Proposal for Penny Sales Tax Project
Sarasota Bay Estuary Program
February 21, 2007
Whitaker Bayou Greenway Park

Whitaker Bayou is a tributary of Sarasota Bay with an urbanized watershed. Human activities in this watershed have impacted the capacity of the tributary to be biologically productive. Whitaker Bayou was identified as a tributary for action in the CCMP. SBEP proposes that $750,000 of the new Penny Sales Tax monies be used to improve the riparian areas along Whitaker Bayou while creating public access points to this tributary by creating and restoring approximately 8 acre linear park from MLK Park north along Whitaker Bayou to 49th Street. Penny Sales tax revenue would be used for the following five project components:

1. Planning and permitting of restoration activities described below.
2. Stream bed restoration such as dredging and removal of contaminated soils.
3. Riparian habitat improvements of scenic and biological amenities of waterway such as exotic plant removal, stream contouring, and native planting.
4. Installing public water access such as a permeable trail, boardwalks and canoe/kayak launches on publicly owned property adjacent to the Bayou.
5. Stormwater improvements including installation of settlement ponds and bioswales on publicly owned sites, right-of-ways and any other appropriate sites.

Final budget request is for $750,000 of the Penny Sales Tax revenue. Approximately $300,000 for dredging, $150,000 for stormwater improvements, $250,000 for riparian habitat improvements and $50,000 for recreation access improvements.

There are several properties already in City ownership along the tributary and provide current opportunities for riparian habitat restoration, stormwater improvements and public access. Other properties could be identified and purchased under the new Neighborhood Parklands Land Acquisition Program. Installation of a permeable trail in the linear park could provide further connections to Sarasota Recreational Trail and future connections to Rails-to-Trails corridor.

Other facets of the project that can be funded through other sources include:

- Education of riparian property owners and neighborhoods about watershed friendly landscaping.
- Development and implementation of community education programs on how they can help the Bayou.
- Assessment of attitude and behavior changes about the neighborhood and bayou as result of park creation and restoration.
- Educational opportunities for adjacent schools
- Monitoring of water quality and biological improvements
- Incorporating into City, neighborhood and SBEP websites
- Additional property acquisition

The development of a Whitaker Bayou Greenway Park would assist SBEP and the City of Sarasota to accomplish several objectives outlined in the CCMP including stormwater

mitigation, wetlands restoration and recreational access. This project could act as part of the City of Sarasota's Action Plan required by all partners of SBEP under the Interlocal Agreement.

Regional water quality will be improved by the removal of sediments and nutrients from stormwater currently going into Sarasota Bay with little treatment. Other community benefits include:

- Improved health, aesthetics and biological productivity of Whitaker Bayou.
- Improved health of a major tributary to Sarasota Bay.
- Ultimate connector to Rails-to-Trials corridor and Sarasota Recreational Trail.
- Public water access points along Bayou.
- Pedestrian friendly park connecting city neighborhoods, Ringling School and Booker High School.
- Restoration of approximately 8 acres of urban riparian habitats and wildlife corridor.

Other possible partners for this project include City of Sarasota, National Park Service, Sarasota County, Sarasota Audubon Society, Florida Native Plant Society, SWFWMD, Florida Yards & Neighborhoods, Extension Service, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program as well as adjacent neighborhood/homeowner associations.