staff further recognizes the utilization of the area as a trailhead of the Florida Trail.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Kissimmee River Restoration Area – Lamb Island – County Road 68 Parcels (pg. 159)

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 varied as to the value of maintaining this parcel in SFWMD ownership.

Comments included:

- Property meets SFWMD core mission and should be retained
- Property provides continuity between SR-68 and the Cypress Swamp
- The parcel has higher scores in the data layers than the nearby Cypress Swamp
- The portions of the parcel located between the cypress swamp and the CR-68 right of way is one of the few areas that could be considered for surplussing

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. These properties provide important buffer to the second largest (after Istokpoga Canal) tributary to the river. Acquisition of other lands to fill in gaps in the ownership of the floodplain and associated buffer would serve the District's core mission. Upland areas (road frontage lots) are important buffers and management access corridors. Currently there is a public use trailhead in this area with plans for additional passive recreational use.
2. The majority of the property serves as an important buffer and provides opportunity for restoration of important natural systems.
3. The habitats provided on these properties attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species.
4. This parcel is adjacent to the Kissimmee River floodplain and is located on a major tributary to the Kissimmee River. Although it occurs outside the 100-year floodplain required for the project, it contains a cypress swamp, which is a relatively rare on the floodplain.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

5. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
6. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- Consider restoration of any disturbed areas as funds become available or as can be arranged through mitigation requirements

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. The residential lots along County Road 68 within the assessment area may be good candidates for surplus or exchange.
2. This parcel provides an undeveloped buffer to the restoration project and should be considered to be retained.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

3. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
4. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
5. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the residential lot with a house on it is being used as officer housing. Staff also recognizes that the other parcel has a trailhead and provides land management access to the swamp. Staff should re-evaluate this property for the continued ownership and use of the site if the parcel with the house is no longer needed as officer housing.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Istokpoga Floodplain (pg. 166)

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 the area outside the floodplain does meet SFWMD core missions, due to its value to wildlife, and limiting development.

Other comments:

- Preventing development and intensification of land use supports several of SFWMD's core missions.
- The property is adjacent to other conservation lands and retention of the property is important to maintain landscape connectivity.
- The property serves as a wildlife corridor linking the Lake Wales and Kissimmee River Valley system.

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, provides key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property was purchased to secure the floodplain for water from the Istokpoga Canal after Kissimmee River restoration. The floodplain and some adequate amount of buffer land are important to the District's core mission.
2. The habitats provided on this property attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species
3. This property is essential for the federally-authorized Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Land requirements for the project were based on three factors: environmental restoration, flood control operations, and induced flooding.
4. The lands within the 100 year floodplain have been certified to the Army Corps of Engineers and are dedicated to and available for the river restoration.
5. Currently, the District is reviewing this property for potential recreational opportunities. The focus of the review has been around the 200+/- acre hammock located at the south end of the property adjacent to the Istokpoga canal.
6. Lands within the 5 year flood plain must remain in District fee simple ownership and lands between the 5 year flood plain and the 100 year flood plain must, at a minimum, have a flowage easement to support the Kissimmee River Restoration project. Portions of the assessment area are located within the 100 year floodplain.
7. The Istokpoga Canal and associated hammock runs along the south border of the assessment area. Furthermore, the southern portion of the area, and to a lesser extent the northern portion, provides a corridor between state owned lands to the west and the Kissimmee River. These areas of the assessment area contribute to the District's core missions of flood protection and natural system protection and restoration.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Cattle grazing is the best use until restoration can be completed
- SFWMD should continue to explore opportunities for public use

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Lands outside of that needed for floodplain and upland buffer could be sold or exchanged to support core District needs in other areas
2. A youth hunt on this property would provide public use. Hiking, horse riding, camping and other compatible uses would benefit public users.
3. Exchange or surplus of lands outside the floodplain and needed upland buffer would enable the acquisition of other lands more important to the District's core mission.
4. The project purpose is environmental restoration; lands needed to achieve this purpose should be fully available and unconstrained. Therefore, lands for restoration are required in fee to ensure the purpose can be met over the life of the project.
5. Water from the Istokpoga Floodplain area includes the Istokpoga Canal, which flows into Pool C of the Kissimmee River Restoration project. The Istokpoga Floodplain unit provides an opportunity to reduce concentrations, and loading, from Lake Istokpoga that discharge into the restored Kissimmee River.
6. Okeechobee Field Station requires retention of access road to S-67, S-67 parcel, & maintenance access along Istokpoga Canal
7. The parcel has limited potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.
8. Future recreational opportunities being considered for this site include managed or organized events such as camping, specialty hunts, or scout events.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

9. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
10. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
11. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the lands outside of the floodplain have limited contribution to the District's mission in its present use as cattle operation. Staff further recognized that the property may be suitable for the construction of water treatment or storage facilities. The District should re-evaluate the continued ownership and use of the site once the Basin Management Action Plan is developed. There are several ways in which the property could provide dispersed water management benefits while serving as a wildlife corridor link to other public lands.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Pool E / Paradise Run (pg. 170)

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 believed the parcel meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

- The Paradise Run Restoration was an original component of the USACE Central & Southern Florida Project.
- Much of the original channel and oxbow footprint remains intact in the Paradise Run segment.
- Several FWC studies have documented the ecological importance of Paradise Run, including a high abundance of winter waterfowl and wading bird foraging activity and a significant availability of foraging habitat for wading birds in the northern Lake Okeechobee area during high water times.
- If the property was sold to a private party, the impacts of development on the Kissimmee Restoration Project must be carefully weighed

