

# Memorandum



**Date:** August 20, 2015

**To:** Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item No. 2B9  
October 6, 2015

**From:** Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor 

**Subject:** First Quarterly Status Report on Resolution No. R-47-15 Directing the Mayor or Mayor's Designee to Continue Strategic Implementation of Miami-Dade County's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program, Consistent With Program Objectives as Approved by the Voters, and to Identify Potential Additional Long-Term Funding Sources for the Continued Acquisition and Management of EEL Lands

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On January 21, 2015, the Board of County Commissioners (Board) passed seven (7) separate resolutions, each supporting the implementation of one of the seven recommendations included in the "Miami-Dade Sea Level Rise Task Force Report and Recommendations." Resolution R-47-15, which requires quarterly status reports and a final report within 364 days, directs the Mayor or Mayor's designee to continue strategic implementation of Miami-Dade County's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program, consistent with Program objectives as approved by the voters, and to identify potential additional long-term funding sources for the continued acquisition and management of EEL lands. Pursuant to R-47-15, this quarterly status report is submitted for your review.

### **Background**

In July 2013, the Board created the Miami-Dade Sea Level Rise Task Force (Task Force) for the purpose of reviewing current and relevant data, science and reports, and to assess the likely and potential impacts of sea level rise and storm surge on Miami-Dade County over time. On July 1, 2014, the Task Force presented a report to the Board entitled, "Miami-Dade Sea Level Rise Task Force Report and Recommendations," providing the requested assessment along with recommendations on how Miami-Dade County can begin planning and preparing for projected sea level rise impacts. In addition, Resolution R-451-14 and Ordinance 14-79 were adopted in 2014, requiring that planning, design and construction of County infrastructure consider potential sea level rise impacts.

The historic loss, fragmentation, and degradation of native wetland and upland forest communities in Miami-Dade County are well documented. In 1990, the electorate of Miami-Dade County authorized the County to exceed the constitutional millage limitation by levying a two year ad valorem tax of three-quarters of one (1) mil for acquisition, preservation, and maintenance of environmentally endangered lands for the benefit of present and future generations. Collection of the ad valorem tax provided \$90 million in initial funding in the EEL Trust Funds (\$80 million allocated to acquisition and \$10 million allocated to management). The County's EEL Program has been very successful in leveraging the original \$90 million investment made by County taxpayers. Since its inception and through the end of FY13-14, the EEL Program has accrued \$198 million in revenue, which includes grants, General Obligation Bond (GOB) funds, interest and other revenue and expended \$154 million on acquisition, management and administration. The balance of the EEL Trust Funds at the end of FY2013-14 was \$44 million, of which \$21.6 million is in the Acquisition Fund and \$22.4 million is in the Management Fund.

Lands acquired by EEL provide numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits to the public including carbon sequestration, protecting wellfields, reducing the impact of stormwater runoff, complementing regional restoration efforts, providing recreational space, as well as providing our community with opportunities to adapt to the effects of climate change. Saltwater intrusion now extends more than six miles inland at the base of the Biscayne Aquifer in southern Miami-Dade County. EEL preserves provide open land for aquifer recharge, which is critical to ensuring clean and reliable water supplies for urban and agricultural areas as well as providing municipal and rural flood protection. EEL acquisition of wetlands in the central and southern portion of the County preserves public lands along the natural mangrove coast and provides hazard mitigation in terms of storm surge attenuation. EEL acquisition of uplands throughout the County provides protection of globally-imperiled ecosystems and open space in the urban and agricultural sectors of the county. EEL Preserves also have great biological diversity and provide critical refuge for rare species that would otherwise be lost, especially when considering the impacts of climate change.

#### **Quarter 1 Progress (January 31, 2015 – April 30, 2015)**

##### **Strategic Implementation through Acquisitions**

Between January 21, 2015 (the date the Board approved R-47-15) and April 9, 2015, the EEL Program has acquired 41.410 acres within the South Dade Wetlands EEL Preserve at a total cost of \$162,000 (\$75,000 in GOB and \$87,000 in EEL Trust Funds). This acreage includes the purchase of seven (7) folios ranging in size from five (5) acres to almost nine (9) acres.

##### **Potential Future Funding Sources**

Funding for acquiring properties on the EEL acquisition lists includes the EEL Acquisition Trust Fund and the Building Better Communities General Obligation Bond funds. These funding sources have been specifically designated for EEL land purchases by referendum and Board approval. Any other source of funding that becomes available for EEL purchase, such as grants, is also subject to approval by the Board. The EEL Program's land management activities are currently funded through the EEL Program's Management Fund. The EEL Program has been increasingly successful in the last few years at securing other funds for land management and at engaging community partners and volunteers to help meet unmet management needs in EEL Preserves. However, these are non-predictable remedies and do not provide long-term assurance that program activity levels can be sustained. Therefore, it is important that long-term and sustainable funding options be identified. One potential option includes allocation of funds made available under Florida Constitutional Amendment 1.

Amendment 1 may result in more than \$10 billion over the next 20 years for conservation, management, and restoration of water and land resources. Miami-Dade County is the most populous county in Florida and generates a significant share of Florida's total stamp tax revenues which will be directed to Amendment 1 Programs. The EEL Program has partnered with the State of Florida to acquire conservation lands within Miami-Dade County using local funds supplemented with \$14.5 million in grants from the State. Annually, the EEL Program spends over \$3 million on the management of state and County-owned conservation lands. On February 18, 2015, the Board approved R-173-15 urging the Florida Legislature to allocate funding for Miami-Dade County's EEL Program for conservation land acquisition and management pursuant to the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Florida Constitutional Amendment 1. Through the development of the final report required under this resolution, staff will continue to research and identify any further funding options for this important program.

In accordance with Ordinance 14-65, this memorandum and report will be placed on the next available Board of County Commissioners meeting agenda.

If you have questions concerning the above, please contact Lee Hefty, Assistant Director, Environmental Resources Management, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, at (305) 372-6754 or [heftyl@miamidade.gov](mailto:heftyl@miamidade.gov).

- c: Honorable Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Courts, Eleventh Judicial Circuit  
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