



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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## ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

### **Public Notice for Proposed Ridge Road Extension results in valuable public input**

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District (Corps) published a public notice for the proposed Ridge Road extension project (Permit Application No. SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH)), Nov. 28, 2011. 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.

In response to the public notice, the Corps received more than 1,600 comments from interested parties including concerned individuals, business owners, non-governmental organizations and local, state, and federal government agencies. The comments received reflect opinions both in support and in opposition to the project. The Corps must now review and consider the comments in its public interest review, a careful weighing of the expected project benefits and detriments. A permit cannot be granted if the Corps determines the project is contrary to the public interest.

The conclusion of the public notice comment period does not mark the end of the Corps' review process. The comments received assist the Corps in completing its public interest review. However, the Corps is concurrently evaluating the proposed project to determine whether the applicants have selected the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative, a requirement for a favorable permit decision.

The Corps is in the process of consulting with appropriate state and federal resource agencies. As proposed, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends denial of the project, stating that it may have substantial and unacceptable adverse impacts on an Aquatic Resources of National Importance. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has requested that the applicants complete additional wildlife surveys to determine potential impacts on protected species.

The Corps is actively engaged with the applicants on a number of issues involved in the application review. The applicants are aware that by this spring, the Corps will provide a formal and comprehensive list of all outstanding information needed to complete the permit review.

The Corps recognizes the high degree of public interest in this project and the lengthy period of time this project has been under consideration. The Corps is committed to reaching a decision that fully complies with the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.



For more information about the project, please visit [www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm) and click on "Ridge Road Extension." Questions or concerns may be directed to Tracy Hurst, project manager, by e-mail ([Tracy.E.Hurst@usace.army.mil](mailto: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.

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