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The S-65E Impoundment, listed as part of the right-of-way lands in Pool E, is another remnant of lands once slated for the river restoration. The restoration will not extend this far south. This parcel does store and perhaps cleans C-38 water, and can be flooded because the District owns it. There is a camp site on one of the islands in this complex.
2. The habitats provided on these properties attract many faunal species including several potentially protected.
3. This property likely was acquired in anticipation of lands required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Originally, the southern extent of the project continued into Pool E of the system and would have included floodplain lands associated with this property. However, revisions to the project were made that stopped construction within Pool D and Paradise Run Restoration was identified as a locally preferred option that could be completed by SFWMD without cost-share capabilities afforded to the fully authorized project.
4. In its current state, the majority of the properties contain portions of the Kissimmee River floodplain and associated wetlands and, therefore, contribute to the District's core missions of water quality protection, flood control and natural systems protection. The flood plain portions provide stormwater attenuation, water quality treatment and habitat.
5. These lands lie outside of the area that established the acquisition need and therefore, are not required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project
6. A Natural Resources conservation Service Conservation Plan is underway with lessee using Dispersed Water Management alternatives for water storage. This project meets multiple aspects of the District's core mission.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- For restoration to move forward, remaining parcels must be acquired.
- Parcels within the North of Lake Unit are located near adjoining private lands with owners that hold parcels within the Paradise Run wetland footprint. The North of Lake units should be used for land swaps to acquire the necessary remaining private wetlands within the Paradise Run footprint.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. These parcels do not contribute to the river restoration project and require District land management resources. A sale or exchange could provide needed resources for District core missions.
2. One best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within it.
3. The CERP Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) project identified the paradise run portion of this assessment area as a wetland restoration project. It is also the location of a CERP pilot Aquifer Storage and Recovery well and has potential for additional ASR wells. The CERP LOW project is awaiting congressional authorization and appropriation.
4. The portion of the property to the northeast of the Paradise Run pasture parcel, west of the Kissimmee river and south of the C-41A canal is proposed as a wetland restoration project at the ecologically significant confluence of Paradise Run, the oxbows of the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee. Other areas could contribute more towards the core missions of water quality and natural systems protection/restoration if restoration/enhancement activities were undertaken, but there is no known funding source to do this.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

5. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
6. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
7. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of this site as a regionally significant wetland resource, as a popular public use area, and an important wildlife corridor link between Lake Okeechobee and the restored Kissimmee River. Staff further recognizes the future potential for restoration of the area if a dedicated funding source could be identified and made available for such purpose.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Pool E / Paradise Run – Yates Marsh Parcel (pg. 176)

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 believed the parcel meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained in SFWMD ownership.

- The Yates Marsh proximity to the Kissimmee river makes it important to the well-being of the river and ultimately Lake Okeechobee.
- Besides its environmental impact it also provides a critical link in the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), without which the NST would have to implement a long and dangerous road walk for hikers using the trail
- If the property was sold to a private party, the impacts of development on the Kissimmee Restoration Project must be carefully weighed

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. The assessment parcel comprises drained and disturbed marsh lands and lies partially within and historic floodplain, in addition to improved cattle pasture. The flood plain and marsh portions provide stormwater attenuation and water quality treatment and contribute to the District's core missions of water quality protection, flood control and natural systems protection and restoration.
2. The entire site is established as part of the Kissimmee River Public Use area which provides public use and hunting opportunities and the Florida National Scenic Trail also transverses the property.
3. A Natural Resources Conservation Service Plan is under development with the Lessee for implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.
4. This property likely was acquired in anticipation of lands required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project. Originally, the southern extent of the project continued into Pool E of the system and would have included floodplain lands associated with this property. However, revisions to the project were made that stopped construction within Pool D. Therefore, these lands are not required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
5. Okeechobee Field Station requires retention of the lands immediately adjacent to S-65D - western portion of the parcel.
6. This property was purchased for the river restoration when it was thought the project would extend this far south (Pool D). Even so, the portion of old river floodplain adjacent to the C-38 has been proposed as a water storage/ wetland restoration.
7. The upland portion harboring the remnants of a pine flatwoods system is an excellent location for a tortoise relocation site and is proposed for a forest and ground cover restoration site as well. The forested upland has already been used to relocate tortoises from a canal bank owned and maintained by the District.
8. This area has a trailhead at each end and two camp sites. It is heavily used by the public for recreation.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other Comments:

- The property is used by hunters and hikers and is essential to the FNST

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Additional efforts to further restoration and/or water storage/retention at the site could further the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.
2. There is potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
2. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
3. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the improved pasture outside of the floodplain contributes little to the District's mission in its present use as cattle operation. Staff further recognized that the property is part of the established Public Use Area, and is a valuable tract for the Florida Trail. The site may be suitable for the construction of water treatment or storage facilities, the site should be further evaluated for those purposes through a feasibility study. The District should re-evaluate the continued ownership and use of the site once a feasibility study is complete.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Pool E / Paradise Run / Telex Marsh outparcel (pg. 176)

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 comments were received regarding this portion of the parcel individually.

