EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SITE MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN
RESTORATION DRI PROJECT SITE
CITY OF EDGEWATER, VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

The project site for the proposed Restoration DRI is located within the city limits of the City of Edgewater, Volusia County, Florida. The site encompasses approximately 5,181 acres of pine plantations and forested and herbaceous wetlands on the west side of Interstate 95 (I-95) north of County Road (CR) 442. The site is composed of 2,078 acres of uplands (40%) and 3,103 acres of wetlands (60%) that have been affected by silvicultural activities for approximately 50 years.

The proposed project consists of two development tracts constructed in three phases on approximately 1,709 acres, which represents 33% of the 5,181-acre project site. The eastern tract, comprising the preponderance of development acreage (1,384 acres), is located adjacent to I-95 and is clustered around a proposed alignment of Volusia County's Williamson Boulevard Extension. The western tract is a 225-acre conservation hamlet located in the central western part of the project site. The conservation hamlet is connected to the eastern development tract by a proposed 2,400-foot access road that will be constructed on an existing timber road. The "hamlet" access road contains a 200-foot long bridge sloping to a maximum height of approximately 20 feet above normal ground elevation.

Native plant communities and wildlife habitats on the project site have been impacted by 50 years of silvicultural activities and by the "damming effect" of CR 442. The areal extent of wetland systems on the project has been reduced by planted pine encroachment. Wetland hydrology and hydroperiods have been adversely affected by the ridges and furrows associated with plantation bedding, creation of drainage ditches, firebreak and road construction, and improper sizing and location of culverts. Upland flatwoods habitats on the project site have been altered by bedded slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) plantations located throughout the project site.

The development plan proposes preservation of 3,472 acres, or 67%, of the 5,181-acre project site under a perpetual conservation easement, including the environmentally sensitive headwaters of Spruce Creek Swamp. Preserved lands will consist of 2,518 acres of wetlands and 954 acres of uplands, representing 81% of the total wetland acreage and 46% of the total upland acreage on the project site, respectively. The Site Mitigation and Management Plan (SMMP) proposes strategies to restore, enhance, and manage the preserved lands.

Strategies to restore natural hydrology and plant associations within wetland systems include: (1) removal or thinning of planted pine extending into wetland systems, (2) reduction of planting beds, (3) grading of firebreaks and interior roads, (4) plugging and/or filling of drainage ditches, (5) planting native wetland species in areas where surrounding seed and seed bank sources and existing vegetation are inadequate, and (6) use of fire in hydric flatwoods and wet prairie situations. Strategies proposed for upland habitats include: (1) creation of four management units to facilitate management of wildlife habitats, (2) thinning existing pine plantations to create a mosaic of savannahs, prairies, and open-canopied flatwoods, while providing revenue for management activities, (3) use of logging equipment, roller chopping, and natural degradation

processes to reduce the effects of planting beds, (4) roadway and firebreak improvements to reduce deleterious effects on sheet water flows, (5) plugging and/or filling drainage ditches extending through uplands, and (6) reestablishment of fire regimes in managed flatwoods habitats through use of prescribed fire, including smoke management to protect proposed developments and surrounding roadways.

Focal wildlife species included in the SMMP include the Florida black bear, bald eagle, swallow-tailed kite, gopher tortoise, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and wading birds. Management actions, such as use of prescribed burns for habitat improvements and fuel reduction, will be conducted for focal species within each of the management units, where applicable. The SMMP proposes measures for the managing habitat for bears and human-bear interactions. Habitat buffers will be preserved for the active VO-041 bald eagle nest, known and potential swallow-tailed kite nesting areas. Relocation areas for gopher tortoises affected by the proposed development will be established and managed pursuant to FWC relocation permit requirements. Upland and wetlands habitats will be managed to provide conservation benefits for deer, turkeys, and other wildlife species on the project site. Wetland restoration, creation of storage compartments for flood waters and stormwater, and management of storm/flood waters will provide foraging and potential roosting and nesting habitats for wading birds. A major wildlife crossing, in the form of a 200-foot bridge reaching 20 feet in height at mid-span, will provide more than sufficient room for wildlife movement between major management units within the interior of the project site.

The development plan and restoration and management strategies proposed for Restoration have been planned to create a marketable residential and commercial development that fits into and maximizes environmental considerations within a county-wide and region-wide context. The proposed plan protects environmentally sensitive resources on-site (i.e., Spruce Creek Swamp) that have been identified on Volusia Council of Government's Map A, maintains connectivity of on-site wildlife habitat and wetlands with off-site habitats and wetland systems, and provides substantial protected habitat (67% of the project site) for bears, the bald eagle, and other wildlife species that will be preserved, restored, and managed in perpetuity. The project also affords potential educational, scientific, and recreational opportunities for citizens living within and working at Restoration, as well as for the citizens of the City of Edgewater and surrounding Volusia County.

A draft copy of the full SMMP is located on the enclosed CD for review and comment.