

APPENDIX F  
SARASOTA BAY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION  
SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

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**1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

This Real Estate Plan is tentative in nature for planning purposes only and both the final real property acquisition lines and the real estate cost estimates provided are subject to change even after approval of the Feasibility Report.

The Ecosystem Restoration Report was funded and initiated, June 12, 1998. Report will be submitted to South Atlantic Division approximately by the end of July 2000.

**2. AUTHORIZATION**

This feasibility study was performed under the authority of Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, Public Law (PL) 99-662, as amended by the Water Resources Development Act of 1990. The act reads, in part, as follows:

"The Secretary is authorized to review the operation of water resources projects constructed by the Secretary (Corps built projects) to determine the need for modifications in the structures and operation of such projects for the purpose of improving the quality of the environment in the public interest."

**3. PROJECT LOCATION**

Sarasota Bay is located on the west central coast of Florida between Tampa and Venice, Florida. The system is bordered by a chain of coastal barrier islands (Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key, Lido Key, Siesta Key and Casey Key).

**4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

West Coast Inland Navigation District requested Federal assistance from the Corps to participate in achieving their comprehensive long-range goal of environmental restoration for the coastal lagoon system.

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Problems within the bay include the loss of approximately 40 percent of historical intertidal wetlands and 30 percent of historical sea grass beds. These habitats are critical nursery and foraging habitats for a variety of economically important fisheries species including snook, red drum, spotted sea trout and mullet.

A portion of the historical wetland and habitat loss in Sarasota Bay is due to the Army Corps of Engineers' placement of dredged fill material from the construction of the Gulf Intracoastal Water Way. The dredged material was placed within the Bay to build islands visible to navigators, preventing dangerous shoals. Dredged material was also placed in mangroves and shallow water bay bottoms creating upland areas.

The remaining wetlands and habitat within and adjacent to the project limits are impacted by non-native nuisance vegetation and an on-gong eroding problem. The presence of exotic plant species inhibits the growth of native species. Erosion is a problem on several of the islands, which impacts both the water quality and the filling of navigational channels.

The primary objective of this project is to ecologically restore the degraded ecosystem structure, function, and dynamic processes by removing exotic vegetation, excavating tidal channels, and planting native vegetation.

Six Islands were evaluated as part of the study. Plans for each of the islands are as follows:

#### **A. BIG EDWARDS ISLAND**

The restoration plan on Big Edwards Island will provide improved and diverse fish and wildlife habitat through the use of a mix of upland restoration, low marsh/mangroves, high marsh and tidal lagoons. The open water/tidal lagoon system also maximizes the "edge effect" of the adjacent low marsh and mangrove systems, maintains public access and use, and enhances public use with a proposed natural foot trail along the upland areas. Also provided for public use is a boardwalk across the marsh and open water systems, a potential opportunity for educational interpretive signage, promoting and explaining the diverse habitats, maintenance of the existing upland area at the southern portion of the island where the majority of public access occurs. In addition, the Preferred Alternative maintains the eastern upland berm along the island and the existing mature mangrove fringe around the perimeter of the island to provide a

visual buffer for homeowners located on either side of the island. See Figure 23 for Island as it now exists and Figure 5 after restoration.

#### **B. SKIERS' ISLAND**

This plan provides improved and diverse fish and wildlife habitat through the use of a mix of upland restoration, low marsh/mangroves, and tidal lagoons. The open water/tidal lagoon system also maximizes the "edge effect" of the adjacent low marsh and mangrove systems, as well as providing an opportunity for water to circulate through the island. It also allows for the continued use of the deep-water channel surrounding the island for water skiing. The upland restoration area proposed at the northern end of the island would allow for public access for passive recreational uses. No structural recreational facilities are provided, instead the focus is purely habitat restoration. See Figure 24 for Island as it now exists and Figure 9 for after restoration.

#### **C. BIRD COLONY ISLANDS**

The restoration of Bird Colony Islands will provide shoreline armoring along the Intracoastal side of the islands to prevent further erosion. No earthwork is proposed on these islands. The plan protects the existing critical bird-nesting habitat that has been documented on these islands.

