

5.0 Measures to Minimize Harm

The proposed 2,150-foot long Wekiva Parkway bridge will replace the existing 561-foot long SR 46 structure. It will bridge the Wekiva River and its adjacent 1,200-foot wide forested wetland. The proposed bridge will have a channel span of 150 feet and the remaining spans will be 100 feet each. The existing bridge has eleven 51-foot spans. The additional span width at the river channel will provide less obstruction to channel flow and will also be an enhancement for the recreational user.

The proposed project will entirely bridge the wetlands and riparian habitat abutting the Wekiva River. The longer bridge will help to open the wildlife corridor between Rock Springs Run State Reserve and the Seminole State Forest, and will enhance habitat connectivity. Many more species of wildlife will be able to safely move between the two public conservation areas.

Water quality treatment will be improved over the existing conditions in the area of the Wekiva River and adjacent wetlands. SR 46 was constructed before stringent drainage criteria were developed; consequently, there is currently no treatment of the pollutant runoff for most of the existing roadway. The proposed project will include stormwater treatment ponds that will provide enhanced filtration of the pollutant runoff from the roadway and the bridge prior to discharge to the abutting wetlands of the Wekiva River.

FDOT is committed to the development of a landscape plan during the final design phase with appropriate buffers that will accentuate the natural environment. FDOT previously conducted a survey of tree/plant diversity and density to provide a guide for the type of species to replant in disturbed areas; that information will be used for the proposed project to revegetate the disturbed and reclaimed wetland and upland areas.

FDOT will incorporate non-intrusive and minimal roadway and bridge lighting in the final design plans in appropriate areas to support the conservation of dark skies in the Wekiva River Protection Area. Additional design features related to the aesthetics of the Wekiva River bridge, such as weathered metal or color tinting, will be evaluated by FDOT during the final design phase of the project. Measures to reduce visual intrusion or substantial noise impacts are design phase activities that will be coordinated with the NPS and the FDEP, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas.

In cooperation with permitting and review agencies during final design and construction, FDOT will employ all possible measures to minimize harm to the Wekiva River.