

Board of County Commissioners

Okeechobee County



304 NW Second Street – Room 123, Okeechobee, FL 34973
Phone: 863-763-6441 Ext.1 or Fax: 863-763-0118

August 23, 2023

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Attn: Mr. Shawn Hamilton, Secretary
via email transmission only

Re: Okeechobee County's Opposition to the South Florida Water Management District's
Proposed Lower Kissimmee Basin Stormwater Treatment Area (LKBSTA) Project

The Honorable Shawn Hamilton:

On behalf of the Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners, this letter is to address an issue currently involving Okeechobee County and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) regarding clean water issues associated with Lake Okeechobee. Currently, we are in conversation with SFWMD regarding the potential development of a Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) on the RIO Ranch Property in western Okeechobee County. According to SFWM, the reason for selecting this site is to address one of the highest nutrient contributors in our region (Kissimmee River).

Our Board of County Commissioners believe the STA in question is in the wrong place because it is too close to existing residential homes and is in proximity of three airstrips, one being the Okeechobee County airport. The impact is that the installation of the EIP project may cause safety issues with aircraft on approach to runway 05 as the wetlands will attract hazardous birds and lead to non-compliance with applicable grant assurances. FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33C Subject: Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or near Airports, states for all airports, the FAA recommends a distance of 5 miles between the closest point of the airport's aircraft operations area and the hazardous wildlife attractant. Special attention should be given to hazardous wildlife attractants that could cause hazardous wildlife movement into or across the approach or departure airspace. Additionally, building this type of project has the potential to require the homes close to this STA to require flood insurance.

We have communicated our opposition to SFWMD regarding the location of the STA, but it has come to our attention FDEP is in favor of this project.

[1028-00033481.1ADMIN]

David Hazellief
District 1

Frank DeCarlo
District 2

Bradley G. Goodbread
District 3

Terry Burroughs
District 4

Kelly Owens
District 5



Page 2
August 23, 2023

A new development in a contiguous county (Glades County) is adjacent to Lake Okeechobee and has a high potential of creating more nutrient load because of effluents from septic tanks. It is our understanding that FDEP is involved with both projects and is currently supporting both. Our question is why is FDEP supporting the approval of over 1000 homes and commercial space to be on a septic system while at the same time supporting the development of a STA, which functionally may not provide the results intended?

While we functionally understand the issue of reducing nutrient loads, we are confused when a development is projected to create over 1,000 homes plus commercial space is about to be approved by FDEP to implement septic tanks as means to manage the wastewater from this new development.

Additionally, the question looms in our mind, why is it so important to build water storage areas in Okeechobee County? These types of projects should be developed in-between Osceola and Okeechobee Counties to assist in providing the cleaning and storage of water. Continuing to take land off our tax roll to build these types of facilities is not in the best interest of our constituents.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our concerns and your support as the need to find better solutions (and locations) to this important environmental issue is important to our Board and community while also protecting the safety of our community's homes and citizens' quality of life.

We thank you and FDEP for the work your organization performs, and we would appreciate a response to address our concerns.

Should you have any questions and/or require additional information regarding our county's position on this project, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Ms. Deborah Manzo, County Administrator at 863.763.6441 (Option #1).

Respectfully submitted,



David Hazellief, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

cc: Okeechobee County Board of County Commissioners
Drew Bartlett, SFWM Executive Director