#### **D. JIM NEVILLE MARINE PRESERVE**

Will provide improved and diverse fish and wildlife habitat through the use of primarily low marsh/mangroves and tidal lagoons and the opportunity for upland restoration on the higher elevation areas of the island. The open water/tidal lagoon system also maximizes the "edge effect" of the adjacent low marsh and mangrove systems, as well as providing an opportunity for water to circulate between the northern and southern portions of the island. Impacts to the existing mangrove systems and unique saltern areas found on the island are minimized, while optimizing the use of low marsh areas to recreate the opportunity for sheet flow across the island during high tides. See Figure 25 for the Island as it now exists and Figure 14 for after restoration.

**E. PALMER POINT PARK**

Plan provides for the creation of low marsh/mangroves in the project area and will benefit from the opportunity of diversity of the adjacent upland areas in the park. Impacts to the existing mangroves and salterns located adjacent to the project site are minimized. Also this plan results in minimal maintenance and the elimination of the tidal lagoon will reduce the potential for stagnant water and mosquitoes. See Figure 26 for Island as it now exists and Figure 17 for after restoration.

**F. SNAKE ISLAND**

Plan provides for additional acreage to the island through the creation of a low marsh reclamation area on the West Side of the island. The plan also provides a large upland enhancement area accessible on the East Side of the island for public use and provides soft-shore stabilization and additional mangroves to reduce the on-going erosion. Also it allows for maintenance of the unconsolidated shore used by the public on the southern end of the island and provides an opportunity to extend this area to the eastern side of the island. See Figure 27 for Island as it now exists and Figure 22 for after restoration.

Both Skier's and Bird Colony Islands are important colonial nesting sites and have suffered substantial erosion primarily from large boat wakes. If feasible, Bird Colony Islands will be armored with native limestone to reduce further erosion and loss of a critical nesting habitat for the birds.

**5. SPONSOR-OWNED LANDS**

**a. Federal**

There are no federally-owned lands within the project limits.

**b. Non-Federal**

The non-federal sponsor is West Coast Inland Navigation District. The islands owned by the Sponsor are:

SNAKE ISLAND is the southernmost project spoil island located in the Venice Inlet. Preliminary planimeter readings indicated that this island was approximately 3.31 acres in 1967 and over a 31-year period, the island has eroded to approximately 1.99 acres (1998).

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SKIERS' ISLAND is an 8-acre spoil island located in Roberts Bay.

Islands owned by Sarasota County are:

BIRD COLONY ISLANDS are 4 small islands, approximately 2 acres in size, which constitutes one of the most significant bird colonies along Florida's West Coast. They are located across the GIWW to the northeast of Skiers Island in Roberts Bay.

PALMER POINT PARK is a 33-acre spoil island located in the lower Sarasota Bay toward the north end of Casey Key, the former Midnight Pass. The project limits are approximately 5-acres.

JIM NEVILLE MARINE PRESERVE is a 35-acre preserve located directly north of Palmer Point Park, toward the southern end of Siesta Key. It is anticipated that work at this site will be carefully integrated with Palmer Point Park due to their proximity for economics in design and construction costs.

BIG EDWARDS ISLAND is a 6-acre spoil island located in Roberts Bay south of the Siesta Key Bridge. Historical, this island was a mangrove island utilized for disposal of dredge material from previous channel dredging operations.

## **6. REAL ESTATE REQUIREMENTS**

Lands required for this project are located in lower Sarasota Bay. They are Snake Island containing approximately 2 acres, Palmer Point Park containing 33 acres, Jim Neville Marine Preserve, containing 35 acres, Skier's Island, containing 8 acres, Big Edwards Island containing 6 acres, and Bird Colony Island consisting of four islands, approximately 2 acres in size. All six of these islands total 86.00 acres, more or less.

## **7. ESTATES**

No additional interest beyond navigation servitude will be required.

