PROJECT: C-18/South Shoreline Navigation Channel

PURPOSE/GOAL: Removal of sediment to improve the clarity of water in the Central Embayment and afford improved navigation to residents living along the Southwest Fork, C-18, and Southern Shoreline of the Embayment, or who use that area of the Embayment to access the Intracoastal Waterway and Jupiter Inlet.

PROJECT LOCATION: South shoreline of Central Embayment, Southwest Fork of Loxahatchee River and C-18 Canal

PROJECT STATUS: Permit application submittal and review process

DESCRIPTION:

In response to numerous requests from local residents over the past two decades, the Jupiter Inlet District has submitted a permit application to the Florida DEP and USACOE to construct a navigation channel parallel to the southern shoreline of the Central Embayment. The channel would continue through the Southwest Fork of the River and into the C-18 Canal to the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) S-46 Flow Control Structure.

The Jupiter Inlet District currently maintains a navigation channel along the northern portion of the Central Embayment of the Loxahatchee River. This channel runs from near the intersection of the ICWW/Alternate A1A Bridge/FECRR Bridge to the western portion of the Central Embayment. This north channel provides residents living along the North Fork, Northwest Fork, and Central Embayment's northern shoreline with ready access to the Intracoastal Waterway and the Jupiter Inlet.

Residents living along the Southwest Fork, C-18 Canal, and the southern shoreline of the Central Embayment currently do not have direct access to a similar navigation channel. These residents must transit either to the far western end of the Central Embayment or carefully pick their way long the southern shoreline before turning north to access the existing navigation channel.

The area contains numerous seagrass patches. Unfortunately, the lack of a defined channel along the south shoreline has led to boaters wandering out of deep water and grounding. This, in turn, results in scarring of the seagrass beds. The JID believes a well-marked and maintained navigation channel along the southern shoreline will likely reduce the incidences of seagrass scarring in the area.

The local desire to develop a southern channel led the JID to sponsor several research projects focusing on potential impacts from the project. Notably, Dr. Ashish Mehta of the University of Florida completed a detailed treatment of the sedimentation issues and tidal flows within the Loxahatchee Estuary. He concluded that a southern channel, extended up to the S-46 flow control structure, would improve overall water quality.

The proposed channel will traverse the C-18 Canal, the Southwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, and follow along the southern shoreline of the Central Embayment of the Loxahatchee River. It will terminate at the existing navigation channel east of a small mangrove island in the vicinity of the FECRR Bridge. The channel will have a depth of -5 ft NGVD and a bottom width of 50 ft. This width is adequate to allow two small vessels to pass when traveling in opposite directions. The JID received its permits from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Construction is expected to begin in 2009.