



TOWN OF CUTLER BAY

2020-01

State Legislative Session

Funding Request(s)

PROJECT:

**CUTLER BAY
RESTORATION PROJECT
(SW 97TH AVENUE)**



Cutler Bay Wetland Restoration

Project Narrative

Requested Amount \$300,000 ~ Town Match: \$146,000

The Town is requesting \$300,000 to convert 52 acres of open space at SW 97 Avenue and SW 224 Street into a wetland area. The project site has drawn nearly 120 species of migratory and rare birds; however, illegal dumping and ATV riding threatens the natural habitat. This project complements the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, has potential to link bicyclists to 3 state bike trails, and will serve as an educational "workshop" for students attending local schools. The Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners (Sponsored by Commissioner Daniella Levine Cava) unanimously adopted Resolution #R-1095-19 "urging the Florida Legislature to appropriate funding for the Cutler Wetlands" on October 3, 2019 (Agenda Item Attached).

The site is envisioned as a joint public-private partnership; while the center will be funded from the grant. Functions included within the observation structure will:

- Provide for the education of the general public
- Provide observation opportunities for professionals and the general public
- Support efforts to re-hydrate Biscayne Bay
- Provide interpretive signs and educational information for guests
- Document both fauna and flora present in the associated wetlands

The proposed project can also provide a major resource for Miami-Dade County Schools and other local institutions of higher learning, to educate and employ students in the effort to preserve Biscayne Bay.