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. This property was purchased for the river restoration when it was thought the project would extend this far south (Pool D). This parcel is not required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
2. This parcel does not lend itself to hydrologic restoration or water storage.
3. It is under a fifty year lease to Okeechobee County, Parks & Recreation and currently has limited public access.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 comments were received regarding this portion of the parcel individually.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. Sale or exchange of this property would provide resources that could be used in areas more central to the District's core mission.
2. Donation to another governmental entity would free the District from land management oversight.
3. Perhaps the Okeechobee County Public Park would be interested in expanding the adjacent park into this area.
4. Excluding the portion of the assessment area that appears to include a portion of this oxbow, it is likely that this parcel is a candidate for donation, exchange or surplus.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

5. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
6. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
7. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Recommendation: Staff recommends that any such portion of the site for which Okeechobee County has no interest in managing under the existing lease, be approved for disposal, exchange, or surplus subject to an acceptable conservation easement along the bank of the oxbow channel.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the site is managed by Okeechobee County under a long-term lease, and therefore is managed at no cost to the District. However, the site is an isolated outparcel and serves little benefit to the District's core missions. Staff further recognizes that the County accepted the management of the property primarily because of the launch facility on the northern end.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Kissimmee River – Pool E / Paradise Run / Spoil Sites (pg. 183)

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 comments were received regarding this portion of the parcel individually.

Comments relating to all parcels in the Kissimmee River unit indicated the entire Kissimmee River project functions as an important wildlife corridor (black bears have been tracked along the entire length of the Kissimmee River), protects the headwaters of the Everglades, key linkages with other conservation lands, and that they generally believe all properties are critical for restoration and landscape-level conservation of the Kissimmee River area. Respondents indicated protection of wildlife and natural resources from development was a critical component of maintaining these lands in SFWMD ownership.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

1. These properties were purchased for the river restoration when it was thought the project would extend this far south. They have limited value from a natural systems, water storage or natural systems restoration perspective due to their size, location and/or existing natural values.
2. Originally, the southern extent of the Kissimmee River Restoration project continued into Pool E of the system and would have included floodplain lands associated with this property. However, revisions to the project were made that stopped construction within Pool D. Therefore, these properties are not required for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
3. The northern spoil site is highly disturbed with pasture grasses, Brazilian pepper and cabbage palms and likely does not contribute to the District's core missions in its current state.
4. The southern spoil site is primarily highly disturbed, but contains portions of oxbow and what appears to be wetlands along the southern portion of the assessment area.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

1. The Kissimmee River region provides outstanding opportunities for camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and equestrian use. Additionally, several miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses through District properties in this region.
2. The land associated with the Kissimmee River Restoration is critical to moving forward with the final phases of the project and provides protection out to the hundred year flood plain.

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 comments were received regarding this portion of the parcel individually.

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

1. Their sale or exchange could provide resources to be directed to District core missions.
2. Efforts to restore the site could contribute to the District's core missions; however, no dedicated funding for this is known.
3. It is likely that this parcel would be a good candidate for donation, exchange or surplus because it does not contribute to the District's core mission, the landscape is highly altered; however, a conservation easement or similar protection measures over the oxbow and associated adjacent lands would be recommended.

Regarding the Kissimmee River properties generally

4. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.
5. Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Actoin Plan process and these large sacale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load target.
6. The existing public use and recreation in the region should continue to be supported.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the parcels be approved for disposal, exchange, or surplus subject to an acceptable conservation easement along the bank of the oxbow channel on the southern parcel.

Basis of staff recommendation:

This parcel is an orphaned outparcel lying separate and apart from any other land. The District's mission is best served by focusing management and restoration activities on landscape-scale areas of regional significance, rather than having limited management and restoration funding diluted by small isolated sites with limited resource value from a regional perspective.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – North of Lake (pg. 193)

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 the area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained.

Other comments:

- Though the project for which the properties were originally acquired do not appear to have ongoing viability, the area have significant value associated with SFWMD core missions
- The area received high habitat values due to the fact that the pastureland mimics many of the habitat features of the old Kissimmee Prairie ecosystem and attracts many of the same species

Comments relating to all parcels

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- These assessment units are primarily cattle leases which do not further the District's core missions. However, most of the NE three sites contain some of the Paradise Run floodplains.
- The properties north of the lake (mostly improved pasture) provide some benefit to the core missions relative to if they were developed, but provide little benefit in terms of natural systems protection and restoration.
- Improved pasture is not as beneficial as the original ecosystem in this area (marsh, wetlands) for flood control, water quality protection/improvements and water supply.
- Cattle grazing on improved pasture, especially this close to Lake Okeechobee is detrimental to water quality protection/improvements for the lake, since runoff from this type of habitat is generally high in nutrient content.
- The habitats provided on these properties attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species.
- A Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Plan underway with lessee using Dispersed Water Management alternatives for water storage. This project meets multiple aspects of the District's core mission.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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.

Comments included:

- There is not a better use of the property
- If the district is not going to utilize these tracts for a water storage/STA type facility, it is possible that a creative land exchange could be initiated using these tracts with the objective of completing acquisition of the Paradise Run project area immediately to the east of these parcels. Such a land exchange would require retention of a conservation easement on the properties to be traded away, as these properties have considerable conservation value and it would be difficult to justify a claim that these properties are "no longer needed for conservation".

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

- Restoring these properties to wetlands or marsh habitat would provide additional benefits to the District's core missions, especially water quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration.
- Public access (e.g. construction of a boardwalk on one of the properties) would provide opportunities to educate the public as to the importance of wetland and marsh habitat to further enhance the District core missions regarding the water quality protection and environmental restoration of Lake Okeechobee.
- The Okeechobee Field Station has no interest in these parcels with the exception of the immediate areas adjoining L-59
- One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within it.
- These parcels are located strategically at the southern portions in the Indian Prairie Sub-watershed which contribute one of the highest unit area loads of the 9 sub-watersheds in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. As mentioned in the Land Use Assessment, information indicates that these sites were purchased to provide water storage and treatment; however, there are no funds identified to design and implement such projects in the near-term.
- One of the components of CERP Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project, more specifically the Paradise Run Wetland Restoration, is located on a portion of Parcel MD100-17. No other projects under CERP are planned for the other parcels south of MD100-17.
- The assessment area (excluding the portion for the Paradise Run Wetland Restoration) is a good candidate for donation, exchange or surplus because it does not contribute to the District's core mission.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation:

Disposal, exchange, or surplus of the District's fee-simple interest, on those southernmost parcels in this assessment area. Seek opportunities to exchange lands in the northern most parcels not needed for the implementation of Basin Management Action Plan for consolidation with other lands along the Kissimmee River.

