



## Proposed J. W. Corbett WMA Flood Control and Mecca Farms Public Shooting Park Projects

February 12, 2014

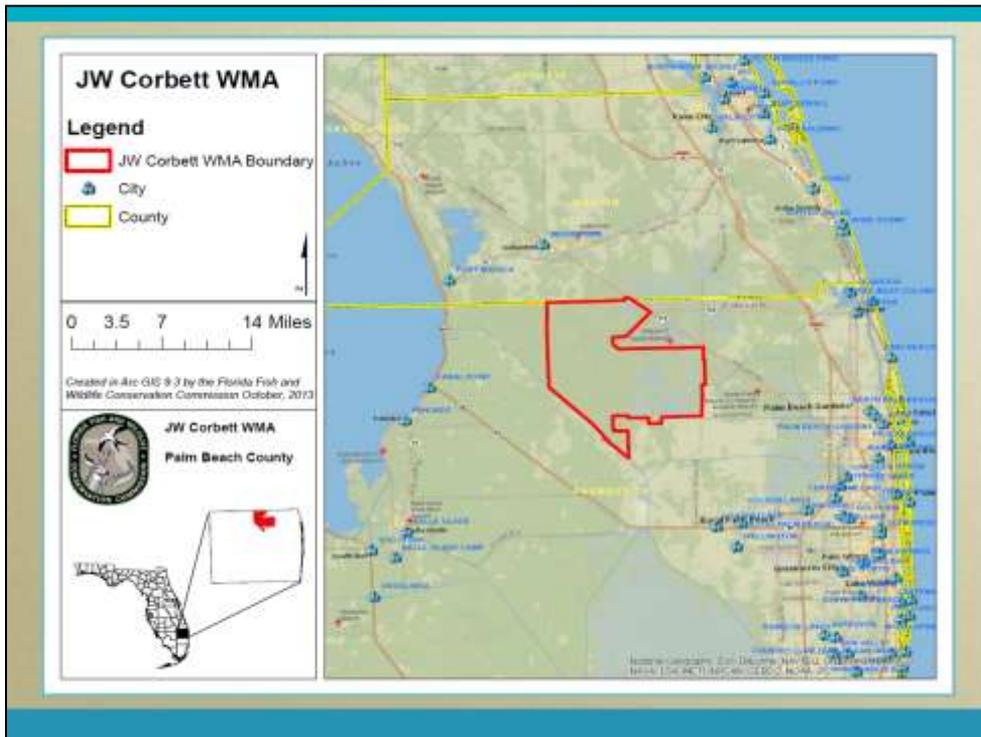
### **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

Division of Habitat and Species Conservation and

Division of Hunting and Game Management



Commissioners, today we are going to present an item that entails an arrangement between the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to facilitate land transactions within and adjacent to J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). These transactions will aid in local flood control efforts and enable the planned development of an FWC public shooting park.



This map shows the location of J.W. Corbett WMA, one FWC's oldest and most popular wildlife management areas in the state. It is located in southeast Florida in northern Palm Beach County, east of Lake Okeechobee and west/northwest of West Palm Beach. The total size of the WMA is 60,348 acres.

## Importance of J.W. Corbett WMA

- 135,349 visitors in 2012
- Estimated economic benefit = \$26,445,841/ year
- Helps to support an estimated 289 jobs
- Important conservation and public use area



As FWC public use data and associated economic analysis reveal, Corbett WMA provides substantial economic, conservation and public wildlife-based recreation benefits to the state.

## Benefits of Taking Action

- M-O Canal/Levee enhancements will aid flood control and protection for the local area
- Flowage easement will enable restoration of hydrology on approximately 2,300 acres of J.W. Corbett WMA
- Public shooting park will be an important asset for Palm Beach County and surrounding areas
  - Provides much needed Hunter Safety Education and Training Site
  - Provides easy access and use by children and visitors to the Everglades Youth Conservation Camp



Approval of these actions in partnership with SFWMD and Palm Beach County will facilitate aiding flood control capacity for the local area adjacent to JW Corbett WMA and provide a much-needed site for an FWC Palm Beach County shooting park that will enhance hunter safety education and training in this area of Florida.

