

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Bob Heeke, Senior Project Manager

FROM: Steve Minnis, Deputy Executive Director

DATE: August 2, 2019

RE: Authorization to Commence Detailed Assessment and Negotiations with Molpus Woodlands Group on the Purchase of the Rocky Creek Tract, Hamilton County

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Governing Board authorize the staff to commence detailed assessment and negotiations with Molpus Woodlands Group for the purchase of the 470 +/- acre Molpus Rocky Creek Tract in Hamilton County.

BACKGROUND

The District received funds from Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) in 2018 through the Springs Grant program to construct four recharge wells in the Upper Suwannee River Region. After the assessment process four well locations were selected, one of which is on private land, owned by Molpus at Rocky Creek in Hamilton County. FDEP rules for recharge wells require “institutional control” of certain lands surrounding the wells to protect the waters that would be used for recharge.

Staff has approached Molpus about a purchase of real estate. Since Molpus is a timber investment organization, they were not interested in any less than fee purchases. The footprint of this acquisition was mutually developed to give the District maximum control over the waters in Rocky Creek to be used for recharge. The footprint also incorporates easily managed boundaries for both parties and connects to existing nearby District lands. District staff will pursue discussions with Molpus about their reserving certain existing stands of near mature pine timber to reduce overall cost.

This tract is being assessed to support the siting of an Upper Suwannee River Regional Aquifer Recharge Project recharge well and associated facilities. Preliminary technical review suggests that the Rocky Creek basin is large enough that this site may be able to support additional wells beyond the current funded well justifying this larger footprint. This purchase, if approved, would be funded by a combination of Springs Grant funds and PCS Mitigation funds.

The Lands Committee reviewed Molpus Rocky Creek Tract at their July 9, 2019 meeting and voted to forward the recommendation to the Governing Board.

Funding for the detailed assessment and negotiations is available in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget under account codes 10-2586-3-2100-10 and 13-2586-3-2100-19.

RH/tm
File #19-003
Attachment