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**Lee Commissioners accept \$22.7 million state grant for water management project at Larry Kiker Preserve**

Fort Myers, FL, Dec. 3, 2024 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to accept a \$22.7 million Resilient Florida Grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the design and construction of the Larry Kiker Preserve Water Management Project Phase 1.

The project plan is to restore flow ways, protect habitat, improve regional flood control, improve water quality and enhance aquifer recharge.

The Lee Board of County Commissioners acquired the 3,921 acres in 2017 and property was renamed the Larry Kiker Preserve in 2019 shortly after the death of Lee County Commissioner Larry Kiker, who was an advocate of preserving the land.

The grant requires 50/50 cost share. The county met local match requirements from the initial \$42 million purchase of the preserve lands.

The site contains significant natural flow ways, given its location at the confluence of Estero River, Halfway Creek and Imperial River. Restoration through site improvements is intended to provide enhanced water quality, flood attenuation and aquifer recharge as well as protect a significant, diverse population of wildlife and plant communities. It also would provide opportunities for nature-based recreation in the southern part of Lee County.

In August 2020, this project was identified in the Southern Lee Flood Mitigation Plan. The plan proposes to construct a regional flood protection project which benefits the Village of Estero, Bonita Springs and unincorporated Lee County.

A year ago, the Lee Board of County Commissioners voted to accept \$1 million in Florida State Resiliency Grant Funds from FDEP to support design and permitting fees.

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