## Importance of M-O Canal Reinforcement



This aerial photo shows flooding within and south of Corbett along the M-O canal and Levee from tropical Storm Isaac and demonstrates the importance of reinforcing this levee for future flood protection. While the M-O Canal/Levee was not breached during this flood event, subsequent engineering analysis by the SFWMD determined the need to strengthen the levee to meet current engineering standards to aid in protection from future flood events.

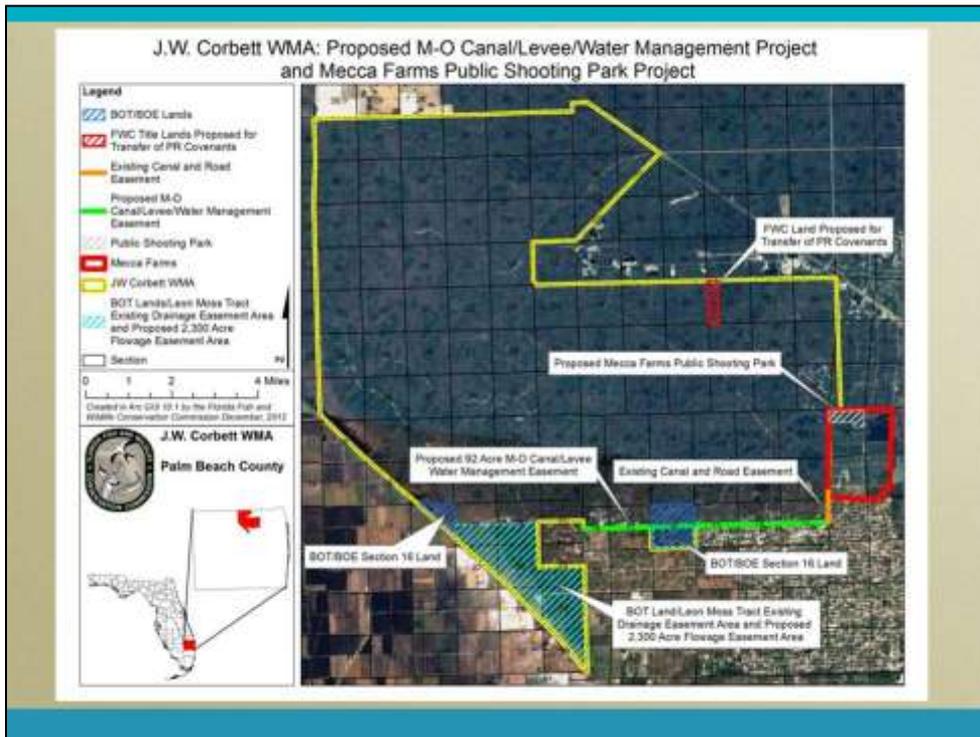
This photo is of the M-O Canal Looking West. JW Corbett WMA is on the right. This picture illustrates a column of water 3 feet deep and 5.6 miles long against a berm on the north side of the M-O canal that does not meet current engineering and construction standards.

