



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
441 G STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20314-1000

The Honorable David Kerner
Mayor of West Palm Beach
P.O. Box 1989
West Palm Beach, Florida 33402-1989

Dear Mayor Kerner:

This is in response to your letter, dated February 26, 2020, regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Chief of Engineers Report for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration project (LRWRP). I appreciate the interest of Palm Beach County (County) in ecosystem restoration and the County staff's contributions throughout the LRWRP study.

Public safety is a top priority and the Corps will use the best available engineering and design standards for the proposed above ground water storage reservoir on the Mecca site along the C-18W canal. While we acknowledge that the C-18W site is adjacent to natural areas undergoing restoration, our collaborative plan formulation process resulted in a recommendation for a water storage reservoir, rather than a natural area at this location for the proposed LRWRP. This recommendation was based on a hydrologic analysis of storage and flows needed to achieve project objectives for restoring the greater Everglades ecosystem, including cost-effectiveness.

The Corps encourages cooperation among water resource agencies, including the County's expressed interest in collaborating with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to pursue water resources solutions that address restoration goals that are not included in the LRWRP but are compatible with other restoration and water quality efforts in the area. Implementation of Corps civil works projects includes some flexibilities after projects are authorized to incorporate modifications for design efficiencies and cost savings during the preconstruction, engineering, and design phase.

Once the LRWRP is authorized, the Corps will work directly with SFWMD, the non-federal sponsor, to develop a Project Partnership Agreement for the construction and operation of the LRWRP. If the County proposes to implement separate items that may complement the LRWRP, the Corps would coordinate directly with the County under the Section 408 (33 USC 408) process.

Section 408 provides that the Corps may grant permission for another party to complete work which may impact a civil works project. Permission is granted upon a determination that the alteration proposed will not be injurious to the public interest and will not impair the authorized benefits of the civil works project.

I appreciate your interest and support of the LRWRP and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and look forward to working with you to implement this important ecosystem restoration project.

I hope this response has adequately addressed your concerns and questions regarding this matter. If you have additional questions, please contact me or Mr. Bradd Schwichtenberg, Deputy Chief, South Atlantic Division Regional Integration Team, at (202) 761-1367.

Sincerely,

Stacey E. Brown, PMP
Chief, Planning and Policy