ESA SCHEDA

FDOT District 4

SR 7 Corridor Extension PD&E Study

Location
Palm Beach County, Florida

Client
Jacobs

Contract Value
$125,000

This challenging PD&E study involves the proposed extension of SR 7 from SR 704 (Okeechobee Boulevard) north to Northlake Boulevard in Palm Beach County. The proposed project would extend SR7 for a distance of approximately nine miles through a presently undeveloped corridor surrounded by several publicly owned natural areas. Proposed improvements include construction of a new six-lane divided urban highway with bicycle lanes, curb and gutter, and sidewalk. Other improvements include a bridge over the M Canal - a designated Outstanding Florida Water - and stormwater collection and treatment systems.

Four corridor alternatives and a no-build option were identified and evaluated for potential effects within the project vicinity. Each alternative corridor was developed with consideration to existing environmental features, available right-of-way resources, and other proposed roadway projects within the study area.

Listed wildlife observed during preliminary field reconnaissance included the state- and federally endangered snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*), the state-endangered wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), the state-threatened Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), and Species of Special Concern (SSC) white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), tricolored heron (*Egretta tricolor*), and snowy egret (*Egretta thula*). The USFWS also identified four active wood stork colonies within 18.6 miles of the project, a radius known as the species' Core Foraging Area (CFA). There are numerous wading bird rookeries within 10 to 20 miles of the study area.

Natural areas within or adjacent to the project corridor are Palm Beach County's Pond Cypress Natural Area, Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area, and the City of West Palm Beach Grassy Waters Preserve. Habitats within these areas include high-quality freshwater wetlands such as marshes, cypress strands, wet prairies, and wet pine flatwoods.

Throughout this PD&E study, ESA Scheda is responsible for identifying and documenting all potential wildlife, wetland, and contamination impacts associated with each corridor and alignment alternative, and coordinating with regulatory agencies and other stakeholders, including the public.