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Jacksonville District

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS FINISHES LAKE BELT STUDY; ISSUES MINING PERMIT TO CEMEX CONSTRUCTIONS MATERIALS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for rock mining in the Lake Belt Area and has issued a project specific permit to Cemex Construction Materials Florida for its FEC Quarry.

After extensive study and coordination with the public and other state and federal agencies, the ROD found that the discharge of fill material into 10,044 acres of Waters of the United States for mining in the Lake Belt area is not contrary to the public interest and is in compliance with the Section 404 of the Clean Water Act 404(b)(1) guidelines subject to certain permit conditions. Of the total impacts, 2,717 acres of wetlands were impacted under the 2002 permits, prior to the permits being vacated. The 7,327 acres of “new” authorized impacts are separated into two geographic areas: Section I (4,591 acres) and Section II (2,736 acres).

The authorized plan includes the following: 1) a 1,500-foot Exclusion Area, in which no mining will occur, along the western border of the Lake Belt mining area (i.e., alongside the Pennsuco Wetlands and the Everglades National Park) in order to reduce seepage, and 2) the transfer of 1,708 acres of miner-owned lands within the Pennsuco to the State. Both areas will be enhanced and preserved as mitigation.

The ROD includes conditional authorization whereby mining will only be allowed in Section II after certain conditions are met. These conditions include construction of a seepage mitigation project that the Corps determines to be effective, an updated mitigation plan that takes into account all changed



circumstances and fully offsets all wetland impacts, an updated Biological Opinion providing renewed support that mining and its associated discharges do not jeopardize the continued existence of any federally listed species, and successful 5-year interagency review(s) that show(s) mining within Section I is proceeding in accordance with permit requirements.

South of Tamiami Trail, permit conditions will require a 1,500-foot Exclusion Area along the L-31N canal to avoid seepage impacts to the Everglades National Park. The Exclusion Area will cover a portion of the requested mining area, and requirements for this area will include the restoration of certain impacted areas and creation of littoral areas along the existing lakes. A seepage mitigation project, determined by the Corps to be effective, must be constructed prior to any further mining south of Tamiami Trail and outside of the 1,500-foot Exclusion Area.

The duration of the Lake Belt mining permits for activities in Sections I and II will be for a maximum period of 20 years, with interagency reviews every five years. This duration was determined based on the rate of wetland impact from 2002 to 2009 (388 acres/year).

For further information, please call the Jacksonville District Corporate Communications Office at 904-232-2236.

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