



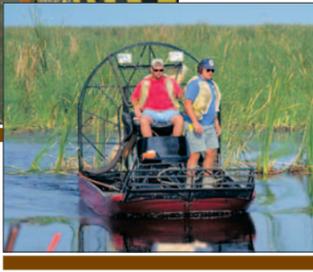
River Restoration Land Acquisition Expands Recreation Areas

As the Kissimmee River meanders and returns to its floodplain, the South Florida Water Management District has been acquiring land to allow the river to overflow its banks and re-inundate historic floodplain habitats.

In all, about 95,000 acres have been purchased along the river and around the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. This land is critical to the Kissimmee River restoration, and almost all of it is open to public recreation. Along the river, public land will allow the river to rise and inundate its floodplain. Around the Upper Chain of Lakes, land purchases allow Lakes Cypress, Hatchineha and Kissimmee to fluctuate 1.5 feet higher than currently allowed by the Flood Control Project's lake level fluctuation schedule. Creating additional water storage in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes will allow the Kissimmee River to receive continuous flows similar to the historic condition.

Although all three lakes are already among the best bass angling lakes in Florida, the greater water fluctuation in Lakes Cypress, Hatchineha and Kissimmee will expand the lakes' littoral zones, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat throughout.

To learn more about the public lands in the Kissimmee River Basin, go online to: <http://www.sfwmd.gov/site/index.php?id=35>, or call your nearest South Florida Water Management District Service Center and request a free *Recreational Guide*.



Flood Control Structures, River Weirs Require Boater Caution

Six navigation locks control water flow between the city of Kissimmee and Lake Okeechobee. Each lock measures 30 by 90 feet and has an average depth of six feet. From downtown Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee, seven bridges are located along the waterway, all having vertical clearances of 11.5 feet or more.

The Kissimmee River between State Road 60 and Lake Okeechobee consists of two features – the main flood control channel (Canal 38) and the oxbows of the historic river channel. Boaters will encounter little difficulty navigating the wide and relatively straight canal. Within restored portions of the river, boaters will encounter the habitat-rich floodplain, but also a meandering channel that requires more caution to navigate. Due to seasonally fluctuating water levels, the restored river channel will accommodate a boat with a three-foot draft 90 percent of the time.

In addition to the restored portions of the river north of the S65-C water control structure, the South Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida maintain a demonstration project for the restoration of the Kissimmee River. Located about five miles south of S65-A are three sheet-pile weirs that partially block the main canal. The weirs are notched at a depth that varies seasonally from 4 to 7 feet, so that boats may navigate through the main channel. Please approach these navigation notches slowly and with caution. During drier times, boaters can travel the historic oxbows, avoiding the weirs altogether.

Access to the old oxbows is possible at a number of locations along the main channel. Boaters should exercise caution and watch for natural hazards such as shoals and aquatic weeds. Several oxbows are dead-end channels.

Due to the lack of navigation locks, boaters cannot travel through the canals connecting the Alligator Chain of Lakes and East Lake Tohopekaliga with Lakes Kissimmee, Cypress, Hatchineha and Tohopekaliga. Access to East Lake and the Alligator Chain of Lakes is provided at several parks and commercial fish camps.

Aquatic Plant Management Poses Ongoing Challenge in the Kissimmee Waterway

Since the late 1980s, millions of dollars a year have been spent in the Kissimmee River basin to battle hydrilla, an exotic invasive plant species from Asia that crowds out native plants and can take over a lake, destroying habitat and limiting access. Before that, the war was waged against water hyacinths and water lettuce, two exotic species that can also overtake a waterway and crowd out native vegetation critical to fish and wildlife habitat.

Herbicide crews from the South Florida Water Management District work the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and Kissimmee River, in partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Aquatic Plant Management.

The anti-hydrilla chemicals in the crews' arsenal include floridone, which is sold under the trademark Sonar, and endothal, also known under the trademark Aquathol K.

To fight water hyacinths and water lettuce, the preferred chemicals include 2, 4-D, 4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, or 2, 4-D, which is sold under the brand name Weedar 64, and diquat dibromide, or Reward. All these chemicals must undergo exhaustive testing to ensure that they are safe to use in aquatic systems. Furthermore, all members of the spray crews are trained in application methods that target only the exotic invasive plants that need to be controlled.

