

**A RESOLUTION OF THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER
MANAGEMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL URGING
THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
AND THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO
EXPEDITE THE COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES
RESTORATION PLAN LOXAHATCHEE RIVER
WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT AND ADVISING
THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
TO COMPLETE CRITICAL SCIENTIFIC DATA
COLLECTION PRIOR TO ADOPTION OF A REVISED
MINIMUM FLOW AND LEVEL FOR THE NORTHWEST
FORK OF THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER**

WHEREAS, the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (NWFLR) is one of only two federally designated National Wild and Scenic Rivers in the State of Florida and is recognized for its exceptional ecological, scenic, recreational, and cultural values; and

WHEREAS, the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council (LRMCC) was established to promote the long-term protection, restoration, and management of the Loxahatchee River and its watershed through intergovernmental cooperation; and

WHEREAS, delivery of adequate freshwater flow is essential to maintaining the ecological integrity of the Northwest Fork, including its nationally significant floodplain cypress forest, estuarine habitats, fish and wildlife communities, and water quality; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is currently undertaking a revision of the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) for the NWFLR, originally adopted more than two decades ago; and

WHEREAS, the NWFLR has experienced 24 salinity-based MFL exceedances in the approximately 23 years (2003 through 2026) that salinity has been measured at River Mile 9.1 with durations ranging from 21 to 136 days and averaging about 40 days; and

WHEREAS, substantial scientific advancements have occurred since the original MFL was developed, and significant uncertainties remain regarding groundwater/surface water interactions, climate variability, sea level rise, tidal variations, watershed alterations, restoration benefits, ecological response relationships, and other factors influencing river hydrology, making additional scientific evaluation necessary to ensure that any revised MFL is based upon the best available science and conservatively protects the NWFLR; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project was authorized to identify, evaluate, and implement restoration

strategies necessary to restore natural hydrologic conditions within the watershed but has been delayed due to reformulation, limited funding, and changing implementation priorities; and

WHEREAS, successful implementation of the CERP Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project will enhance ecosystem health, valued ecosystem components, improve quantity, quality, timing and distribution of freshwater flows, and decrease saltwater intrusion; and

WHEREAS, development of a scientifically robust MFL is essential because it serves as a foundational regulatory benchmark guiding future water resource planning, permitting, restoration, and water supply decisions affecting the Loxahatchee River for decades to come; and

WHEREAS, the SFWMD has identified the CERP Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project as the official Recovery Strategy for achieving compliance with the current MFL and to provide flow sufficient for meaningful restoration; and

WHEREAS, scientific credibility and stakeholder confidence are best achieved when clear ecological goals are established using the most complete and defensible scientific information available and communicated early; and

WHEREAS, the determination of the MFL requires the identification of the vulnerable resources and an assumption of a specific amount of sea level rise; and

WHEREAS, the LRMCC appreciates the SFWMD's longstanding commitment to protecting and restoring the Loxahatchee River and offers this Resolution in the spirit of advancing that shared mission through sound science and timely restoration.

The foregoing recitals are hereby adopted and ratified and incorporated herein by reference.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER MANAGEMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL RESPECTFULLY URGES THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT AND THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (USACE) TO ELEVATE THE PRIORITY OF, SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDING, AND EXPEDITE COMPLETION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the LRMCC respectfully requests that the SFWMD identify and publicly document the critical scientific data gaps, uncertainties, and technical analyses necessary to support a scientifically defensible revision of the MFL for the

NWFLR including but not limited to the required understanding of groundwater/surface water interactions, floodplain hydroperiod requirements, cypress forest ecological response thresholds, restoration scenario modeling, seasonal tidal changes, and climate/sea level rise considerations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the LRMCC requests the SFWMD develop a work plan and schedule for addressing those identified data gaps and fund additional monitoring, modeling, ecological studies, restoration evaluations, and other appropriate scientific investigations, including a transparent process for thorough stakeholder input.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the LRMCC respectfully requests that before adopting a revised MFL, the SFWMD complete identification of the critical scientific data gaps and substantially complete the actions necessary to address those gaps, thereby ensuring that any revised MFL reflects the best available science and current understanding of the watershed.

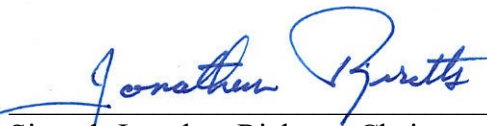
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the LRMCC reaffirms its commitment to working collaboratively with the SFWMD, the USACE, local governments, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders to advance restoration and long-term protection of the Loxahatchee River and watershed.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the SFWMD Governing Board, the Executive Director of the SFWMD, the Jacksonville District Commander of the USACE, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Legislature, and the Congressional delegation representing the Loxahatchee River watershed.

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The foregoing Resolution was offered by LRMCC Member Thomas Lanahan (Treasurer Coast Regional Planning Council), who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by LRMCC Member Dr. Albrey Arrington (Loxahatchee River District), and upon being put to a vote, the vote passed unanimously 14-0 with Cassondra Armstrong (SFWMD) abstaining.

The LRMCC Chair, Jonathan Ricketts, thereupon declared the Resolution duly passed and adopted this 14th day of September 2026.



Signed: Jonathan Ricketts, Chair
Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council