



## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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July 21, 2023

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director  
Southwest Florida Water Management District  
2379 Broad Street  
Brooksville, FL 34604  
[Brian.armstrong@swfwmd.state.fl.us](mailto:Brian.armstrong@swfwmd.state.fl.us)

Subject: Lease for the Weeki Wachee Preserve

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

Hernando County (County) submitted a proposal for development of a public park for recreational uses in the Weeki Wachee Preserve to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) on January 20, 2023. Two management options (lease and land swap) were presented for the proposed project area along with incorporating recreational activities as established by the District in the Management Plan for the Weeki Wachee Preserve (Preserve) issued in December 1997. The County also supported updating the current management plan for the Preserve.

This District provided a response to the proposal on March 28, 2023, to the County. The District did not object to consideration of a lease or some other agreement for management of portions of the Preserve by the County. The District proposed discussion of a lease or management agreement for a smaller portion of the Preserve (Figure 1) wherein the County would assume responsibility for recreation with the following terms and conditions:

1. Improve existing amenities and trails within the revised project area.
2. Utilize the Shoal Line entrance and build out a boardwalk or bridge over the canal to the Preserve for ingress and egress subject to applicable permitting and mitigation requirements.
3. Expansion of non-motorized boating activities such as a kayak launch.

The proposed project, herein referenced as Mermaid Lakes Park, will incorporate activities such as hiking, fishing, picnicking, and non-motorized boating as established by the District in the Management Plan for the Weeki Wachee Preserve issued in December 1997. The Mermaid Lakes Park masterplan has been revised to address the above requirements and is attached for your review. The Masterplan shows the entire vision for the property. The Swimming area shown would not be developed while the property is under a lease, as you have requested.

The County requests the District draft a lease for the use of the revised project area to include the

Mermaid Lakes masterplan within the Preserve. If needed, we are willing to meet to discuss any more details of the agreed upon lease. You may reach me via email at [jrogers@hernandocounty.us](mailto:jrogers@hernandocounty.us) or via phone at (352) 754-4841.

Sincerely,



Jeff Rogers, P.E.  
County Administrator  
Hernando County

Attachments: Mermaid Lakes Park masterplan  
Figure 1 – SWFWMD Revised project area

cc: Brian Starford, P.E., SWFWMD, [brian.starford@swfwmd.state.fl.us](mailto:brian.starford@swfwmd.state.fl.us)  
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