No one, especially those applying the herbicides, likes to see chemicals added to our waterways. But it is only through a systematic strategy of regular applications that such chemicals can be kept to a minimum. A strategy of "maintenance" application of herbicides allows crews to attack exotics when they first appear, keeping the amount of chemical to a minimum and the cost of chemicals as low as possible. Fish kills can occur as rotting vegetation robs the water of oxygen. Spraying plots of exotics while they're still relatively small helps avoid putting too much dying plant material in the lake, reducing the chance of fish kills and minimizing the creation of habitat-destroying muck.

In river systems and lakes where exotic plants are allowed to grow unchallenged, chemical crews are forced to take extreme action to get the exotic plants under control.

Alternative management strategies are continuously sought out and tested, but to date no method has proved as successful as herbicide maintenance. Grass carp proved effective in controlling some exotic invasive plants, but after the targeted plants are consumed, the fish turn to the native plants critical to fish and wildlife habitat.

Research into biological controls, such as introducing predator insects from the invasive plant's native region, is ongoing, but expensive. Before an additional non-native species can be released into the environment, researchers must be confident that it will attack the existing problem and not create additional problems. Typically each proposed biological control requires years of research.

Mechanical harvesters are also effective in the right setting but are not capable of maintaining control on large regions of exotic aquatic plants such as those in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. Harvesters also leave behind small sprigs of hydrilla, which then take root and spread the plant infestation.

With the exception of endothal, trademarked Aquathol K, the application of the chemicals does not affect the consumption of fish. The label for Aquathol, which is applied only a couple times a year, carries a three-day fish-eating warning. When an Aquathol treatment is planned, local media are asked to notify anglers. Notices are posted at boat ramps to alert fishermen.

When encountering a crew spraying herbicides, simply navigate clear of the spray boat and continue on your way.

And, please, when loading a boat on its trailer, check, then double-check for hanging sprigs of hydrilla or other exotics. Sprigs – some several days old – transported from lake to lake aboard a boat trailer have helped spread hydrilla throughout Florida, costing taxpayers more than \$26 million annually.



LOCK HOURS

Weekday Hours for Locks

S-61, S-65, S-65A, S-65C, S-65D, S-65E
Monday – Friday, all year, 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Weekend Hours for Locks

S-61, S-65, S-65A, S-65C, S-65D, S-65E
March 1 – October 31, 5:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
November 1 – February 28, 5:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

S-65B has been removed as part of the Kissimmee River Restoration

Approximate time to go through locks is 15 minutes.

There is no charge for going through locks during posted hours. After hours, however, the locktender is not required to permit passage. If boats are admitted, a fee may be charged. For your own protection, and as a courtesy, notify the locktender ahead of time if late passage is necessary.



Freddy's Top Ten Rules for Boater Safety

1. Remember all Coast Guard boating regulations and the Florida boat safety laws apply in these waters. Please obey posted signs and speed limits.
2. Always wear a personal flotation device while the boat is in motion.
3. Boaters encountering a spray crew applying herbicide should maintain a distance of at least 500 feet and slow to avoid creating a large wake. The South Florida Water Management District airboats are clearly marked and numbered, making them easy to spot.
4. Boaters planning to travel from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee are encouraged to call ahead for navigation information. Both the Orlando and Okeechobee Service Centers can provide daily water level and navigation information. The Okeechobee Service Center can be reached at (863) 462-5260 or (800) 250-4200. The phone numbers for the Orlando Service Center are (407) 858-6100 and (800) 250-4250. During drought times, water levels may fall and limit access to motor boats. Also, periodic maintenance and Kissimmee River Restoration project construction may restrict navigation.
5. Alcohol consumption while piloting a boat is illegal.
6. Navigate carefully at all times, but particularly when traveling the meandering oxbows of restored sections of the river. The depth of the river varies and sandbars can shift and reappear as water levels rise and fall.
7. Always pack your garbage out. Garbage spoils the view and can pose a danger to visitors and wildlife.
8. Hunting regulations along the Kissimmee River are unique. Ignorance of the law is not a defense and can result in severe fines, penalties and the confiscation of your guns, boat and hunting equipment.
9. While locking through the structures along the Kissimmee waterways, turn off your boat motor and extinguish your cigarettes.
9. Be considerate of others on the waterways. Their rights are as valid as yours.

project—a 50-50 partnership of the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—is scheduled to be complete by 2010 at a cost of about \$500 million.