BALD EAGLE



BELTED KINGFISHER



GREAT BLUE HERON



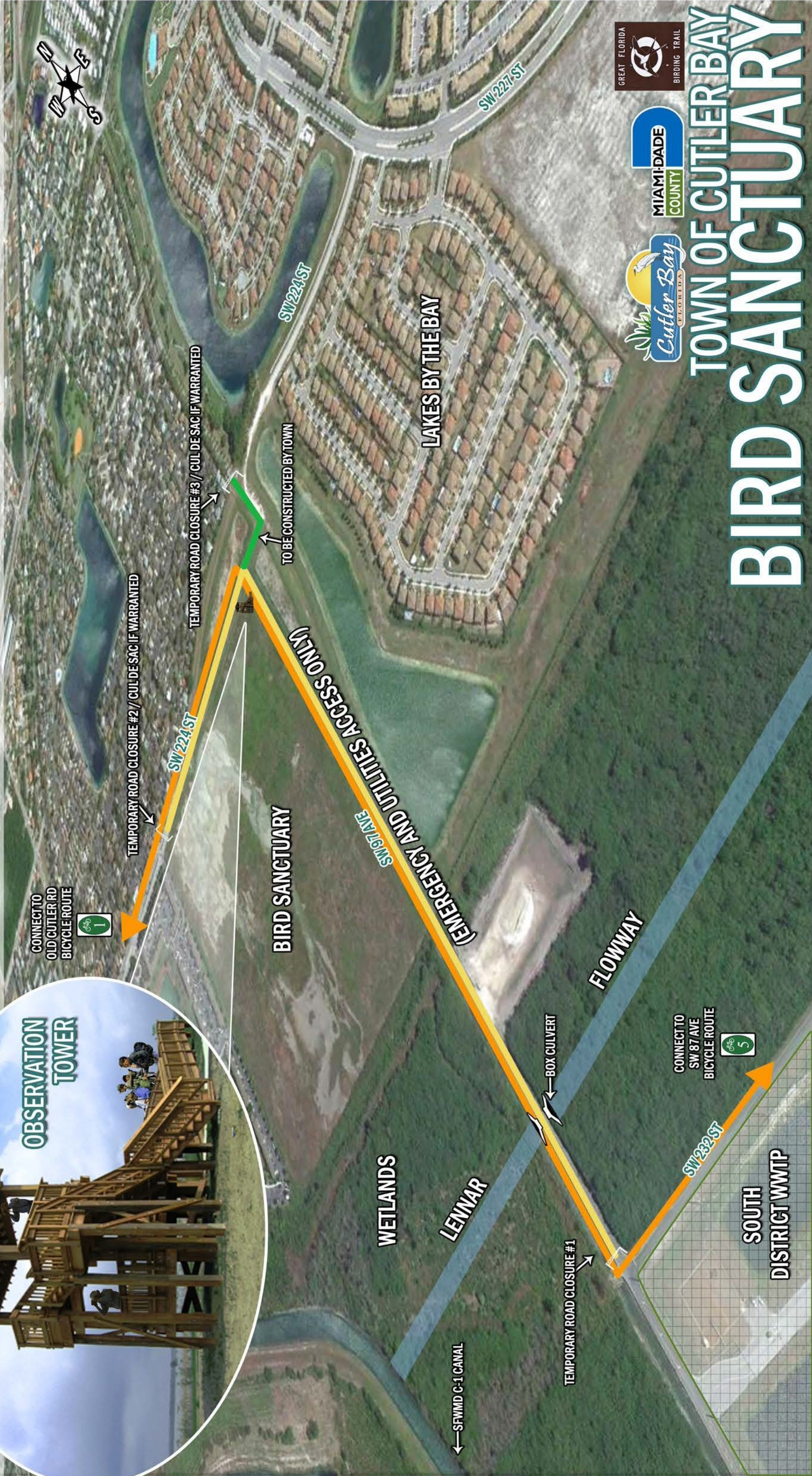
PURPLE GALLINULE



ROSEATE SPOONBILL



WOOD STORK



TOWN OF CUTLER BAY BIRD SANCTUARY

