

# **LAKE BELT MITIGATION COMMITTEE**

## **Meeting Summary**

South Florida Water Management District

3301 Gun Club Road, (Bldg. B-1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Storch Room)

West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

This meeting was conducted as a Zoom meeting

**Thursday, March 16, 2023 9:30 AM**

1. Call to Order by Jennifer Reynolds, Committee Chair

a) Meeting began at 9:30 AM

2. Attendees

a) Committee Members

1. Jennifer Reynolds, Chair, SFWMD
2. Matthew Morrison, SFWMD (Alternate Member)
3. Miles Meyer, Vice Chair, USFWS (Teleconference)
4. John Fellows, USACE (Teleconference)
5. Veronica Fasselt, USEPA (Teleconference)
6. Marisa Rhian, DEP (Teleconference)
7. Jason Hight, FWCC, (Teleconference)
8. Michael Spinelli, DERM (Teleconference)
9. Jeff Rosenfeld, MDLPA (Ex-Officio)

b) Other meeting attendees

1. Lourdes Elias, SFWMD
2. Justin Nolte, SFWMD
3. Rory Feeney, SFWMD
4. Emily Johnson, SFWMD
5. Jesse Van Eyk, SFWMD
6. Tom MacVicar, MDLPA

c) Other teleconference attendees – Zoom registration list attached.

3. Approval of Minutes

Draft LBMC Meeting Minutes from August 18, 2022 were reviewed by the Committee members. The minutes were moved for approval by Jason Hight, with a second by Miles Meyer. The minutes were approved by the Committee.

#### 4. Submittal of Invoices for Acceptance by LBMC – Karyn Allman / Jeff Rosenfeld

Jeff Rosenfeld discussed the invoices submitted since the last Committee meeting and Karyn Allman prepared a spreadsheet (copy attached) summarizing the invoices to be accepted by the Committee. These invoices included: 1) two Dade-Broward Levee Construction Monitoring Phase 3 invoices totaling \$4,229.65 and 2) two Lake Belt Water Quality Monitoring invoices totaling \$141,304.84. The total for the invoices since the last Committee meeting was \$145,534.49. Veronica Fasselt asked for clarification on items in the full invoice packages that were provided to the Committee members as part of the meeting handouts. Veronica Fasselt moved to accept the invoices and it was seconded by Jason Hight. The invoices were accepted by the Committee.

#### 5. FY 24 Funding Request: Dade-Broward Levee Structures Operations & Maintenance (O&M) – Jeff Rosenfeld

A motion was presented to “Approve the expenditure of \$14,453 for FY24 operation and maintenance of the two new Dade-Broward Levee water control structures.” These structures were constructed as part of the Committee-approved Dade-Broward Levee Phase 2 project. Under the Three-Party Agreement for the project that has been executed by SFWMD, Miami-Dade County, and MDLPA, SFWMD will operate and maintain the two new structures. Jason Hight moved to approve the motion and it was seconded by Miles Meyer. The motion to fund the Dade-Broward Levee structures O&M was approved by the Committee.

#### 6. FY24 Funding Request – Water Quality Monitoring – Jeff Rosenfeld

A motion was presented to “Approve the transfer of \$286,273 for estimated water quality monitoring costs during the period between March 2023 and February 2024”. This estimate was based on actual monitoring expenditures between March 2022 and February 2023. It was discussed that there could be a deficit in the account, if the actual FY24 costs are greater than the estimate based on FY23 costs. This was the case in the current year due to increased laboratory costs and additional monitoring. However, since the check request reimbursements are always a quarter behind invoices, the potential deficit has not previously been an issue. Jason Hight moved to approve the motion and it was seconded by Miles Meyer. The motion to fund the Lake Belt Water Quality Monitoring Project was approved by the Committee.

## 7. Abiaki Prairie – Karyn Allman

Karyn Allman made a presentation summarizing the current status of construction and land management activities at the Abiaki Prairie project.