While the Kissimmee River Restoration seeks to restore an ecosystem and greatly enhance the outdoor experience of anglers and boaters, construction will inhibit travel along portions of the river during some phases, and some activities will temporarily block navigation. The canal construction destroyed nine miles of the historic river channel, so dredges will recarve the channel to reconnect historic oxbows. In some cases, earthen bridges will be built across the channelized waterway to move fill material to construction sites.

To receive up-to-date information about navigation on the Kissimmee River, contact either the Okeechobee or Orlando Service Center of the South Florida Water Management District. The Okeechobee Service Center can be reached at (863) 462-5260 or (800) 250-4200. The phone numbers for the Orlando Service Center are (407) 858-6100 and (800) 250-4250.

Today the river is the site of an ambitious restoration to benefit the hundreds of plants and animals of the Kissimmee's floodplain ecosystem.



In the 1960s and early 1970s, the river was channelized.



The Kissimmee River, in its natural state, once meandered freely.



In response to periodic flooding, the 1960s channelization project transformed the 103-mile Kissimmee River into the 56-mile Canal 38. The 300-foot-wide and 30-foot-deep canal achieved its flood protection goal, but virtually eliminated fish and wildlife habitat. About 90 percent of the wintering waterfowl population no longer used the system and wading birds largely disappeared. Rough fish, such as bowfin and gar, thrive in this once-renowned largemouth bass fishery. The vast floodplain were primarily transformed into cattle pasture.

To preserve the flood protection benefits of the channelization project, the upper and lower portions of Canal 38 will remain while a 22-mile stretch of the canal's midsection in Highlands and Okeechobee counties will be backfilled. Ultimately the Kissimmee River Restoration will return flow to 43 miles of the river's historic channel and restore about 40 square miles of river/floodplain ecosystem. The restoration

In the coming years, the Kissimmee River will greet boaters and anglers with new challenges and great opportunities as the Kissimmee River restoration project restores an ecosystem that was nearly destroyed during and after channelization.

Instead of the straight, deep and wide canal dug 40 years ago, the midsection of the Kissimmee River will again meander through its historic and wetland-rich floodplain. This restoration will create opportunities for improved fishing, and wildlife viewing and nature study. More than 300 species of fish and wildlife are expected to benefit from the restoration.

River Restoration Returns Natural Beauty and Habitat to the Kissimmee River Valley

Welcome to the Kissimmee Waterway,

one of the most beautiful and exciting recreation areas in the state. Whether beginning in the headwaters of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, Lake Okeechobee or any place in between, you are sure to witness some of Florida's most spectacular natural areas.

The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the Kissimmee River offer sites and experiences enjoyed by Floridians and visitors for generations. Yet the next several years will begin a new era for the Kissimmee River Basin as the ongoing Kissimmee River restoration project restores habitat that will benefit more than 320 species of fish and wildlife.

The South Florida Water Management District has prepared this map to help boaters and anglers navigate the waterway and locate public boat ramps, locks and other facilities. This brochure also contains safety tips and information about lock operations and the benefits and periodic navigational challenges created by the Kissimmee River Restoration.



Anglers will enjoy the Kissimmee River and the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes where native Florida species are well represented. Lakes Kissimmee and

Tohopekaliga rank among Florida's top ten bass lakes, and Lake Okeechobee has a worldwide reputation as a prime bass producer.



For further information contact the following area offices of these agencies:

South Florida Water Management District
1707 Orlando Central Parkway, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32809
(407) 858-6100

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
1601 Scottys Road
Kissimmee, FL 34744
(407) 846-5300

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Invasive Plant Management
5882 South Semoran Boulevard
Orlando, FL 32822
(407) 275-4004

Please share this information with other anglers or pass this brochure along to a friend.



KRS/23/05

sfwmd.gov

South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
561-686-8800 • FL WATS 1-800-432-2045
www.sfwmd.gov