## **8. NAVIGATION SERVITUDE**

The coastal wetlands and seagrass meadows in the Sarasota Bay region have been significantly impacted from the placement of dredge and fill placement from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway

(GIWW) during the late 1950s to early 1960s. The spoil areas represented the most economical locations for depositing spoil material and keeping the dredge's floating line to approximately 1,800 feet. The spoil material was placed so as to build islands visible to navigators, thus preventing dangerous shoals. Dredge material was frequently placed in mangroves and shallow water bay bottoms creating upland areas, which were invaded by exotic vegetation. Therefore, the islands are within the navigation servitude for which the Federal Government has paramount jurisdiction, negating the need for the acquisition of any additional interest to proceed with construction of the project.

ER 405-1-12, Chapter 12, paragraph 12-38f, states that "In no event shall credit be afforded for lands that are available to the project through exercise of the navigation servitude." Based on that guidance, the non-Federal sponsor shall not receive credit for the value of lands it provides. A real estate cost is included in the M-CACES to cover administrative costs of \$17,500 to be incurred by Federal and non-Federal sponsors.

## **9. PROJECT MAP**

Real estate project maps are included in this report the Draft environmental assessment, dated May 2000, Section 7.0, Figure 1, pages 1 to 3.

## **10. INDUCED FLOODING**

There will be no induced flooding directly associated with this project.

## **11. REAL ESTATE BASELINE COST ESTIMATE**

Lands and Damages:	\$0
Acquisition/Administrative Costs	
Federal	
Project Planning	\$ 4,000
Review of Acquisitions	\$ 10,000
Non-Federal	
Acquisitions	\$0
Total Acquisition/Administrative Costs	\$14,000

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Contingencies (*25%)	\$ 3,500
Total Estimated Real Estate Costs	\$ 17,500

\*Contingencies of 25% are estimated to cover uncertainties associated with such elements as valuation variance, negotiation latitude, condemnation awards and interest, and refinement of boundary lines during ownership verification.

**12. RELOCATION ASSISTANCE BENEFITS**

There are no persons or businesses to be relocated as a result of this project.

**13. MINERALS**

No known minerals exist in the project area.

**14. NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR'S AUTHORITY TO PARTICIPATE**

The non-Federal sponsor is West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND), Sarasota County, and Florida. Its principal office is located in Venice, Florida. West Coast Inland Navigation District is an independent, multi-county special taxing district composed of the counties of Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Lee. WCIND is public body created by Chapter 23770, Laws of Florida 1947. WCIND's special acts have been codified in Chapter 98-526, Laws of Florida (1998). Section 5(f) of the codification legislation provides the following:

The District (WCIND) is authorized to assume sponsorship, or to act with other agencies, in environmental restoration and enhancement projects, seeking to protect, restore and enhance water quality, aquatic habitat, and other marine oriented conservation and environmental values in the navigable waters in the district. Such activities may include studies and work to restore damage to the aquatic environment caused by construction or maintenance of navigation channels, harbors, or similar works.

**15. REAL ESTATE MILESTONES**

After execution of the Project Cooperation Agreement, acquisition will be initiated. Acquisition of required lands is currently scheduled for six months.

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**16. PRESENCE OF CONTAMINANTS (HAZARDOUS, TOXIC AND RADIOACTIVE WASTES)**

A draft environmental assessment, dated May 2000, prepared by Jacksonville District, contains no mention as to the presence of hazardous, toxic or radioactive waste found on the islands.

**17. ATTITUDE OF LANDOWNERS**

West Coast Inland Navigation District and Sarasota County own the project lands. Both agencies fully support the project and will provide the real estate interest required supporting the project at no cost to the non-Federal sponsor.

**18. M-CACES FOR REAL ESTATE**

01	Lands & Damages	\$ 0	
01AA	Project Planning	\$ 4,000	
01B--	Acquisitions		
01B20	By local Sponsor (LS)		
01B30	Review of Local Sponsor	\$10,000	
TOTAL REAL ESTATE COST EXCLUDING CONTINGENCY			\$14,000
REAL ESTATE CONTINGENCY (25% COST)		\$ 3,500	
TOTAL PROJECT REAL ESTATE COST			\$17,500