## Importance of a Public Shooting Park



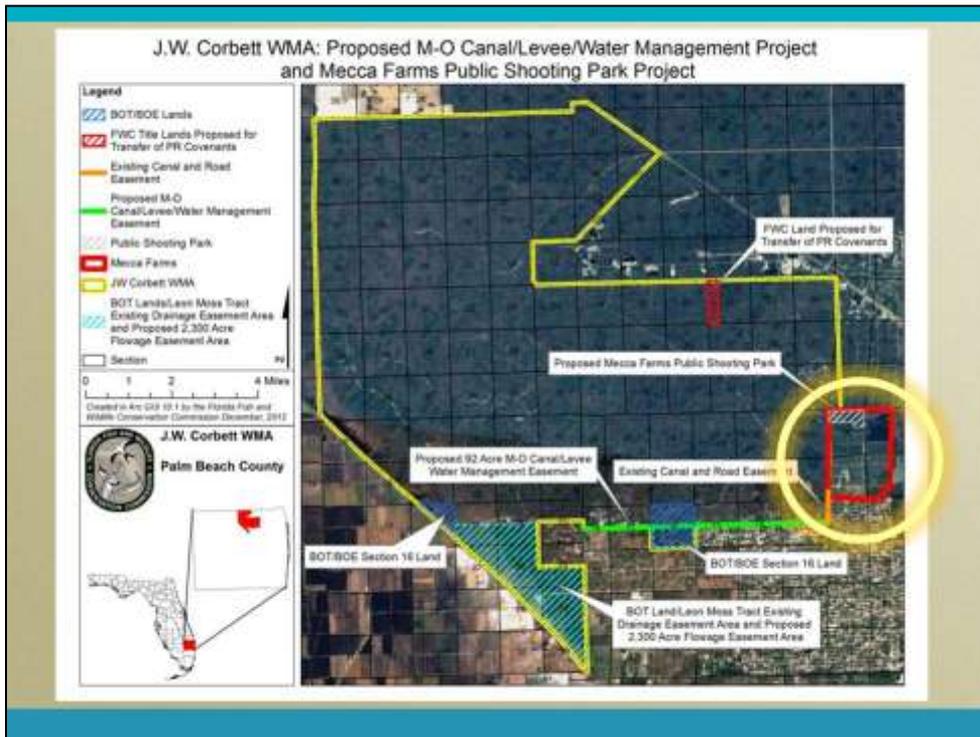
The need for a public shooting park in this part of Florida is great. A shooting park would create opportunity for people to have access to hunter safety training, youth shooting experiences, and recreational shooting- all of which would lead to strengthened hunting participation and recruitment. There is strong support for such a shooting park in Palm Beach County.

In 2007, a public meeting was held to determine what elements shooters would like to see included on 60 acre parcel previously selected for a Palm Beach County Public Shooting Park. According to county staff, this meeting drew the highest attendance of any public meeting for any recreational activity within Palm Beach County. The previously acquired 60-acre site was not large enough for all the amenities desired in a public shooting park. FWC's new proposed shooting park was designed using the previously acquired criteria from local shooting enthusiasts. The proposed conceptual design was posted for public comment prior to the May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 meeting of the Palm Beach County Commissioners. During that meeting there was overwhelming public support for the new site and proposed design.



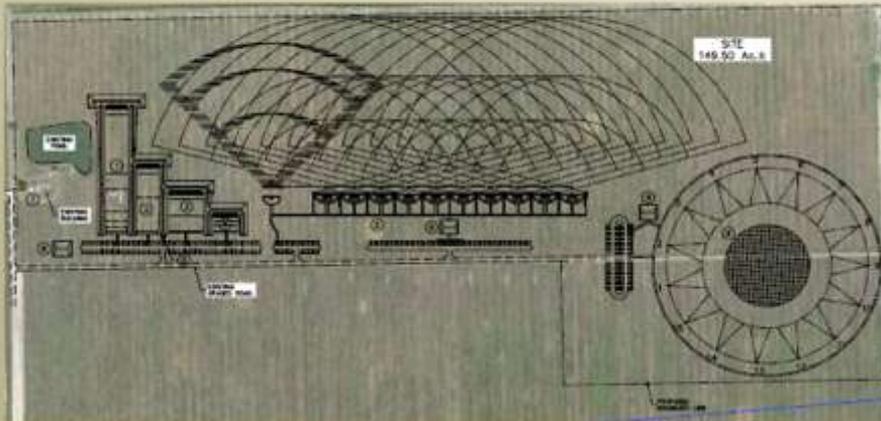
This map provides an overview of areas within and adjacent to JWCWMA that we are presenting today for your consideration. It depicts the proposed 92-acre J.W. Corbett WMA M-O Canal/Levee/Water Management easement that the SFWMD is requesting to aid in flood protection along the southern boundary of Corbett WMA. It also shows the 150-acre Mecca Farms site that the SFWMD is proposing to convey to FWC for its proposed new Palm Beach County public shooting park that is located along the southeastern boundary of Corbett WMA. The land proposed for transfer of USFWS Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act covenants is depicted on the map immediately south of the Corbett WMA boundary with Pratt-Whitney.

The map also depicts a proposed BOT flowage easement that is also being requested by the SFWMD on lands within the southwestern area of Corbett WMA that we are seeking concurrence with (contingent on ARC/BOT approval and FWC approval of a hydrology plan for drainage and flowage rights). We will step through each of these elements in more detail over the next few slides.