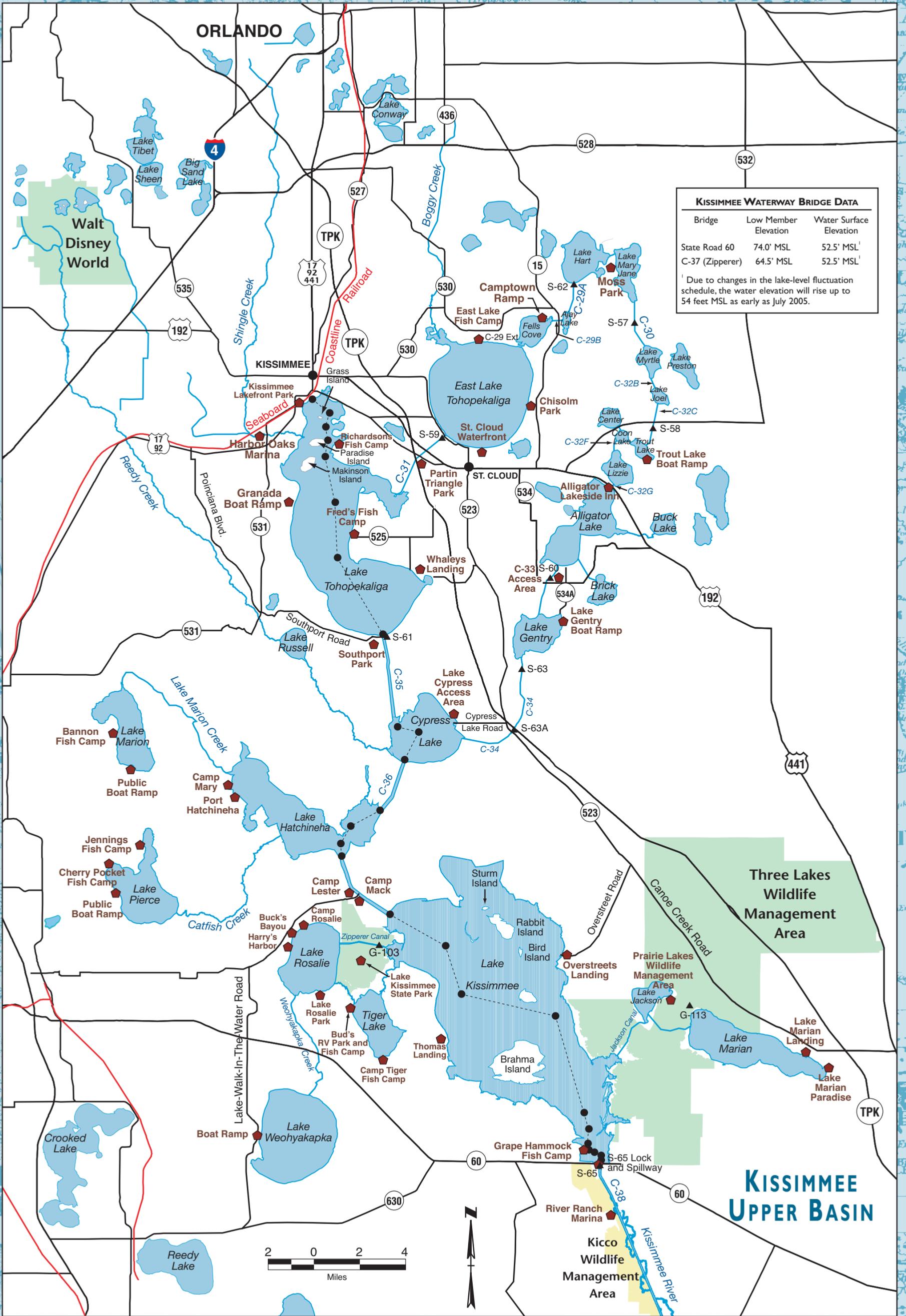
MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Guide to the KISSIMMEE waterway