Land Within the Paradise Run Floodplain:

Retain ownership and management of lands within the Paradise Run floodplain, along with an adequate buffer to benefit land management operations and to facilitate public access.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that this property, in its present state and under its present agricultural use provides only incidental and indirect contributions towards the District's core missions. Staff recognizes that the sites were historically wet prairie, but had been converted and used for improved cattle pasture. While useful as an interim management tool, it does not fall within the scope of the District's core mission to maintain an agricultural use as a primary use of the land.

Staff further recognizes that there are water-treatment, storage, and habitat restoration needs within the Lake Okeechobee watershed. The current watershed planning initiatives, such as BMAP, and Northern Everglades, are expected to identify those needs. The sale or exchange of this land could provide the financial resource to develop the necessary projects where they most-needed to be developed. Another alternative, proposed by several commenters at the land assessment public meeting, would be the sale of these lands to fund the acquisition of land in support of restoration of the Paradise Run/Pool E floodplain and historic river system.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – Lemkin Creek (pg. 197)

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 the area meets SFWMD core missions and should be retained.

Other comments:

- This tract is an active pilot project involving nutrient removal through algal turf scrubbers and similar technological innovations.
- It may also serve as the site to deploy and evaluate other technological means of water cleanup.
- The core mission, as it relates to flood control, might not be adequately addressed with the implementation of the Lemkin Creek project.
- The City of Okeechobee is in dire need of flood control initiatives. It's the City's belief that the Lemkin Creek project will provide minimal flood control relief and SFWMD should explore alternate methods to address same.
- In order to expand the project to include a flood control component, it would be necessary to substantively increase the land area, or footprint involved for water retention; making a real difference in the amount of storm event, flood water retention that is diverted from the primary effluent ditches of the City.

Comments relating to all parcels

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- The western portion of the property (west of Wolff Ditch) contains two operational Hybrid Wetland Treatment facilities and a pond (old rock borrow pit) that hydrates wetlands downstream. This portion of the site contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
- The eastern portion of the property (east of Wolff Ditch) is an abandoned rock mining operation that is planned for the implementation of the Lemkin Creek Urban Stormwater Project to provide water storage and water quality improvement.
- In addition to its current use as a water quality improvement site, the wetland on the Lemkin property has become an important location relative to natural systems protection and restoration. Since rehydrateion the Lemkin wetland has developed into a low nutrient eleocharis marsh. District staff have converted a portion of it into a bulrush nursery from which plants can be harvested for other Lake O restoration activities and it is the site of a native apple snail hatchery whose production is used for apple snail stock enhancement activities. The wetland is also providing foraging opportunites for a variety of wading bird species as well as for the endangered Everglades snail kite.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/qauity, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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:

Public comments indicated the property itself was not sufficient to provide flood protection to the area.

Comments included:

- The acquisition of the property immediately to the south for the purpose of expanding the project and intercepting further stormwater flows from the City of Okeechobee should be expedited.
- While water quality improvement may be the parcel's highest use, the area has a much greater need for flood control
- Without increasing the area of the project and to some extent modifying the scope to include additional water retention, the effectiveness for flood control will be compromised.

Summary of SME comments:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

- There is not a better use of the western portion of the property. For the 90 acres East of Wolff Ditch, the District is planning on moving forward with a stormwater treatment facility.
- Some additional vegetation management activities would help to maintain the marsh; specifically cattail and torpedo grass (both legacy plants from before rehydration) would benefit from control activities. Also, since the site is regularly visited from the Lemkin Creek side by commercial airboat tour operators, some signage at the weir at the outflow end of the wetland would help to promote the District's core mission to the visiting public.
- This facility likely attracts many species of wading birds as well as other migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation: Staff recommends continuing the management and development of the project, and to seek opportunities for acquiring the land necessary for completing the development of the project. Staff further recommends the development of a vegetation management plan for the marsh and to find opportunities for compatible recreation opportunities.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of this project area to the District's core missions as expressed by the SME comments. As a point of clarification, the State owns the wetland portion of the property referenced in the SME comments.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – Grassy Island / Taylor Creek (pg. 201)

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 the area meets SFWMD core missions, due to its value to wildlife.

Other comments:

- The STA facility which is proposed for eventual expansion is an important water quality improvement feature north of Lake Okeechobee.

Comments relating to all parcels

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- The habitats provided on these properties attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species. Many species of migratory bird (such as wood ducks, mottled ducks, osprey, purple gallinules, great blue herons, black-necked stilts, and Florida sandhill cranes) are known to nest within Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area. These properties fall within the core foraging range of multiple wood stork nesting colonies. One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within it.
- This area has been very well used for recreation. The Taylor Creek STA property, managed in partnership with Okeechobee County, is a very popular site for the local community to hike, nature view, and bike. In addition, a boardwalk has been designed by District engineers and would be constructed subject to future budget approval.
- The Grassy Island portion of the property on the west side of Hillard Rd. supports a very successful youth hunting program. The eastern portion of Grassy Island provides equestrian use and has one of the top bike trails in the State which is maintained by local volunteers.
- The portion of the property that includes the Taylor Creek Pilot STA (east of Taylor Creek) and the Grassy Island Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology site (northeast portion of the property) contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
- The remainder of the property is managed through grazing leases and its current state does not contribute to the District's core missions.
- A Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Plan is under development with the Lessee for implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Expansion of the current STA facility would be desirable
- Continue to permit public access
- The tract provides excellent opportunity for recreation, exercise, and nature interpretation very close to the City of Okeechobee; consideration should be given to the expansion of these opportunities

