PASSIVE RECREATIONAL USE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

of the

CELERY FIELDS REGIONAL STORMWATER FACILITY

December 2002

Primary Use: Stormwater Component

Maintenance
Permitting
Monitoring

Secondary Use: Recreational Component

Existing Uses to Remain
Existing Uses to be Enhanced
Miscellaneous

Additional Use:

Walker Tract
Commercial Parcels along Palmer
The former Field Operations Center (FOC) Site
Stormwater Re-use

PRIMARY USE: STORMWATER COMPONENT

The Celery Fields Regional Stormwater Facility (CFRSF) is comprised of 342 acres of former agricultural land located in Sarasota County (Sections 19, 20, 29 & 30 Twp36S R19E), east of I-75, south of Fruitville Road and adjacent to the Main C Canal (a major tributary to Phillippi Creek). The primary function of the facility is the diversion of flows from the upper reaches of Main C Canal into a flood storage area, reducing the demand on the downstream portion of the drainage system.

The facility is separated into 3 cells. The northern cell, 2 - 58 acre basins, serves as a sedimentation pond, the central cell is a 106-acre attenuation pond and the southern cell will provide 120 acres of wetland treatment. The project was built in two phases: Phase I of the project began in 1995 and involved the construction of the central cell and the replacement of an aged agricultural weir in the Main C Canal. Phase II of the project began in 1996 and included a diversion structure, modification to the Central Cell and construction of the Northern and Southern cells.

A. Maintenance

1) Normal Operations

The Public Works Drainage Operations Division (Drainage Operations) is responsible for the normal operation and maintenance of the CFRSF. Normal operation and maintenance includes: discharge structure operation and maintenance (including Main C Weir), facility, vegetative and landscape management evaluation.

2) Storm Event Operations

The Stormwater and Drainage Operations Divisions are responsible for the Storm Event Operation of the CFRSF. The operation includes: monitoring water levels in and around the facility, discharge structure operation, operation of high mast lighting along Palmer Boulevard and monitoring embankment slopes and exterior slopes as facility fills.

B. Permitting

1) South West Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)
Permit No. 44013672.007, July 24, 2002

Allowed for the lowering of the control elevation in the facility from 16.5 NGVD to 14.5 NGVD. In addition, it was determined that the wetland function lost by the 16.62 acres of permanent wetland impacts have been offset with the existing 15.49 acres of wetland habitat.

2) Army Corps of Engineers (A.C.O.E.)

A revision to the permit has been submitted to the A.C.O.E. for review. The permit proposes to create 120+/- acres of wetland habitat in the southern cell.

C. Monitoring

1) Water Quality Testing

Water quality sampling is currently being performed at the facility to establish baseline water quality data and to determine removal efficiency of the facility

2) Soil Testing

Soil testing is currently being performed at the facility to ensure that pesticide contaminated soils have been identified and/or removed from the facility

SECONDARY USE: RECREATIONAL COMPONENT

A Passive Recreational Use Plan has been developed which enhances the recreation function of the facility. The plan is also consistent with the existing stormwater and environmental function of the facility. Attached is a Recreational Concept Plan that encompasses the following uses:

A. Existing Uses to remain

1) Floodplain Management
2) Ackerman Park Uses
3) Existing Gazebo, limited parking at Palmer Boulevard(provide shelters, trails, and interpretive signage)
4) Spoil Pile as overlook
5) Equestrian trails (no additional enhancements)

B. Existing Uses to be enhanced

1) Parking/restrooms (provide shared parking and restroom facility in northern cell near library)
2) Historical significance/interpretive activities (provide interpretive signage/kiosks Wildlife Habitat
3) Wildlife observation (add limited boardwalks, shelters, and interpretive signage)
4) Wildlife habitat/utilization (add wetland mitigation in south cell, continued enhancement in central cell)
5) Passive soft trail use (enhance soft trail routing on perimeter and trail quality)
6) Historical significance/interpretive activities
7) Fishing/Fishing Pier (northern cell)
8) Passive hard trail use (provide where indicated, primarily along perimeter or existing roadways)
9) "Calmed" traffic/safe pedestrian crossings at Palmer (provide gateway features, enhanced pedestrian crossings)
10) Canoeing/kayaking (add boat launch, seasonal access restriction signage)

C. Miscellaneous

1) Northern parcel use - retain portion for primary gateway/parking/restrooms
2) Consider renaming park to better reflect planned character and uses of park
3) Work with Manasota Fossil Club to coordinate future excavation / finish grading of site

The maintenance of the recreational components of the facility will be a joint effort between the Stormwater and Drainage Operations Divisions and the Community Services Parks and Recreation Division.

ADDITIONAL USES

In addition to the items listed above, there are several outstanding issues regarding the future of the facility

A. Walker Tract

The acquisition of the Walker Tract by the County offers opportunities to divert stormwater from Main A. The diversion could possibly further reduce flood levels both upstream and downstream. In addition, this tract was part of the original sawgrass wetlands and could be enhanced/re-created as such.

B. Commercial Parcels along Palmer Boulevard

Four 10-acre parcels, one on each corner of the Palmer Boulevard/ Coburn Road Intersection, are owned by the County. These parcels are for sale.

C. The former Field Operations Center (F.O.C.) Site

The FOC Site is a 42 +/- acre site adjacent to the north property line of the facility. A portion of the FOC site could provide land for ancillary features of the facility. Features that could include: parking, restroom facilities, park/museum facilities, tourist center, historical center and an eco-tourism hub.

D. Stormwater Re-use

The Integrated Water Resources Team is currently exploring ways to conserve (re-use) water resource discharge from the CFRSF for potential non-potable uses.