The first major element is the 150-acre conveyance of property from the SFWMD to FWC for development of the public shooting park. This area is a portion of a larger 1,896-acre tract acquired by the SFWMD from Palm Beach County. This area commonly is referred to as the Mecca Farms tract. These areas are highlighted in yellow on the map. To build the public shooting park, FWC intends to utilize federal Pittman-Robertson funds and use the value of the land as match.

## FWC's Proposed Public Shooting Park

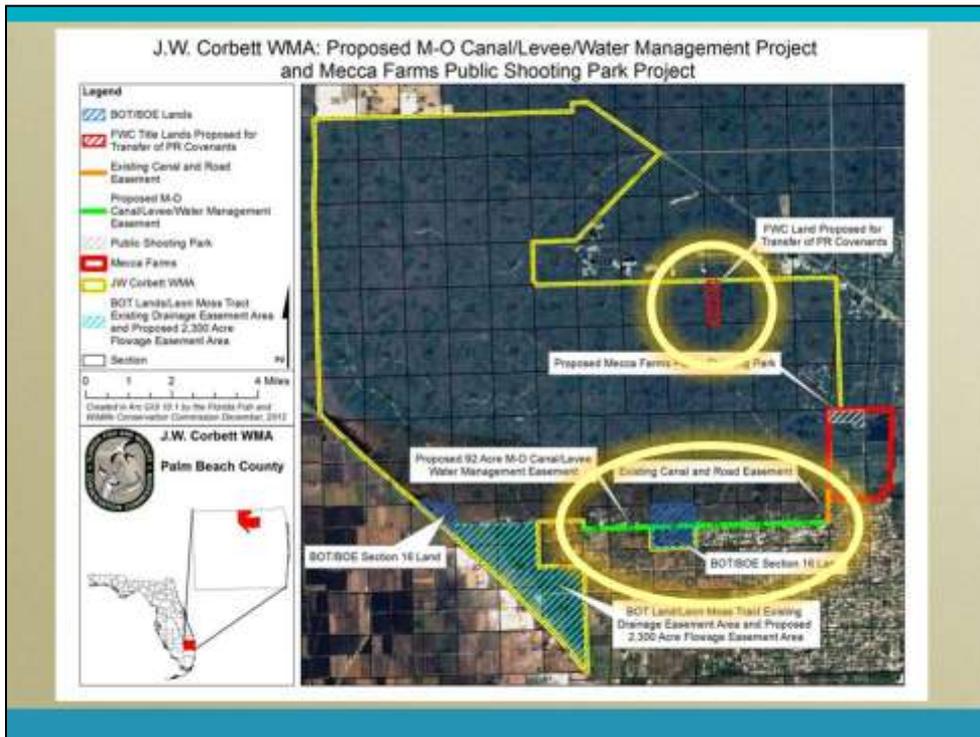


- 20 shooting positions on a 300 yard small bore rifle range
- 20 shooting positions on a 100 yard small bore rifle range
- 42 shooting positions on a 25/50 meter pistol range
- 30 shooting positions on a 10 meter/50 foot pistol range
- 1 international (Olympic) trap bunker
- 10 combination trap and skeet fields
- 15 position sporting clays course

The above schematic is a conceptual design for FWC's proposed public shooting park to be located in Palm Beach County on lands the SFWMD is proposing to convey to FWC on the Mecca Farms Site.

The proposed shooting range design consists of:

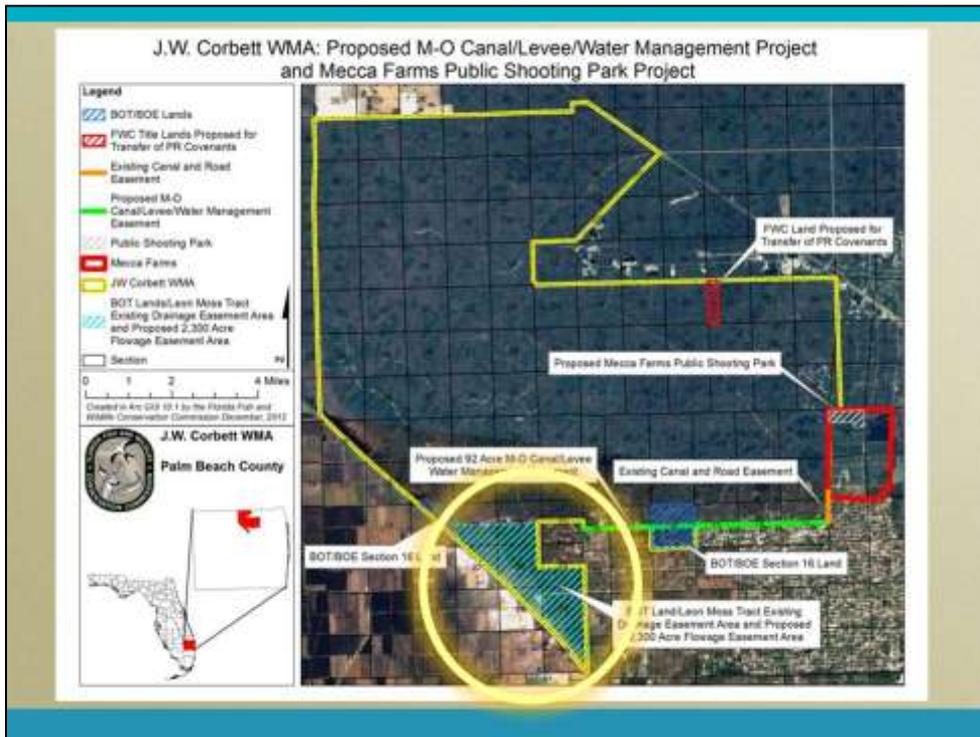
1. 20 shooting positions on a 300 yard small bore rifle range
2. 20 shooting positions on a 100 yard small bore rifle range
3. 42 shooting positions on a 25/50 meter pistol range
4. 30 shooting positions on a 10 meter/50 foot pistol range
5. 1 international (Olympic) trap bunker
6. 10 combination trap and skeet fields
7. 15 position sporting clays course



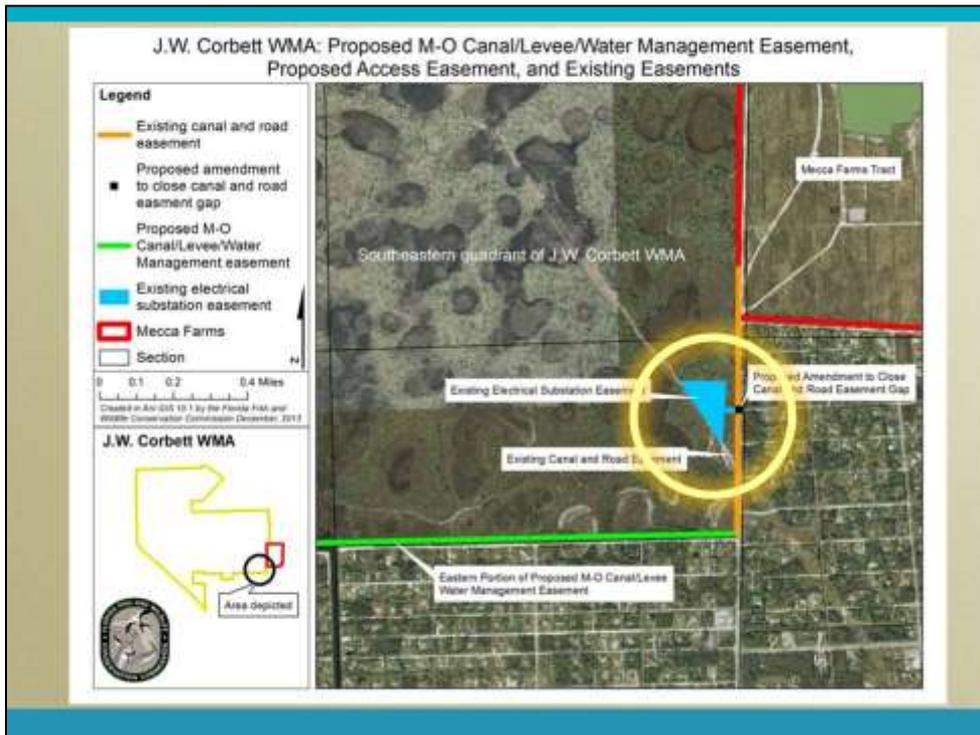
The second major element is an approximately 92-acre water management easement within J. W. Corbett WMA that FWC would convey to the SFWMD. This easement would allow the SFWMD to strengthen and improve the levee so that it would meet standards for future flooding events. This area is highlighted in yellow and depicted as a palm green line at the southeastern boundary of the WMA.