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

- The site contains the footprint for the Taylor Creek Reservoir which is a key component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project proposed tentatively selected plan. There have been delays in the implementation of the CERP Lake Okeechobee Watershed Plan primarily due to unresolved cost-sharing issues.
- The District is performing a feasibility study at the site on Parcels HF100-005 and HF100-006 west of NW 50th Drive to evaluate alternatives or options for the site including water quality or water storage options, conservation or potentially surplus the property.
- The southern portion of the parcel west of NW 50th Drive has use limitations due to its proximity to the Okeechobee Airport and Federal Aviation Administration restrictions on its use.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation:

1. Land East of NW 50th St. continue the use and management of the property as-is.
2. Land West of NW 50th St: defer until there is a recommendation from the ongoing feasibility study referenced in the SME comments above.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the completed Stormwater Treatment Area east Taylor Creek, and the value of the floodplain resources, the habitat value, and the public uses on the land west of Taylor Creek and East of NW 50th Street.

Staff further recognizes that land west of NW 50th Street has potential to contribute more to the District's core missions through dispersed water management or through the development of water storage and treatment facilities. These potential uses are currently being evaluated through the development of a feasibility study.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – Nubbin Slough (pg. 209)

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.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD's core missions and should be retained.
- Completion of the proposed STA will enhance benefits to SFWMD's core missions
- Some parcels are not being used for SFWMD's mission
- The area should be retained as it is being used to catch water off adjoining lands to be clean runoff

Comments relating to the triangle parcel

Public comments indicated that while the triangle shaped area outside the impoundment boundary has little environmental value; however it is adjacent to a public road and may be a useful site for the development of a visitor entrance and parking area similar to the facility at Grassy Island/Taylor Creek.

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- The habitats provided on this property attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species. Many species of migratory bird (such as mottled ducks, black-necked stilts, and Florida sandhill cranes) are known to nest within Nubbin Slough STA. This property falls within the core foraging range of at least one wood stork nesting colony.
- Improved pasture is not as beneficial as marsh or wetland habitat for flood control, water quality protection/improvements and water supply. Cattle grazing on improved pasture, especially this close to the water quality treatment cell and Lake Okeechobee is detrimental to water quality protection/improvements for the lake, since runoff from this type of habitat is generally high in nutrient content.
- The portion of the property that includes the Nubbin Slough STA project (approximately the southern 1/2 of the property) contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.

Regarding the triangle parcel

- The habitat provided on this property attracts a few faunal species including some potentially protected species.
- The portion that is improved pasture and degraded pasture (the triangle portion) provides little benefit in terms of natural systems protection and restoration.
- The Triangle Parcel, does not contribute to the District's core missions.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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.

Comments included:

- There is not a better use of the property
- There may be future opportunities for public access and wildlife viewing
- This is surplus land that is not contributing to SFWMD's missions; it should be made available and sold to the public. SFWMD can fund its ongoing projects from the proceeds, SFWMD will benefit from extra tax revenue, and the community will benefit from increased economic activity.
- Progress on completion of the STA should continue
- Visitor access similar to Grassy Island/ Taylor Creek should be added

Comments relating to the triangle parcel

Consider a visitor use parking area



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- One of the best uses for these properties is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within it.
- Upon completion of the project the District is planning on allowing public use opportunities which would be consistent with the purposes of the project. The site may a very popular recreation area for the residents of Okeechobee similar to the Taylor Creek STA property.
- Converting the improved and degraded pasture portion of the property to wetlands, marsh or forested habitat would provide additional benefits to the District's core missions, especially water quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration.
- Limited public access (e.g. construct a short boardwalk) would provide opportunities to educate the public as to the importance of wetland, marsh and forested habitat to further enhance the District core missions regarding the water quality protection and environmental restoration of Lake Okeechobee.
- The remainder of the property, excluding the Triangle Parcel, has potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.
- Portions of the property outside of the project footprint may be good candidates for exchange or surplus as they do not contribute to the District's core missions and no known projects are planned on these lands.

Regarding the triangle parcel

- The Okeechobee Field Station has no interest in this parcel.
- Portions of the property outside of the project footprint may be good candidates for exchange or surplus as they do not contribute to the District's core missions and no known projects are planned on these lands.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation: Staff recommends continuing the completion of the stormwater treatment cell. Staff further recommends developing dispersed water management and public recreation features on the northern portion of the site. Staff recommends the disposal, exchange, or surplus of the portions of the property outside of the project footprint that do not contribute to the District's core mission.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the value of the stormwater treatment cell towards the reduction of nutrients flowing into the Lake. Staff further recognizes the addition benefit that would be realized from developing dispersed water management and wetland restoration features. Staff recognizes that due to the close proximity of this property to the City of Okeechobee, there is potential for the development of popular recreation opportunities on portions of the property. Staff also recognizes the minimal contribution to the District's core mission of upland pastures lying outside of the project boundary.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – Lakeside Ranches (pg. 214)

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 the area meets SFWMD core missions, due to its value to wildlife, contributions to water quality, and limiting development.