CUTLER BAY WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT

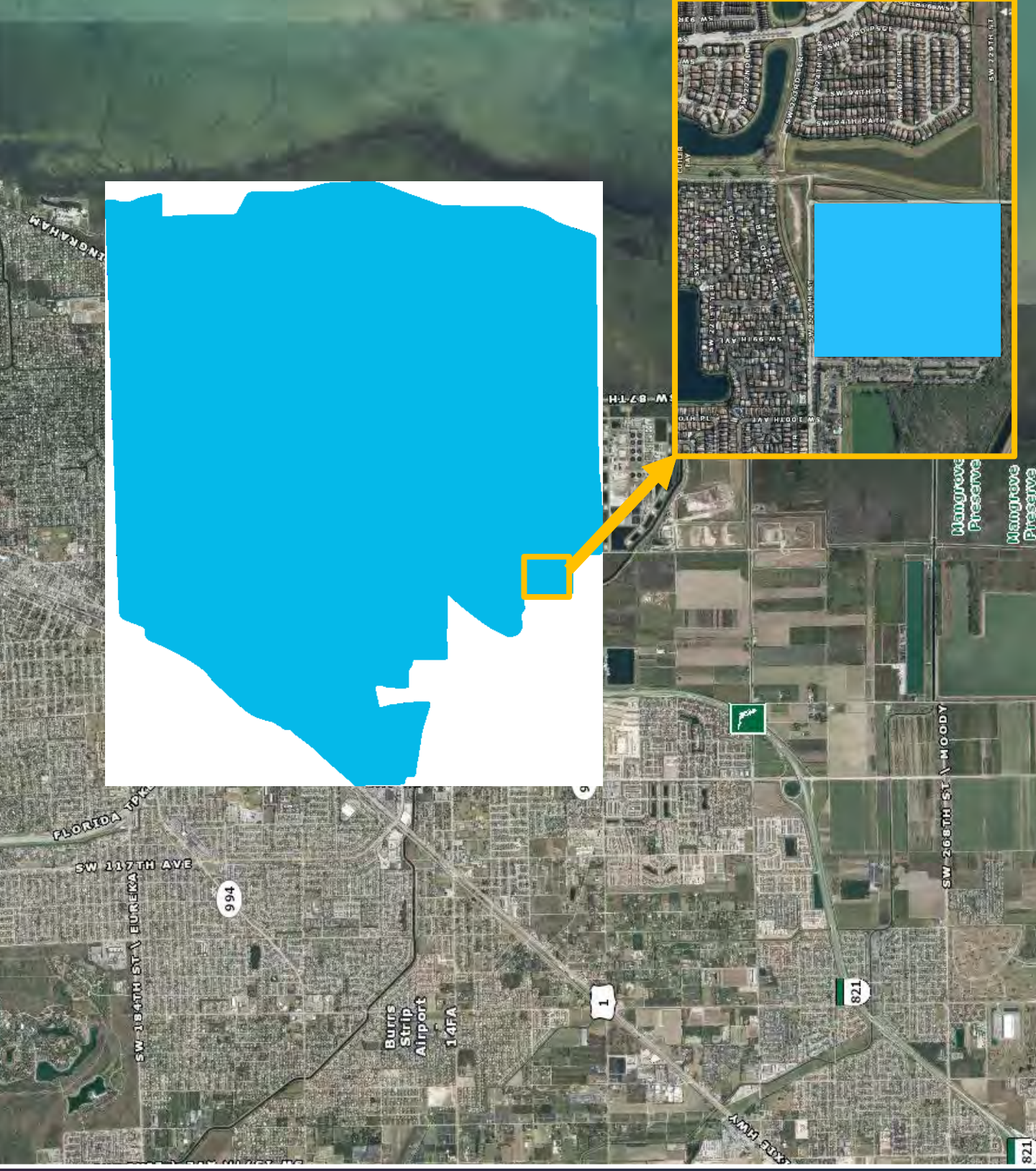
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A GREAT PARTNERSHIP