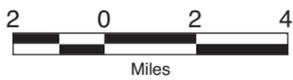


sfwmd.gov

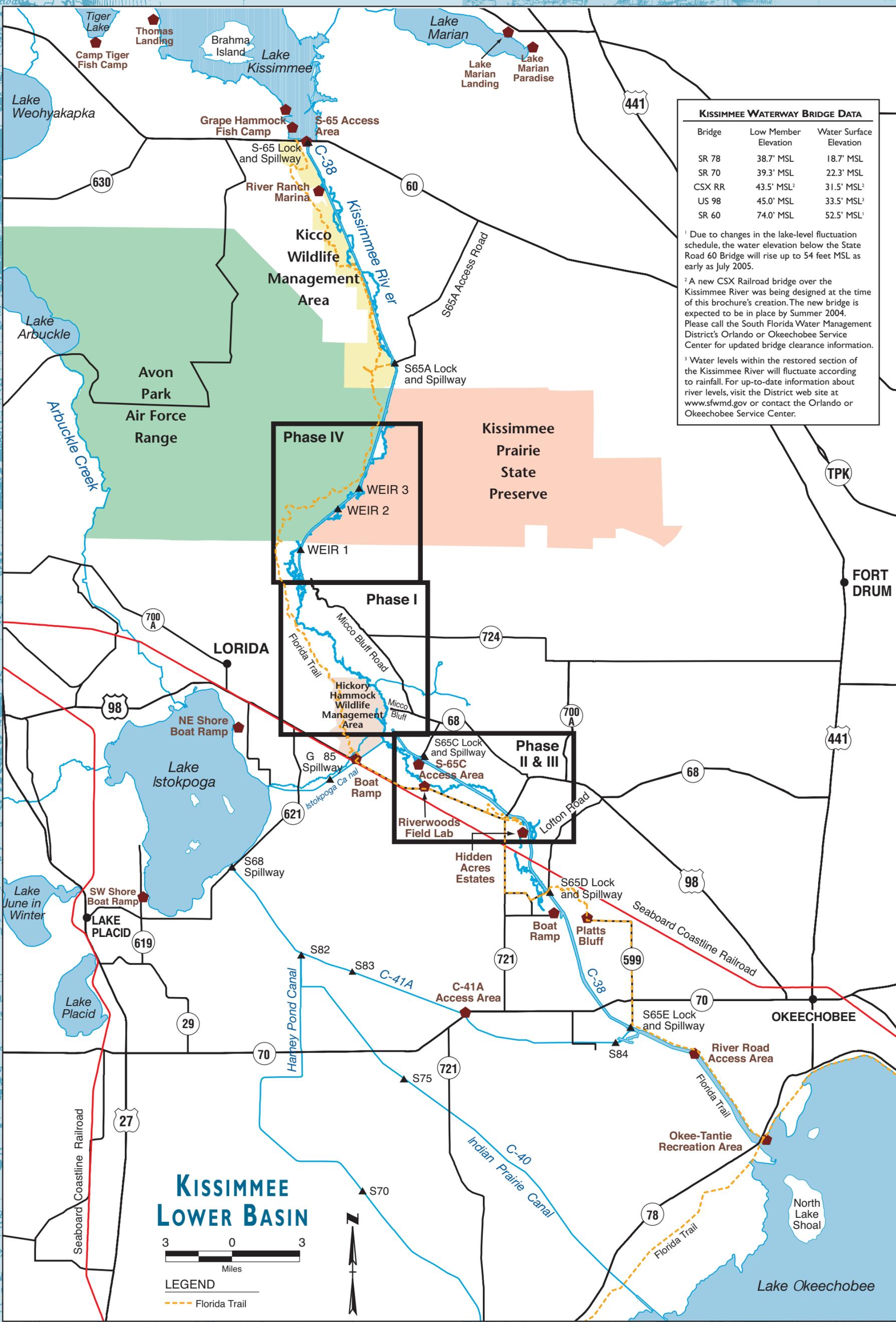


KISSIMMEE WATERWAY BRIDGE DATA		
Bridge	Low Member Elevation	Water Surface Elevation
State Road 60	74.0' MSL	52.5' MSL ¹
C-37 (Zipperer)	64.5' MSL	52.5' MSL ¹

¹ Due to changes in the lake-level fluctuation schedule, the water elevation will rise up to 54 feet MSL as early as July 2005.



KISSIMMEE UPPER BASIN



KISSIMMEE WATERWAY BRIDGE DATA

Bridge	Low Member Elevation	Water Surface Elevation
SR 78	38.7' MSL	18.7' MSL
SR 70	39.3' MSL	22.3' MSL
CSX RR	43.5' MSL ²	31.5' MSL ²
US 98	45.0' MSL	33.5' MSL ³
SR 60	74.0' MSL	52.5' MSL ¹

¹ Due to changes in the lake-level fluctuation schedule, the water elevation below the State Road 60 Bridge will rise up to 54 feet MSL as early as July 2005.

² A new CSX Railroad bridge over the Kissimmee River was being designed at the time of this brochure's creation. The new bridge is expected to be in place by Summer 2004. Please call the South Florida Water Management District's Orlando or Okeechobee Service Center for updated bridge clearance information.

³ Water levels within the restored section of the Kissimmee River will fluctuate according to rainfall. For up-to-date information about river levels, visit the District web site at www.sfwmd.gov or contact the Orlando or Okeechobee Service Center.

KISSIMMEE LOWER BASIN



LEGEND

--- Florida Trail

