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Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRIDGING THE DAM AND RESTORING WATER FLOW

Corps awards Tamiami Trail contract

Jacksonville Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today the award of a construction contract that will replace one mile of Tamiami Trail with a bridge. This will remove a key portion of the most formidable barrier to fresh water flows to northeastern Everglades National Park and will lead to benefits for the entire Everglades ecosystem.

The Corps awarded the \$81 million contract to Kiewit Southern Company, of Sunrise, Fla., and anticipates construction beginning in early November 2009. The contract includes constructing the bridge, and raising and reinforcing an additional 9.7 miles of Tamiami Trail, thus allowing higher water levels in the adjacent L-29 Canal. Higher water levels in the canal will drive flows into the Park when water is needed most. Projected completion of the bridge and road-raising construction is 2013.

“This is a momentous achievement for the Department of the Interior and all the agencies that have worked so long and hard to restore the Everglades,” said Col. Al Pantano, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District. “We are very proud to contribute to Everglades restoration by serving as the managers of this construction project.”

In 1989, Congress approved the Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act for the purpose of modifying the Central and Southern Florida Project to improve water deliveries to Everglades National Park, and to take steps to restore the park’s natural hydrologic conditions. Addressing the hydrological and ecological effects of Tamiami Trail is a major component of this legislation.

“The Department of the Interior, including the dedicated staff of Everglades National Park, and our partners have worked tirelessly for 20 years to restore more natural flow to the Park and to the greater Everglades,” said Tom Strickland, assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, who also serves as chair of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. “This is a great day for Everglades restoration and will be a strong foundation for future efforts to increase the natural water flow and return health to this incredible ecosystem.”



Dan Kimball, Superintendent of Everglades National Park, observed that, “Tamiami Trail currently acts as a dam that starves the Park of its lifeblood -- water. The bridge and roadway modifications will not only supply much needed water to imperiled wildlife and vegetation in the Park, but they will also result in ecosystem restoration benefits to the greater Everglades.”

Tamiami Trail was built in the 1920s so vehicles could travel between Tampa and Miami, two of the earliest centers of population growth in southern Florida. Decades later, restoration agencies identified the Trail as one of the most serious threats to the health of the Everglades.

Funding for the construction project is provided by the Department of the Interior.

The Corps estimated the cost of the project to be approximately \$200 million in 2008. Changes, in the nation’s economy have dramatically decreased the project’s cost estimate to less than 50 percent of the original estimate. “This cost savings comes along with another benefit – much-needed jobs to an area experiencing a high unemployment rate,” Pantano said.

The contract awarded today is in accordance with the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 that directed the Corps of Engineers to move forward immediately with implementation of the plan recommended in the 2008 Limited Reevaluation Report for the Tamiami Trail. That plan called for a one-mile bridge and associated road modifications. Implementation of this plan will result in more natural hydrologic conditions within the Park, as specified in the 1989 Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act. More specifically, the plan results in major increases in conveyance capacity under Tamiami Trail and in flow volumes to the Park. The plan also achieves more natural flow velocities and flow patterns. These improvements contribute to the reestablishment of more natural hydrologic conditions, a more naturally functioning ridge and slough landscape, and more favorable conditions for wildlife and vegetation in over 63,000 acres of the Park.

For more Tamiami Trail project details, please visit www.saj.usace.army.mil, or call Nanciann Regalado, at (904) 334-8954.

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