Project
Concept

LOCATION

- SW 97 Avenue and SW 224 Street
- Approximately 52 acres of open space
- Owned by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees permit (No. 200103245)



HISTORY

- In 2012 Lennar Land Partners, Inc. conveyed the land to South Florida Water Management District (resolution 2012-1107)
- During 2005-2010, the area drew a large diversity of migratory birds as the conditions were ideal for their feeding preferences. During that time as many as 120 species of birds were sighted, an incredible diversity within 52 acres of land



This parcel of land has great potential.

Please join us in restoring and preserving the Cutler Bay Wetlands. This project will bring forth benefits that will be reaped on a local, county and statewide level:



Environmental



Educational



Ecotourism

TOWN'S VISION FOR THE LAND



Illegal Dumping



ATV Riding



Loss of Bird
Diversity

| **CURRENT CONCERNS**



CONCERN #1: ILLEGAL DUMPING



CONCERN #2: ATV RIDING ON LAND WITH GROUND-NESTING BIRDS



CONCERN #3: BIRD DIVERSITY HAS DRASTICALLY DIMINISHED

- Local birders estimate that on any given day there may be around 10 different bird species, a drastic reduction of the bird species counts taken between 2005-2010
- The lack of routine maintenance has permitted invasive plants to take over both the berm and the mitigation area, deterring migratory birds' that previously fed off the land





| **WHY THIS LOCATION?**

EXCERPT FROM *FISH & WILDLIFE COORDINATION ACT REPORT* ON BISCAYNE BAY COASTAL WETLANDS PROJECT (APRIL 2010)

Maintaining this site as high-quality habitat for shorebirds is important given that the tip of the South Florida peninsula is the last fuel stop on the Eastern Flyaway in North America before the shorebirds migrate south across the Caribbean Sea or the Gulf of Mexico in the fall, and the first fuel stop on the continent as the birds migrate north in the spring.



