

Resource Management Committee  
September 22, 2020

Discussion Item

**Weeki Wachee River Channel Restoration Project Funding**

*Purpose*

Request Board approval to revise funding sources for the Weeki Wachee River Channel Restoration project in the FY2021 budget.

*Background/History*

Sedimentation in the lower Weeki Wachee River has been accelerated by human disturbances including river widening in the vicinity of Weeki Wachee Gardens. Accumulated sediments have altered the river channel structure and smothered beneficial river bottom habitat and submerged aquatic vegetation.

The District received a \$400,000 state appropriation in 2018 to design and permit a project to remove sedimentation to restore this segment of the river. The design and permitting of this project were completed in the spring of 2020 and were fully funded by the state appropriation.

The project is anticipated to remove 26,200 cubic yards of accumulated sediments by hydraulic dredging along a 1.6 mile stretch of the river from upstream of Grand Cypress Canal and downstream past the Shoal Line Blvd bridge. The project will restore river bottom habitats, enhance submerged aquatic vegetation, and provide adequate depth for manatee passage.

The District recently submitted a grant funding application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for \$4,195,000 to construct the project. Last month the Board approved including the revenue in the FY2021 budget for adoption at the tentative public hearing that was held on September 8, 2020.

This project is one of several that FDEP is considering for funding through its grants process. In an effort to make the project more competitive, District staff is recommending the District fund half the project, \$2,097,500, to help this critical environmental project move forward on schedule and continue the support of the Governor's Springs Initiative. If the District's contribution is approved, the required changes will be included in the FY2021 budget for adoption at the final public hearing scheduled for September 22, 2020 at 5:01 p.m.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the following changes to be incorporated into the FY2021 budget:

- a. Reduce FDEP funding for the Weeki Wachee River Channel Restoration Project from \$4,195,000 to \$2,097,500.
- b. Increase Balance from Prior Years by \$2,097,500 to fund the District's share of the project.

Presenter: Jennette Seachrist, P.E., Director, Resource Management Division