



## NEWS RELEASE

August 11, 2016

### **Governing Board Stands Up for Loxahatchee Refuge** *SFWMD Notifies U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of Possible Consequences of Continued Failure to Control Invasive Plants in Loxahatchee Refuge*

**West Palm Beach, FL** - The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board today notified officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of the consequences of their continuing failure to control invasive plants that are wreaking havoc on the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Governing Board voted to issue a notice of default. This starts a process that could result in the USFWS being removed from the Loxahatchee Refuge if it does not take steps to live up to its agreement and control invasive plants.

The USFWS has repeatedly refused to ask Congress for the additional funding necessary to meet its legally-binding obligation to control invasive Lygodium and other invasive plants in the Loxahatchee Refuge, which is owned by SFWMD.

"Their inability to secure federal funding is destroying a crucial piece of the Everglades and threatening the progress and future of all the Everglades restoration work which Florida taxpayers have paid billions of dollars to complete," said SFWMD Governing Board Member Jim Moran. "We have repeatedly asked the USFWS to obtain adequate funding, do the job it promised to do and preserve the refuge. If they are unable to secure the funding and control the invasive plants, we will take the measures necessary to protect the rights of Floridians, the owners of that property, who deserve the opportunity to enjoy it in its natural state for generations to come."

- Science has shown continued expansion of Lygodium will lead to the irreversible collapse of hundreds of tree islands that are critical to the Everglades and will terminally degrade wading bird habitat.
- The Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge has suffered a 600-percent increase in the infestation of Lygodium during the past 20 years of USFWS control.
- The 1951 Agreement between the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), renewed in 2002 for another 50 years, requires the USFWS to control invasive plants in the refuge as a condition of being allowed to use the land, owned by SFWMD.
- As part of the Agreement, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) -- developed by USFWS with public input and consultation with SFWMD -- included the following requirements:

- USFWS agreed to control 10 percent of Lygodium infestation by 2007.
- USFWS agreed to control 50 percent of Lygodium infestation by 2012. **(USFWS has not met this goal)**
- USFWS agreed to control 100 percent of Lygodium infestation by 2017. **(USFWS has said it will not meet this goal)**
- Initially, a total of \$25 million over five years is required to gain control of invasive plants, according to science-based estimates.
- An estimated \$4 million annually will be needed to prevent invasive plants from returning.
- The USFWS has not even requested the needed funding. Congress cannot be blamed when the USFWS has not even asked.
- The SFWMD is within its rights to send the USFWS a Notice of Default for its failure to live up to its obligations in the agreement. The USFWS will have three opportunities through this process to correct its default or negotiate a settlement with the SFWMD.

### Multimedia:

- For more information on the USFWS's contract violation, visit the SFWMD's Refuge website at [www.sfwmd.gov/loxrefuge](http://www.sfwmd.gov/loxrefuge).
- To see pictures and video of the devastating effects of Lygodium allowed to spread in the Loxahatchee Refuge because of the USFWS's failure to live up to its obligations to control invasive plants, visit this Flickr gallery <https://www.flickr.com/gp/sfwmd/08R5a6>.

###

### Media Contact:

Randy Smith | [rsmith@sfwmd.gov](mailto:rsmith@sfwmd.gov) | Office: 561-682-2800 | Cell: 561-389-3386

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional governmental agency that manages the water resources in the southern part of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. Our mission is to protect South Florida's water resources by balancing and improving flood control, water supply, water quality and natural systems.*

### STAY CONNECTED

Follow us on  twitter

 Forward to a Friend

SFWMD Newsroom

South Florida Water Management District, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm  
Beach, FL 33406

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by [waternews@sfwmd.gov](mailto:waternews@sfwmd.gov) in collaboration with



Try it free today