LOCATION IS PRIME FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS:

- Proximity to landfill, which attracts them
- Bordered by Biscayne Bay to the east
- Last fuel stop before crossing the Gulf of Mexico
- Mixed elevations of land can attract a large variety of birds with different feeding preferences



SPECIES PREVIOUSLY SPOTTED IN CUTLER WETLANDS



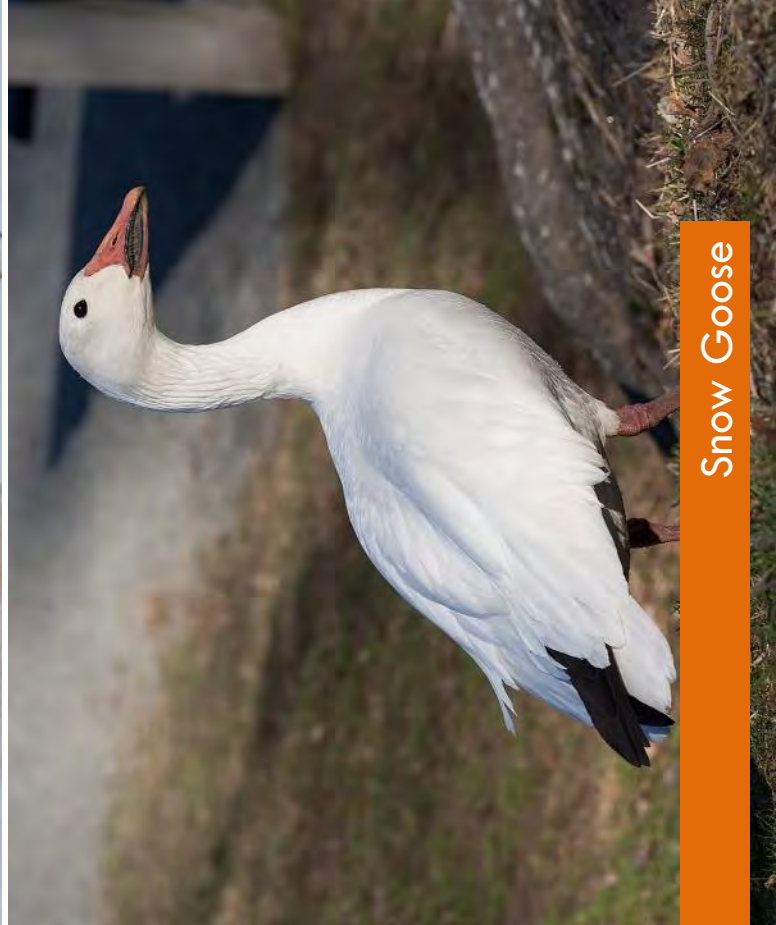
Hudsonian Godwit



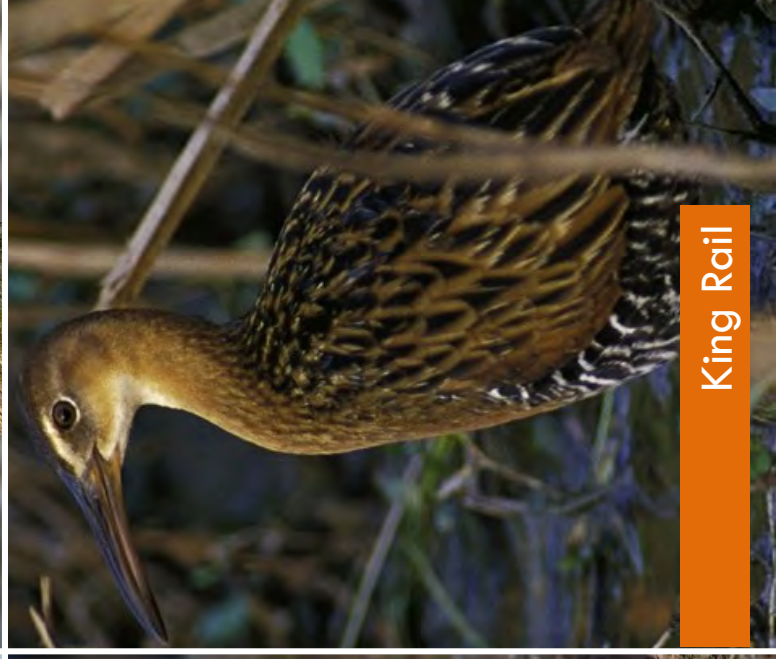
Bald Eagle



Black Necked Stilt



Snow Goose



King Rail



Red-Winged Blackbird



EXCERPT FROM *FISH & WILDLIFE COORDINATION ACT REPORT*
ON BISCAYNE BAY COASTAL WETLANDS PROJECT (APRIL 2010)