Phase 1 construction has been completed and Phase 2 construction activities (clearing, leveling, and canal backfill) are underway. In addition, construction of the main project access roads, boundary seepage canal, water control structures, and pump station are underway. In terms of land management, planting of approximately 400 acres of maidencane and native seeds in Abiaki 2 is underway. District staff are seeing significant native plant recruitment and expansion of previously planted wetland species in Abiaki 1 and are finalizing the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report.

SFWMD did not request any credit releases in 2022 and is anticipating requesting the release of 161.46 mitigation units in 2023 as part of the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report submittal. These credits are associated with meeting Construction Level 1 and 2 success criteria for the remaining portion of Abiaki 1 and Construction Level 1 for Abiaki 2. This represents approximately 4% of the project's mitigation credit goal. Additional credit release requests are anticipated in 2024 for Abiaki 1 and 2.

## 8. FY 24 Funding Request: Abiaki Prairie restoration project – Jeff Rosenfeld

A motion was presented to “Approve the expenditure of \$7.0 million for FY24 Abiaki Prairie Restoration Project funding per the updated cost estimate. At an updated cost of \$35,300 per WRAP unit, this expenditure authorizes in the award of 198.3 WRAP units (793.2 Pennsuco-equivalent mitigation acres) for 2023.” It was clarified, that while the Committee approves the funding request, the regulatory agencies are responsible for the award of mitigation credits.

With this request, the project funding will total \$62 million since the initial funding approval by the Committee in 2012 (and ten subsequent annual funding approvals). The \$62 million represents approximately 77% of the 2020 estimated \$80 million construction cost. Miles Meyer moved to approve the FY23 Abiaki funding motion and it was seconded by Jason Hight. The motion to fund the Abiaki Prairie Restoration Project was approved by the Committee. Miami-Dade County voted against approval and FDEP abstained.

#### 9. Monitoring data update - Dade-Broward Levee project – Jeff Rosenfeld

Jeff Rosenfeld stated that the positive monitoring results previously presented to the Committee continued in 2022. The Dade-Broward Levee berm repair was completed in 2016. Jeff showed that the change in relationship between USGS monitoring wells after the repair continued through the 2022 wet season. This change in the relationship after 2016 indicates that the berm repair has resulted in higher relative water levels in the Pennsuco wetlands.

The new West Wellfield Protection Canal structure was completed in May 2018. Historical upstream and downstream canal stage data indicate that the new water control structure has resulted in a wet season canal stage increase of approximately 0.8 feet in the canal reach adjacent to the Pennsuco wetlands. Comparison of the upstream canal stages with monitoring wells in the Pennsuco wetlands indicates that the canal is now recharging the wetlands (due to the higher stage), while historically the canal drained the adjacent wetlands.

In January 2023, SFWMD began a pilot test in which available regional water in the SFWMD L-30 Canal was diverted to the Pennsuco wetlands via the new Pennsuco Diversion water control structure (which was constructed using Committee-approved funding). The purpose of diverting water is for the wetlands to potentially have a slightly increased hydroperiod. The results of the pilot test will be reported to the Committee at the next meeting.

#### 10. Acceptance of 2022 LBMC Annual Report – Jeff Rosenfeld

Jeff Rosenfeld presented a copy of the draft 2022 LBMC Annual Report to the Committee. Jeff discussed the financial and Committee-approved mitigation aspects of the report, as summarized in Appendix C. It was discussed that there were no willing-seller acquisitions in the Pennsuco wetlands in 2022. Michael Spinelli asked if SFWMD was still actively contacting potential sellers. Jennifer Reynolds said that the SFWMD Real Estate group was still contacting potential willing sellers, but there was currently little interest. It was mentioned that there had been an extensive discussion about possible options for Pennsuco at the March 2022 Committee meeting.

Miles Meyer moved to accept the 2022 Annual Report and the motion was seconded by Jason Hight. The Annual Report was accepted by the Committee.

11. Public Comment

None

12. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was proposed for March 2024, unless any issues arose before then.

13. Meeting Adjourned