

Memorandum



Date: June 8, 2016

Agenda Item No. 2(B)4

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

July 6, 2016

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carlos A. Gimenez", written over the printed name of the Mayor.

Subject: Report on Miami-Dade County's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program US
Fish and Wildlife Service Grant Application Process - Directive 152234

This report is provided to the Board of County Commissioners (Board) pursuant to Resolution No. R-1114-15, which directed the Mayor or Mayor's designee to apply for funds from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and earmark such funds for the acquisition of wetlands through the Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program. Resolution No. R-1114-15 also directs that a report be provided to the Board regarding plans for the conservation project and application process.

An application for grant funds for the purchase of lands in the South Dade Wetlands EEL Preserve was submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on February 26, 2016. The County's application requested funding in the maximum amount of \$1 million through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. With matching funds from the EEL Program, the grant would be used to purchase at least 898 acres of land from willing sellers in the South Dade Wetlands EEL Preserve.

Matching funds can be provided as future funding or retroactively as funding from the previous two (2) years. Staff was able to demonstrate that over 50 percent of the total work plan budget could be provided primarily through the combined value of matching acquisitions that have already occurred or will soon occur, along with provision of EEL Program funds to be used for future acquisitions. More specifically, the \$3.3 million work plan budget proposes that at least 898 acres of wetlands will be purchased through combined grant and EEL Program match funding sources, of which approximately 485 acres (valued at approximately \$1.8 million) qualify as match acquisitions because these lands have recently been or soon will be purchased by the EEL Program. The remaining 413 acres of wetlands targeted for acquisition could be purchased at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million, based on recent acquisition trends and appraisal information. Of this amount, \$1 million would be provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service if grant funds are awarded. The remaining amount (approximately \$500,000) would be funded as future EEL Program purchases.

Under the application process, additional points are awarded for applications that demonstrate involvement of more partners in the work plan and/or higher match funding in the work plan budget, which may include management activities and/or acquisitions made within the previous two-year period. Staff coordinated with other agencies, including the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to demonstrate these agencies' involvement and financial commitment to management activities during the previous two (2) years. Staff was also able to demonstrate a history of partner funding support for acquisition as well as management.

In addition to developing the work plan and associated budget, background information from diverse sources was assembled to address a series of technical questions in the application to demonstrate the significance of the South Dade Wetlands EEL Preserve to avian species, including wading birds, waterfowl, shorebirds, other migratory birds, and threatened and endangered bird species. This preserve is located within the boundary of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Atlantic Coast

Joint Venture (Venture), and staff was able to demonstrate that key species of interest to the Venture have been documented in the South Dade Wetlands. Staff coordinated with Audubon Florida research staff to obtain and use unpublished data in support of the project. Staff also consulted with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Venture Coordinator throughout the application process to better understand nuances in the application requirements. County staff continue to coordinate with the Venture Coordinator to track the proposal and ensure that any additional information needs are addressed in advance of the ranking meetings for this grant process.

Miami-Dade County will be notified of the final grant award allocations in September 2016. In addition, County staff are exploring whether alternative funding for this proposal may be available through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

In accordance with Ordinance No. 14-65, this memorandum and report will be placed on the next available Board of County Commissioners meeting agenda.

If you have questions, please contact Lee N. Hefty, Assistant Director, Division of Environmental Resources Management, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, at (305) 372-6754 or heftyl@miamidade.gov.

c: Abigail Price-Williams, County Attorney
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