...The fact that much of the migratory shorebird habitat in South Florida has been lost to urban or agricultural development over the last century underlines the importance of preserving and maintaining viable shorebird habitat in this area.





Complements Comprehensive
Everglades Restoration Plan



Community
Support

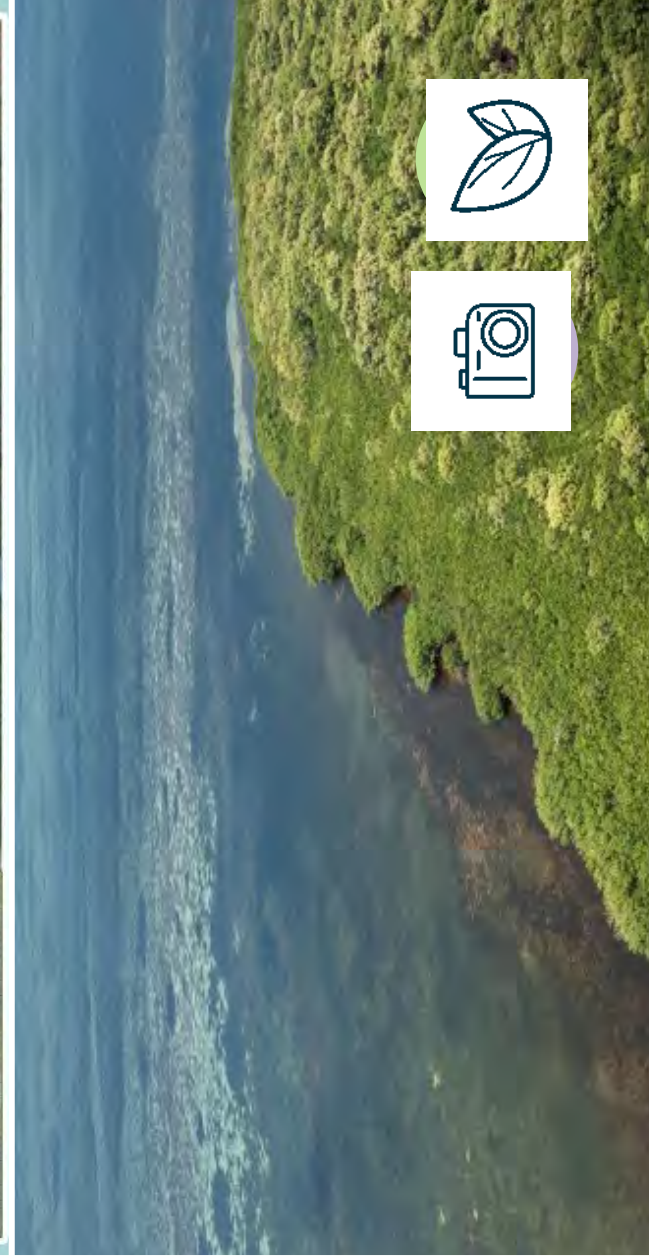


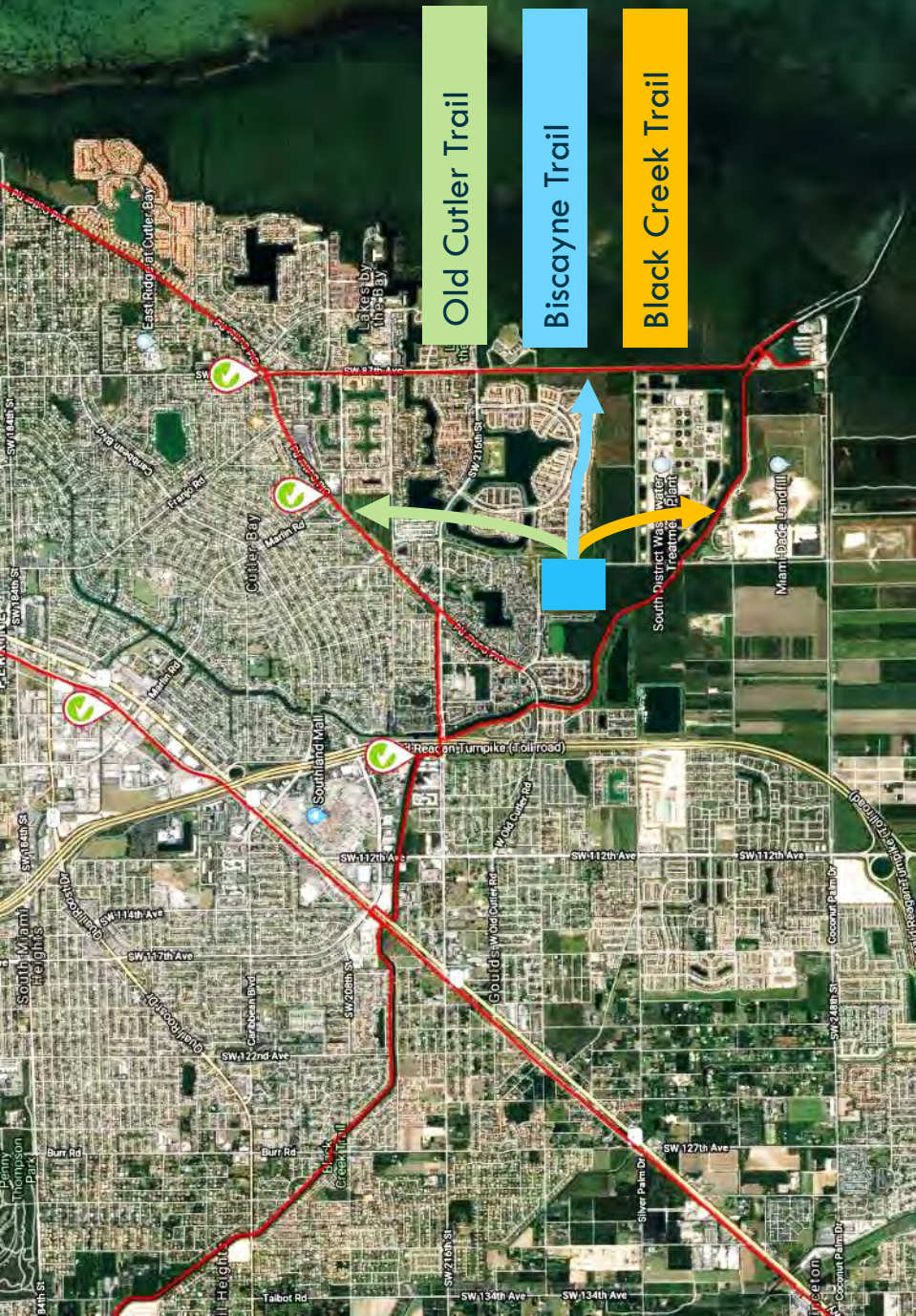
Town's
Commitment

WHY CAN THIS PROJECT SUCCEED?

