



# SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

March 27, 2020

Mr. Chris Stahl, Coordinator  
Florida State Clearinghouse  
2600 Blairstone Road  
M.S. 47  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400

**Subject: Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project, February 2020**

Dear Mr. Stahl,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement (PIR/EIS) for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP). The South Florida Water Management District (District) is authorized to act as the local sponsor for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects, provide technical resources and play an integral role in the development of the LRWRP Final PIR/EIS. We commend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for the development of a plan that meets the purposes of the LRWRP to restore and sustain the flow of freshwater to the federally designated "National Wild and Scenic" Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (NWFLR). The project will also enhance hydroperiods in the Loxahatchee Slough; increase connectivity of the hydrology, flora, and fauna between natural areas within the watershed and improve the seasonal timing and distribution of water to improve the hydropatterns throughout the historic headwaters to the river.

The Recommended Plan includes a storage reservoir with associated aquifer storage and recovery wells, pump stations and other structures to capture and store water currently lost to tide. Captured water will be redistributed to improve timing and increase the volume of water deliveries to the NWFLR, achieving 91% of the dry season restoration target flows and 98% of the wet season restoration target flows. The Recommended Plan also includes new and modified culverts and weirs, pump station and canals, ditch plugs and other measures to rehydrate over-drained wetlands throughout the watershed.

These features will promote improved health and functionality of wetland and upland areas, restore hydrologic and ecological connectivity and enhance the quantity and quality of native plant communities to support fish and wildlife.

Key local stakeholders that participated in the planning process, recognize the importance of this project and support the efforts to restore the Loxahatchee River and its watershed. Over the years, many stakeholders committed significant resources toward the acquisition of land and completion of local projects that are consistent with the overall

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LRWRP Recommended Plan. They have expressed an interest in continuing to collaborate with USACE and the District as the project advances.

The District encourages continued engagement with stakeholders and the public on this important project. The District supports the advancement of the LRWRP for Congressional authorization in 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drew Bartlett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Drew Bartlett  
Executive Director

DB/bk