Other comments:

- The area was purchased to provide treatment of water coming off adjoining properties; this provides a benefit to protecting and reducing nutrient loading into larger water bodies

Comments relating to all parcels

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- The northern portion of the property west of the L64 Canal includes Phase I of the Lakeside Ranch STA which was recently constructed and start-up operations are anticipated in water year 2014. This portion of the property contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
- The portions of the property outside of the STA, does not contribute to the District's core missions in its current state.
- This property provides some benefit to the core missions relative to if they were developed, but the 2/3rds of the property that is improved pasture provides little benefit in terms of natural systems protection and restoration. Improved pasture is not as beneficial as marsh or wetland habitat for flood control, water quality protection/improvements and water supply. Cattle grazing on improved pasture, especially this close to Lake Okeechobee is detrimental to water quality protection/improvements for the lake, since runoff from this type of habitat is generally high in nutrient content.
- The multiple habitats provided on this property attract many faunal species including several potentially protected species.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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 was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Completion of the STA and management of the remainder of the site for wildlife habitat.
- The forested area is important in conjunction with the re-created wetlands in the STA as a roosting site for birds that will feed in the STA
- Recreational access features should be added as soon as practical

Summary of SME comments:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Regarding this property in particular

- The site contains the footprint for both the Lakeside Ranch STA and the Brady Ranch STA which are key components of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project proposed tentatively selected plan. There have been delays in the implementation of the project primarily due to unresolved cost-sharing issues.
- Design of the Phase II of the Lakeside Ranch STA has been completed for the southern portion of the property west of the L64 Canal. Performance of Lakeside Ranch Phase I will inform decisions regarding the construction of Phase II. The lands east of the L64 canal include the proposed Brady Ranch STA.
- If either Lakeside Ranch Phase II or Brady Ranch STA move forward, the lands they comprise would contribute to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
- The parcel has potential for the development and implementation of water retention and wetland restoration as part of the Dispersed Water Management Program.
- Converting the improved pasture and vacant agricultural portion of the property to wetlands, marsh or forested habitat would provide additional benefits to the District's core missions, especially water quality protection/improvements and natural systems protection and restoration.
- One of the best uses for this property is for it to remain as a preserve for the numerous species within it.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation: Staff recommends continuing the management and ownership of the Lakeside Ranch – Phase I, as is. Staff recommends continuing the implementation of a dispersed water management in the Phase II area. Staff recommends reducing the density of cattle operations on the southern portion of the property to be more compatible with water-quality goals and to increase public access to the property.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that there is no imminent cost-share agreement for the construction of water quality treatment facilities on the portions of the property left out of the first phase of construction. Staff further recognizes that a reduction in the intensity of the cattle grazing operation under the existing lease to that which is necessary for vegetation management would provide some immediate water quality improvements while keeping vegetation management costs in-check. Staff further recognizes that the natural area near the center of the southern portion of the property would be valuable as a public use area in the interim period and following project development.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Lake Okeechobee – Lake Okeechobee Islands (pg. 220)

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 the area meets SFWMD core missions, due to its value to wildlife, contributions to water quality, and limiting development.

Other comments:

- The purpose of these islands is to allow SFWMD maximum flexibility in the potential operating range of Lake Okeechobee
- There is limited quality emergent marsh in the southern area of Lake Okeechobee. Degradation of perimeter and internal levees, backfilling of internal ditches, and removal of derelict water control structures on Ritta, Torry, and Kreamer Islands would allow connection of these lands with the lake proper.
- Current plant communities on these islands are typied by species, native and exotic, with low fish and wildlife habitat value.
- Removal of impediments to water flow across these islands will result in improved water quality and development of conditions conducive to establishment of desirable native plant species. Ritta Island external levees were degraded into the borrow ditch in 2004; however, internal ditches remain.

Comments relating to all parcels

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- The Observation Island portion of the property are wetlands located in the Lake Okeechobee Western Marsh and contributes to the District's core missions of water quality protection and natural systems protection and restoration.
- The islands in the lake provide some benefit to the core missions relative to when they were farmed, or if they were developed, but could provide additional benefit in terms of natural systems protection and restoration.
- There are areas of Ritta, Kreamer and Torry islands which contain very dense non-native vegetation (e.g. water lettuce, castor bean) or invasive natives (e.g. cattail), which likely restrict utilization by native wildlife, relative to the amount of habitat utilization that occurred prior to transformation of the land for farming.
- The islands are one of the few locations where the endangered Okeechobee Gourd has been identified and also contain excellent remnant examples of the pond apple (*Anona glabra*) stands that once covered the entire southern region of the Lake.
- Considerable effort and expense has been incurred in recent years in planting pond apple and other native vegetation on these islands.
- Due to their low elevations and location within the Herbert Hoover dike, any use or development of these islands would almost invariably lead to additional nutrient runoff and negatively impact our efforts to achieve the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Load.
- The habitats provided on these islands attract many faunal species for nesting/breeding activities including some potentially protected species. Observation Island also falls within the core foraging range of a wood stork nesting colony.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- These properties all currently further at least one of the District's core missions. These projects positively impact the water supply/quality, flood control and natural resources' protection in this region.

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:



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Comments indicated respondents did not believe there was a better use of the property.

Other comments:

- Environmental restoration efforts should be intensified – consider partnering with FFWCC
- Visitor access, both day use and overnight camping, could be developed as public uses

Summary of SME comments:

Regarding this property in particular

- If they are not needed for the regulation schedule, then perhaps they would be good candidates for donation to a local government for recreation and preservation management.
- Providing consistent vegetation management would provide additional benefits to the District's core missions of natural systems protection and restoration.
- Providing additional public access (e.g. construction of a nature center and boardwalks) for supervised passive recreation would provide opportunities to educate the public as to the importance of wetland and marsh habitat to further enhance the District core missions regarding the environmental restoration of Lake Okeechobee.
- One of the best uses for these properties is for them to remain as preserves for the numerous species within them.

