

**RESTORE Act Ecosystem Restoration Project Proposals
for consideration in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Comprehensive Plan
2012**

Contact Information: Clyde Dabbs/Roland Ottolini	Date of Submittal: 1/07/2013
Name of Project: Four Corners Initiative & Florida Citrus Land Acquisition	Org and Rank: 4
Background: The Tidal Caloosahatchee estuary is the second largest open water estuary in the state. It is 30 miles long and seven miles wide with a total area of 270 square miles. The study area known as “Four Corners” is comprised of agricultural drainage ditches that are part of the County Line Drainage District which outfalls directly to the Caloosahatchee as well as to the Spanish Creek, Miller’s Gulley, tributaries to the Caloosahatchee located at the intersection of Lee, Hendry, Glades and Charlotte County. The headwaters of Spanish Creek and Miller’s Gulley were rerouted when ditches were installed for orange groves. The watershed has been significantly altered over the past 50 years by road construction, farming and river dredging activities. Project Description: The Four Corners area encompasses portions of Glades, Charlotte, Hendry, and Lee counties, and includes the Cypress Creek, Spanish Creek, and Jacks Branch tributary watersheds (See figure below). Water flow to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary (CRE) via these watersheds has been substantially modified through development and agricultural practices and has directly affected water quality and storage. Several studies to address these issues have been conducted resulting in the Spanish Creek/Four Corners Initiative (CRWPP project CRE 44). This is a collaborative initiative among the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Lee County, and Hendry County to develop regional approaches for improving water quality and storage in the Caloosahatchee River Watershed. The goal is to expand upon existing conceptual plans to address conveyance, attenuation, and treatment of stormwater runoff from the Spanish Creek and Jacks Branch (County Line Ditch) watersheds using wetland flow-ways. Under this initiative, two of the previously listed projects meet the qualifying criteria: Spanish Creek Restoration and Jacks Branch (County Line Ditch). Spanish Creek Restoration. Lee County has been pursuing a project to create wetland flow-ways that will serve to rehydrate the Ruby Daniels Preserve, Bob Jane’s Preserve, and Spanish Creek. The county’s acquisition of a key parcel of approximately 640 acres of citrus grove adjacent to Bob Jane’s and Ruby Daniels preserves failed negotiations, however the land should be considered for acquisition provided there is a willing seller in the future. The project is planned to redirect stormwater flows to a more natural pathway, provide water storage in the watershed, and offer stormwater treatment prior to its entering the preserves, creek, and Caloosahatchee River. In Fiscal Year 2012 (FY2012) (October 1, 2011–September 30, 2012), the SFWMD intends to provide funds to Lee County for the project’s initial design; project construction will be addressed in the future pending availability of funds. Jacks Branch (County Line Ditch). To date, Hendry County has developed 30 percent design plans in collaboration with the District for improvements to County Line Ditch, which conveys	

stormwater flows from Jacks Branch Watershed to the Caloosahatchee River. Utilizing 3.5 miles of right-of-way acquired by Hendry County, the project is intended to improve the conveyance by widening the ditch, adding shallow littoral areas, and providing weirs for increased storage and treatment. In FY2012, the District plans to provide funds to Hendry County for developing 100 percent design plans; project construction will be addressed in the future pending availability of funds.

Land Acquisition: Acquisition of the former Lee County Conservation 2020 nomination #477. The parcel is 650 acres located in an area called locally the "Four Corners" adjacent to the Bob Janes Preserve. This is a target project area identified by the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan and the Southwest Florida Comprehensive Watershed Plan for hydrologic restoration and water quality improvement projects. The projects may have future funding commitment through Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District pending acquisition of the lands. The nomination failed the Conservation Lands Acquisition & Stewardship Advisor Committee review process given the disturbed condition of the land and the potential cost of remediation to a natural state.

Project Location: Caloosahatchee Watershed

Responsible Party: SFWMD/Lee County **Partners:** Lee Co, Hendry Co, SFWMD

NEP: CHNEP **Project Cost:** \$11,462,000 **Dollars Needed:** \$7,500,000

Start: 2012 **Completion:** 2015

Status of Project Design and Permitting: Feasibility study complete, design/permitting pending.

What Date or Year could Construction Feasibly Begin: 2013

Your Proposed Timing of Funding (given permits, phasing, staging, etc.)

FY	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	Total

Quantify Environmental Results and How to Measure Them: Water quality improvement by nutrient load reduction. Can be evaluated through the BMAP water quality monitoring program.

Economic Benefits (including ecosystem services): Improved water quality, improved fisheries and rookery habitats.

Estimated number of Jobs Created or Preserved: 127

How much Habitat will be restored and conserved?: 55,000 Acres

Quantify pollutant reductions: Removal rates estimated 6.14 mt/yr TN, 1.51 mt/yr TP.

What living coastal/marine resources will be improved and by how much?: Tidal Caloosahatchee, San Carlos Bay, Pine Island Sound and Matlacha Pass.

How will community resilience be enhanced? Improved freshwater wetland habitat in the current landscape will prolong the period of habitability in the tributaries of the Caloosahatchee as climate change and sea level rise occur. Habitat improvements due to restored historical flows will also mitigate the current effects of degradation on fisheries and improve the period of time these fisheries can be sustained during the onset of sea level rise.

Additional Justification: Lee County has entered into a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in 2012. The BMAP was promulgated due to TMDLs for total nitrogen in the Tidal Caloosahatchee. The County is required to restore and protect water quality under this watershed restoration plan. In addition,

the Tidal Caloosahatchee is part of a system that has been designated an Estuary of National Significance as well as discharging into State Aquatic Preserve and National Wildlife Refuges.

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