COMPLEMENTS COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN

- The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is the largest hydrologic restoration project ever undertaken in the United States. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) is a component of CERP
- The BBCW Cutler Wetlands C-1 Flow Way project has been approved for design and would complement the proposed project. Features of the Flow Way Project include: Bicycle/walking path, parking, waterless toilets, benches, trash receptacles, bicycle rack, trail signage and more





BBCW CUTLER WETLANDS C-1 FLOW WAY PROJECT WOULD CONNECT AREA TO A NETWORK OF TRAILS



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Large “green” community in Cutler Bay
- Five of the public schools in Cutler Bay and one charter school have an academic track focusing on environmental sciences:
 - **Dr. E. L. Whigham Elementary’s** “Whigham’s Aquatic Visionary Explorers” (WAVE) Academy
 - **Gulfstream Elementary’s** Marine Science Academy
 - Cutler Bay Ocean Academy of Science and Technology (COAST) Academy programs at **Cutler Bay Middle** and **Cutler Bay Senior High**
 - **Mater Academy Cutler Bay** (K-12) is a charter school offering an environmental and animal science learning curriculum



TOWN'S COMMITMENT

- Town funded \$30,000 for traffic study to close off SW 97 Avenue
- Town's Public Works Department is committed to providing supplemental vegetation management along the proposed project limits and berm
- Town's Code Enforcement and Police Officers continuously monitor the area to enforce code violations (illegal dumping, ATV riding, etc.)
- Town created an educational campaign regarding the current issues to raise community awareness



TOWN'S COMMITMENT

- Town continuously proves to be a green community through the various environmental awards and recognitions received:
 - Florida Green Building Coalition Certified Silver City
 - Florida Planning and Zoning Association 2018 Sustainability Award for our Green Master Plan
 - Recipient of Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA award for 10 consecutive years and Growth Award for 5 consecutive years
 - Community Rating System Class 4 (one of only 3 in Florida)





Ecotourism

The strategic location of this land has the potential to attract a large diversity of migratory birds and, with it, the birding community. Currently, in Miami-Dade County, there are very limited designated locations for birding—pushing the birding community to other counties.

| ADDED BENEFIT



KEY TO SUCCESS: **US**



Serve as the lead agency to showcase the restoration project



Own and maintain property, promote restoration project through the *More to Explore* campaign



Work closely with SFWMD and Miami Dade's Environmental team to restore property



Assist with maintaining and promoting facility, proposing to enter into a joint participation agreement with SFWMD to restore property and to an active wetland preserve

KEY TO SUCCESS: US



Work with Town to develop educational opportunities for youth and community, assist in coordinating volunteer clean-up events



Provide expertise related to environmental education component and assist with promoting project



DEERING ESTATE
FOUNDATION

Provide expertise related to environmental education component and assist with promoting project



Work with Town to develop educational opportunities for youth and community, assist in coordinating volunteer clean-up events



Provide expertise on selecting educational information, enhancements to property

DuPuis Management Area

Martin County

The DuPuis Management Area is a 21,875-acre multi-use natural area. The District partners with the Center for Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University to conduct events, lecture series and other educational opportunities at the onsite environmental education facility.

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW)

Lee and Collier County

The 7,000-acre Corkscrew Marsh is the headwaters for the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW). The District partners with the CREW Land and Water Trust to offer educational programs and recreational opportunities.



SUCCESS STORIES

Tibet-Butler Preserve (Vera Carter Environmental Center)

Orange County

This Preserve is an oasis for wildlife and nature seekers amidst burgeoning Orlando. Over four miles of interpretive hiking trails and elevated boardwalks radiate from the **Vera Carter Environmental Center**. The preserve is home to bobcats, foxes, swallow-tailed kites, gopher tortoises, bald eagles, the rare indigo snake and a variety of songbirds. The center hosts a special environmental studies series for fifth graders.

A pavilion at the end of Osprey Overlook Trail provides a good view of the cypress forest—a great spot for bird watching.

SUCCESS STORIES



SFWMD Mission Statement:

To safeguard and restore South Florida's water resources and ecosystems, protect our communities from flooding, and meet the region's water needs while connecting with the public and stakeholders.



Environmental



Educational



Ecotourism

**Please join us in restoring and
preserving the Cutler Bay Wetlands.**



YOU PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS PROJECT...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!