Regarding the Lake Okeechobee properties generally

- With the recent announcement of a Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan being developed, these areas may be used for future water quality projects that may assist the District to meet the Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Loads. The District units near Lake Okeechobee may be used on projects that will result in achieving further load reductions in the area.
- Much of this region is still going through the Basin Management Action Plan process and these large scale management initiatives have not yet identified what future restoration projects and efforts will be needed in order to reach the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Loads. These larger management initiatives have not identified how these properties could be used in the future, but more restoration projects that improve water quality and the timing of flows to Lake Okeechobee will be needed to achieve the target. Water storage is a critical issue north of the lake and any opportunities to better utilize these properties for this purpose will need to be identified.

Recommendation: Seek opportunities to negotiate the transfer of ownership and management to another public entity or organization, while retaining a flowage easement with appropriate conditions to protect water quality and areas of native vegetation.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes the importance of the properties remaining under public ownership and management. These sites were acquired to meet the water-level regulation schedule of Lake Okeechobee. Staff further recognizes, as reflected by the SME comments above, that these sites could benefit from greater vegetation and public use management. The District should seek and negotiate the transfer of these properties to an organization capable of employing greater public use and vegetation management resources.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Unassociated Parcels – St. Cloud Field Station (pg. 228)

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:

Comments were mixed.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD's core missions and should be retained.
- The parcels are important conservation lands
- If there are no plans to develop this site for a field station it should be considered surplus. Perhaps Osceola County or the City of St. Cloud has some use for this site to erect some public facility. They should be invited to consider the site for such purposes.

Comments relating to all parcels:

Most parcels in this region meet SFWMD's core missions and are needed for water quality enhancement, greenway, habitat restoration, landscape connectivity, and provide important recreational opportunities. These lands should not be surplus, as it will remove access for recreation and public use.

Summary of SME comments:

- It does not serve in any way to it's original intended purpose as a field station site due to presence of a persistent eagle nest. It is currently a liability to the District due to maintenance costs.
- In its current state, the assessment parcel does not contribute to the District's core missions.

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.

Comments included:

- There is not a better use of the property
- Surplus
- Any other use or development would weaken support for protecting the natural environment
- The St. Cloud Field Station may be appropriate for surplus with a retained conservation easement because of a bald eagle nest on-site.

Comments relating to all unassociated parcels:

Many of these smaller, scattered tracts are managed in cooperation with other public entities to provide public access, etc. and provide important public services.

Summary of SME comments:

- The parcel does not contribute to the District's core missions and is a good candidate for surplus or exchange.
- Would be better managed by Land Management or donated to local community as an urban park. it is only an expense for OMC.

Recommendation: Staff recommends disposal, exchange, or surplus of the property.

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that the field station intended to be built on this parcel was in fact built at another location and therefore this site is no longer needed for District purposes.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Unassociated Parcels – Camp Mack Triangle (pg. 231)

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:

Comments were mixed.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD's core missions and should be retained.
- The parcels are important conservation lands
- The conversion of this parcel to developed use would result in negative wetland impacts
- The parcel appears to be wetlands, and should someone want to develop it, a wetland permit would be required

Comments relating to all parcels:

Most parcels in this region meet SFWMD's core missions and are needed for water quality enhancement, gateway, habitat restoration, landscape connectivity, wildlife uses, and provide important recreational opportunities. These lands should not be surplus, as it will remove access for recreation and public use.

Summary of SME comments:

- This site is adjacent to a remnant oxbow of the C-37 Canal which connects Lakes Hatchineha and Lake Kissimmee. While their site contains mostly wetlands, the condition of these wetlands is not specified. It is unlikely that in its current state the sited contributes to the District's core missions.
- Parcel has no value for field station operations and maintenance activities.
- There is a SCADA telemetry site on the parcel.
- This parcel may have been purchased for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project because it lies below the 54 ft elevation contour. The elevation should be verified; if it is below 54 ft, it should be kept.

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 there was not a better use of the property.

Comments relating to all unassociated parcels:

Many of these smaller, scattered tracts are managed in cooperation with other public entities to provide public access, etc. and provide important public services.

Summary of SME comments:

- The site does not currently contribute to the District's core missions and the shape of the site limits its use for projects; therefore, it may be a good candidate for donation, surplus or exchange.
- The shape of the site limits its use for projects; however, the location of the site may make a good location for a passive use park with a small kayak or boat launch since there is access to both lakes Hatchineha and Lake Kissimmee from the site. Perhaps a local entity would be interested in partnering on such a project.
- If not needed as a SCADA site, it would have no value to the District and should be surplus.

Recommendation:

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

Basis of staff recommendation:

Staff recognizes that public access to this parcel is limited and that it is unlikely that a successful restoration of this drained and highly disturbed area could be accomplished in a manner that is feasible from a cost-benefit perspective. Staff should re-evaluate this property for the continued ownership and use of the site once all the post-restoration monitoring requirements for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes are fulfilled.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Unassociated Parcels – Okeechobee County Boat Ramp (pg. 234)

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:

Comments were mixed.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD's core missions and should be retained in conservation.
- The parcels are important conservation lands
- The developed part of this parcel supports SFWMD's core missions by providing public access.
- A study of the long-term use of public use facilities surrounding Lake Okeechobee in relation to SFWMD's core missions is needed
- Potential surplus, due to conversion of many public boat ramps to private holdings which puts pressure on other natural systems and prevents access for recreation, the area should remain open to general citizen use.

Comments relating to all parcels:

Most parcels in this region meet SFWMD's core missions and are needed for water quality enhancement, greenway, habitat restoration, landscape connectivity, wildlife uses, and provide important recreational opportunities. These lands should not be surplus, as it will remove access for recreation and public use.

