

# Loxahatchee River could get federal funding

U.S. Rep. Mark Foley will seek Everglades Restoration dollars.

**By Bill DiPaolo**  
Staff Writer

Federal funding for the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative, long a missing link in the protection plan for the North County River, is possible as early as next year, said U.S. Rep. Mark Foley.

The Initiative received \$2.5 million from the state for 2004-05 fiscal year, with another \$2.5 in matching money come from the organization's budget. Foley, a West Palm Beach Republican who is running for re-election, says he will seek a federal appropriation from the \$8 billion Everglades Restoration Act for a federal contribution to the initiative for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

"They all tie together, the Everglades and the Loxahatchee River. I think of Florida as a

human body, and the Everglades and waterways such as the Loxahatchee River are the kidneys," said Foley, who met Wednesday with local initiative officials.

On Monday, the 13-member Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative approved a \$3.5 million budget for 2005-06. The amount of state funding will not be determined until next summer.

"We're hoping the federal government will pick up any shortfall," said Chairman David Brown.

The Everglades Restoration Act, passed by the federal government in 1994, is a 30-year project to restore water quality and quantity to the Everglades. The program is funded 50/50 between Florida and the federal government. Among other things, the \$8 billion program sets regulations on sugar farmers, requires the government to buy and preserve about 40,000 acres of farmland, creates water runoff standards and increases water flow to the Everglades.

## Preservation projects

Among those 2005-2006 projects approved this past week by the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative:

- Cypress Creek Restoration, Phase I: \$300,000
- Kitching Creek Restoration, Phase III: \$600,000
- Sediment removal from the C-18 Canal: \$800,000
- Community Stormwater Retrofits: \$1.2 million
- Urban Stormwater Management System Rehabilitation: \$600,000

Foley would not give an amount on the potential federal contribution. His next step will be to approach the House Appropriations Committee on the proposal and then re-

port back to Jupiter officials.

"We may be able to match the state and local contributions. We may be able to get more. That would make a nice chunk of dollars. We'll start scrubbing through the program to find out if the money is available," said Foley. Neither North County congressmen Foley nor Clay Shaw are appropriations committee members.

Following Wednesday's meeting at the Jupiter Lighthouse Restaurant with Foley, Loxahatchee Initiative officials were hopeful the federal funding would materialize. But they noted the potential of federal funding could create a political problem. If federal funds are approved, state agencies that contribute to the agency, such as the South Florida Water Management District, could reduce its funding.

"We never ask for more than we need. Our budget for the upcoming fiscal year is actually less than this year," said Brown.

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