This majority of this area within the WMA was purchased with federal P-R monies and therefore has USFWS covenants that must be met. In order to do so, staff proposes to transfer the USFWS covenants to another area of the WMA that was not acquired with federal monies. Such a transfer requires approval by the USFWS, which staff is in the process of securing. The area proposed for the transfer of covenants is highlighted in yellow and shown in red crosshatch in the northeastern part of the WMA.

Additionally, a small portion of the 92-acre easement includes Board of Trustees land and would require State approval. This area is depicted in blue crosshatch in the lower southeastern portion of the WMA.



The third major element is a flowage easement that would be conveyed from the FWC to the SFWMD on 2,273 acres in the southwestern portion of J. W. Corbett WMA. This flowage easement would allow the SFWMD to restore hydrology to this portion of the WMA. This area is highlighted in yellow and is commonly referred to as the Leon Moss tract. This area already has drainage easements established for surrounding landowners. The SFWMD would create a restoration and water management plan for this area that would ensure the drainage easements are not impacted and would be approved by the FWC.



Lastly, there are some related other easements that would need to be created or modified. This map depicts the eastern portion proposed 92-acre M-O Canal/Levee/Water Management easement, the southwestern portion of the Mecca Farms tract, and lands that are within the FWC/Palm Beach County/Scripps development easement. The Palm Beach County/Scripps easement requires amendments to re-affirm its usage and rectify some gap glitches in the legal description within the original easement for canal right-of-way, road right-of-way, and electrical substation since the original Scripps/Palm Beach County easement was granted contingent upon the Scripps facility being developed on the Mecca Farms tract. These easement areas are highlighted in yellow on the map.

## Memorandum of Agreement to Aid Project

- Acceptance of the conveyance of 150 acres in the Mecca Farms Tract from the SFWMD to FWC for a FWC Public Shooting Park Site
- FWC and Board of Trustees (contingent on BOT approval) issuance of a 92 acre M-O canal/levee easement to the SFWMD
- Transfer of U. S. Wildlife Restoration Act (USWRA) grant covenants that encumber the proposed Corbett M-O canal easement to other FWC lands within Corbett WMA
- Concurrence with a proposed 2,273 acre BOT flowage easement to the SFWMD on Corbett WMA (contingent on BOT approval and FWC approval of a hydrology plan for drainage and flowage rights)
- Amendment of an existing 30 acre easement FWC issued to Palm Beach County for the proposed Scripps facility



In order to aid in accomplishing each of these proposed land conveyances, FWC entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SFWMD that is included in your agenda background information. Accordingly, staff is asking the Commission to approve the following items listed on this slide that are also generally referred to in the FWC/SFWMD MOA.

## Local Support

Supported by:

- SFWMD in Cooperation and Partnership with FWC
- Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
- Indian Trails Improvement District
- Stakeholders



These projects are being developed in cooperation with SFWMD, Palm Beach County, and the Indian Trails Improvement District and are supported by FWC stakeholders that have advocated for completion of these projects.

## Staff Recommendation

- A Delegation of Authority to the Executive Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve and execute the land conveyances outlined in this presentation contingent upon approval:
  - by the Acquisition and Restoration Council,
  - by the Board of Trustees,
  - by the USFWS, and
  - of all required due diligence.



In conclusion, staff is asking for your approval of a delegation of authority to the Executive Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve and execute the land conveyances outlined in this presentation. Such approval would be contingent upon independent approvals by the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC), Board of Trustees (BOT), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and legally required due diligence.

Thank you; I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.