[1028-00033481.1ADMIN]
David Hazellief
District 1

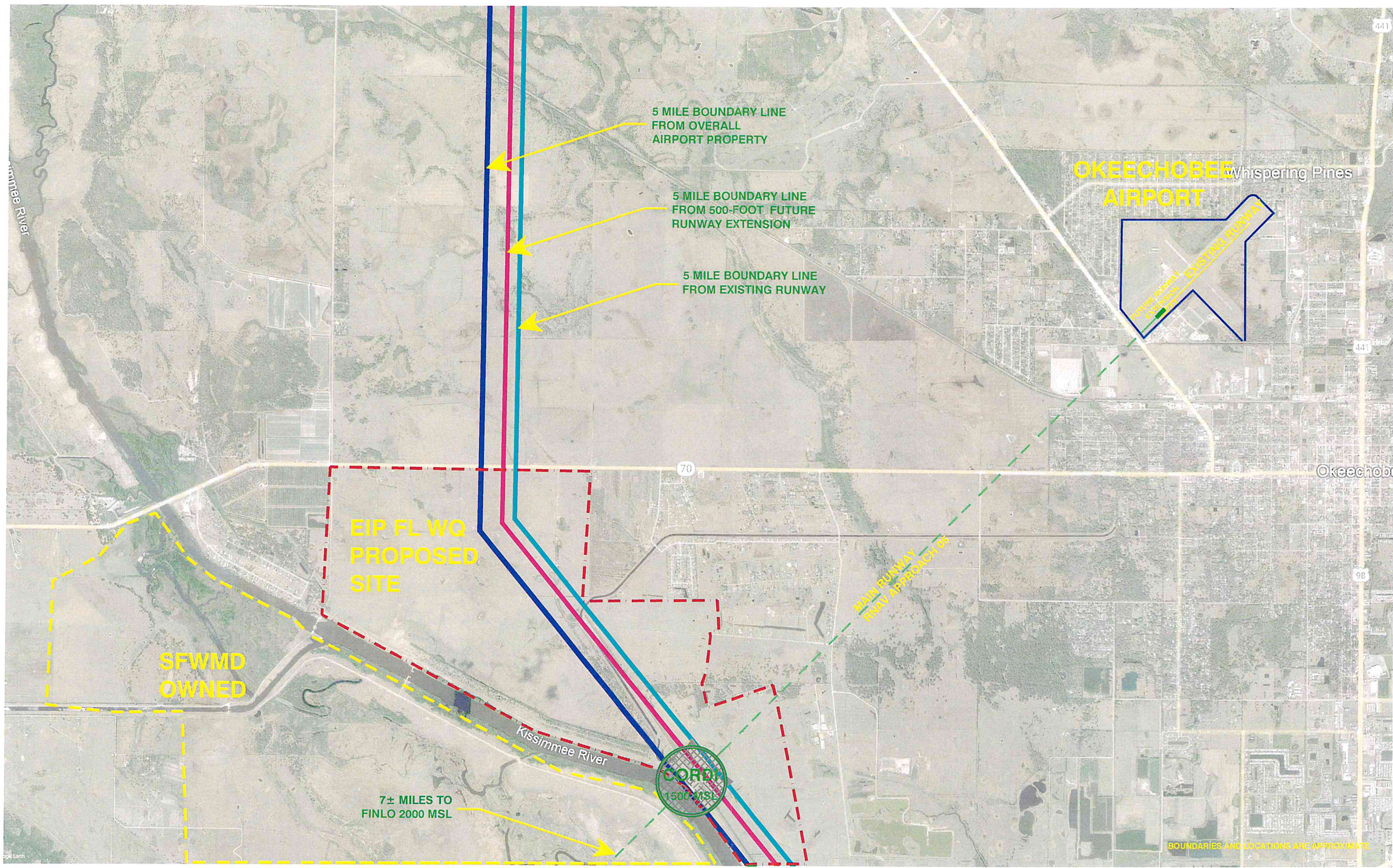
Frank DeCarlo
District 2

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District 3

Terry Burroughs
District 4

Kelly Owens
District 5





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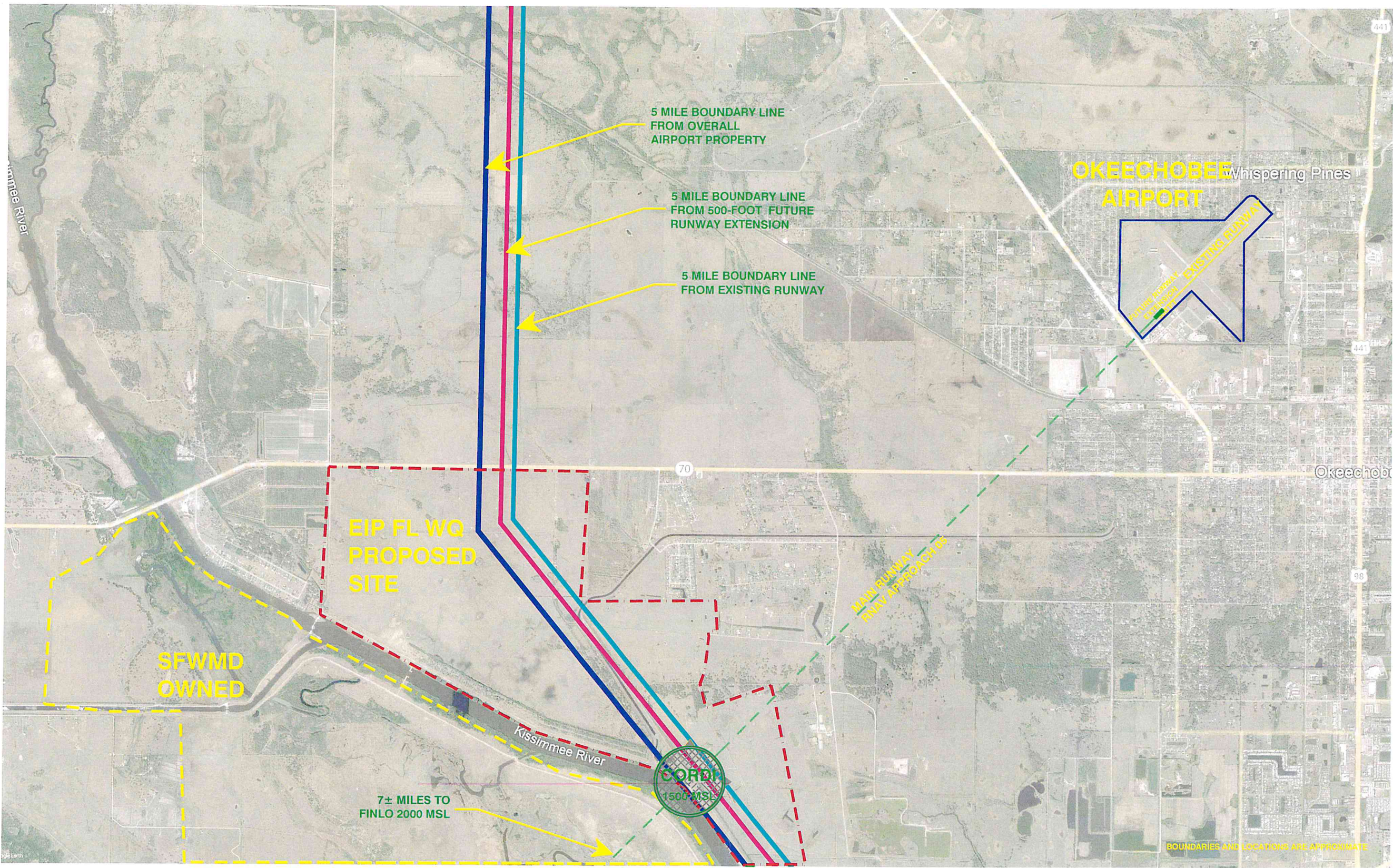
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OKEECHOBEE COUNTY AIRPORT
OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
5 MILE BOUNDARY EXHIBIT

DRAWING
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REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	APPR

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OKEECHOBEE COUNTY AIRPORT OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA 5 MILE BOUNDARY EXHIBIT	
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