



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Publishes Public Notice for Proposed Ridge Road Extension

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District (Corps) has published a public notice for the proposed Ridge Road extension project (Permit Application No. SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH)). Permit applicants Pasco County and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) propose to extend the existing Ridge Road approximately eight miles east of its current terminus at Decubellis/Moon Lake Road, to U.S. Highway 41. The proposed project also includes a 4-ramp interchange at its intersection with Suncoast Parkway. Since the proposed work includes impacts to water bodies that are under the jurisdiction of the Corps, the applicants are required by the Clean Water Act to obtain a Department of the Army permit.

The proposal requires impacts to approximately 59 acres of wetlands. To offset unavoidable impacts to wetlands, Pasco County proposes to preserve 221 acres, known as the "River Ridge Site," located between the Starkey Wilderness Preserve and the River Ridge subdivision in Pasco County. Pasco County has also proposed to supplement this mitigation by preserving acreage within 4G Ranch, Crockett Lake parcels or Starkey Ranch. The FDOT proposes a suite of options to offset unavoidable impacts to wetlands, including: 1) deeding approximately 86 acres of existing borrow ponds to the Southwest Florida Water Management District, to be incorporated into the Serenova Tract of the Starkey Wilderness Preserve; 2) use of excess mitigation credit from the completed Suncoast Parkway project; and 3) purchase of mitigation credit under the FDOT regional mitigation program.

The Corps previously published a public notice for this project in 2000; however, the application was considered incomplete and was withdrawn without further action. The applicants recently submitted a new, updated application, and the Corps determined that an additional public notice is needed to gain input that will allow thorough and balanced evaluation of the proposal.

In the new proposal, the alignment of the proposed roadway remains unchanged from the original proposal; however, proposed wetland impacts have been reduced by 7.35 acres as a result of the applicants' efforts to minimize those impacts.

The Corps is in the process of evaluating the proposed project and its potential impact(s) on the public interest, and will consider all input and information received from all interested parties as a result of the public notice.

For more information about the project, please visit www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm and click on "Ridge Road Extension." Included on the website are the public notice, Pasco County's updated alternatives analysis, proposed mitigation plans for both Pasco County and the FDOT and answers to frequently asked questions. As an alternative to accessing these documents on the Internet, interested parties may request that a



hard copy or disk be mailed to them by contacting Tracy Hurst, project manager, by e-mail (Tracy.E.Hurst@usace.army.mil), phone (813-769-7063), fax (813-769-7061) or by mail at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 10117 Princess Palm Avenue, Suite 120, Tampa, FL 33610. Requests should specify which documents are requested and whether a hardcopy or disk is preferred.

Comments on the proposed project should be submitted in writing to the District Engineer at 10117 Princess Palm Avenue, Suite 120, Tampa, FL 33610 by December 28, 2011.

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