Summary of SME comments:

- The site is currently a boat ramp with parking facilities. While it provides boating access to Lake Okeechobee, it does not contribute to the District's core missions in its current state.

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.

Other comments:

- There is not a better use of the property.
- It is possible that the developed areas of these tracts could be managed by local government as recreational access points.
- Potential surplus, but maintain public access

Comments relating to all unassociated parcels:

Many of these smaller, scattered tracts are managed in cooperation with other public entities to provide public access, etc. and provide important public services.

Summary of SME comments:

- Okeechobee County currently manages the site as a boat ramp facility. Perhaps this would be a potential site for exchange or surplus to the current managing entity; however, the District would need to retain access to the boat ramp for activities such as launching boats to perform water quality monitoring.

Recommendation: Staff recommends negotiating a transfer of the fee-simple interest to another public entity or organization; first to the current managing entity if they express an interest, with a restrictive covenant to keep the primary use of the site as a boat ramp facility, and an access easement that allows the District to continue to use the facility to launch watercraft. If no other public entity or organization has an interest in accepting the ownership subject to suitable terms, then staff recommends that the use and management of the site continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:



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Staff recognizes the value of the site to public recreation, and recognizes that the District has no interest in retaining the underlying ownership.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Unassociated Parcels – Clewiston Boat Ramp (pg. 237)

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:

Comments were mixed.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD's core missions and should be retained in conservation.
- The parcels are important conservation lands
- The developed part of this parcel supports SFWMD's core missions by providing public access.
- A study of the long-term use of public use facilities surrounding Lake Okeechobee in relation to SFWMD's core missions is needed

Comments relating to all parcels:

Most parcels in this region meet SFWMD's core missions and are needed for water quality enhancement, greenway, habitat restoration, landscape connectivity, wildlife uses, and provide important recreational opportunities. These lands should not be surplus, as it will remove access for recreation and public use.

Summary of SME comments:

- A portion of the site is a boat ramp with parking facilities. While the site contains wetlands, they are isolated and likely highly degraded. This site does not contribute to the District's core missions.

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.

Other comments:

- There is not a better use of the property.
- It is possible that the developed areas of these tracts could be managed by local government as recreational access points.

Comments relating to all unassociated parcels:

Many of these smaller, scattered tracts are managed in cooperation with other public entities to provide public access, etc. and provide important public services.

Summary of SME comments:

- Perhaps this would be a potential site for exchange or surplus to the current managing entity; however, the District would need to retain access to the boat ramp for activities such as launching boats to perform water quality monitoring.

Recommendation: Staff recommends negotiating a transfer of the fee-simple interest to another public entity or organization; first to the current managing entity if they express an interest, with a restrictive covenant to keep the primary use of the site as a boat ramp facility, and an access easement that allows the District to continue to use the facility to launch watercraft and access the Herbert Hoover Dike. If no other public entity or organization has an interest in accepting the ownership subject to suitable terms, then staff recommends that the use and management of the site continue as-is.

Basis of staff recommendation:



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Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Staff recognizes the value of the site to public recreation, and recognizes that the District has no interest in retaining the underlying ownership.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Region Being Reviewed: Kissimmee/ Okeechobee Region

Select Area Name: Unassociated Parcels – Sportsman’s Village Parcel (pg. 240)

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:

Comments were mixed.

Other comments:

- The parcels contribute to SFWMD’s core missions and should be retained in conservation.
- The parcels provides a wildlife corridor
- The developed part of this parcel supports SFWMD’s core missions by providing public access.
- A study of the long-term use of public use facilities surrounding Lake Okeechobee in relation to SFWMD’s core missions is needed
- A large part of this tract should be retained by the District due to its high natural resource value.
- A significant part of this 284.4 acre tract consists of Lake Okeechobee littoral zone marshes.
- This parcel has a probable presence of the Everglades Snail Kite.

Comments relating to all parcels:

Most parcels in this region meet SFWMD’s core missions and are needed for water quality enhancement, greenway, habitat restoration, landscape connectivity, wildlife uses, and provide important recreational opportunities. These lands should not be surplusd, as it will remove access for recreation and public use.

Summary of SME comments:

- No SME comments were submitted

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.

Other comments:

- There is not a better use of the property.
- It is possible that the developed areas of these tracts could be managed by local government as recreational access points.

Comments relating to all unassociated parcels:

Many of these smaller, scattered tracts are managed in cooperation with other public entities to provide public access, etc. and provide important public services.

Summary of SME comments:

- No SME comments were submitted

Recommendation:

Northern boat ramp parcel

Staff recommends negotiating a transfer of the fee-simple interest to another public entity or organization; first to the current managing entity if they express an interest, with a restrictive covenant to keep the primary use of the site as a boat ramp facility, and an access easement that allows the District to continue to use the facility to launch watercraft. If no other public entity or organization has an interest in accepting the ownership subject to suitable terms, then staff recommends that the use and management of the site continue as-is.

Southern wetland parcel

Staff recommends the continuation of the current use as a littoral wetland.



Kissimmee / Okeechobee Region Land Assessment Evaluation/Recommendation Form

Basis of staff recommendation:

Northern boat ramp parcel

Staff recognizes the value of the site to public recreation, and recognizes that the District has no interest in retaining the underlying ownership.

Southern wetland parcel

Staff recognizes that this parcel lies within the Herbert Hoover Dike and consists of littoral wetlands that had to be acquired as part of the Central and Southern Flood Control project to obtain the necessary rights in the Lake's littoral zone to support the water level regulation schedule of Lake Okeechobee.