



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is a regional governmental agency that oversees the water resources in 16 counties – from Orlando to the Florida Keys.

OUR MISSION

To **SAFEGUARD** and **RESTORE** South Florida’s water resources and ecosystems, **PROTECT** our communities from flooding, and **MEET** the region’s water needs while **CONNECTING** with the public and stakeholders

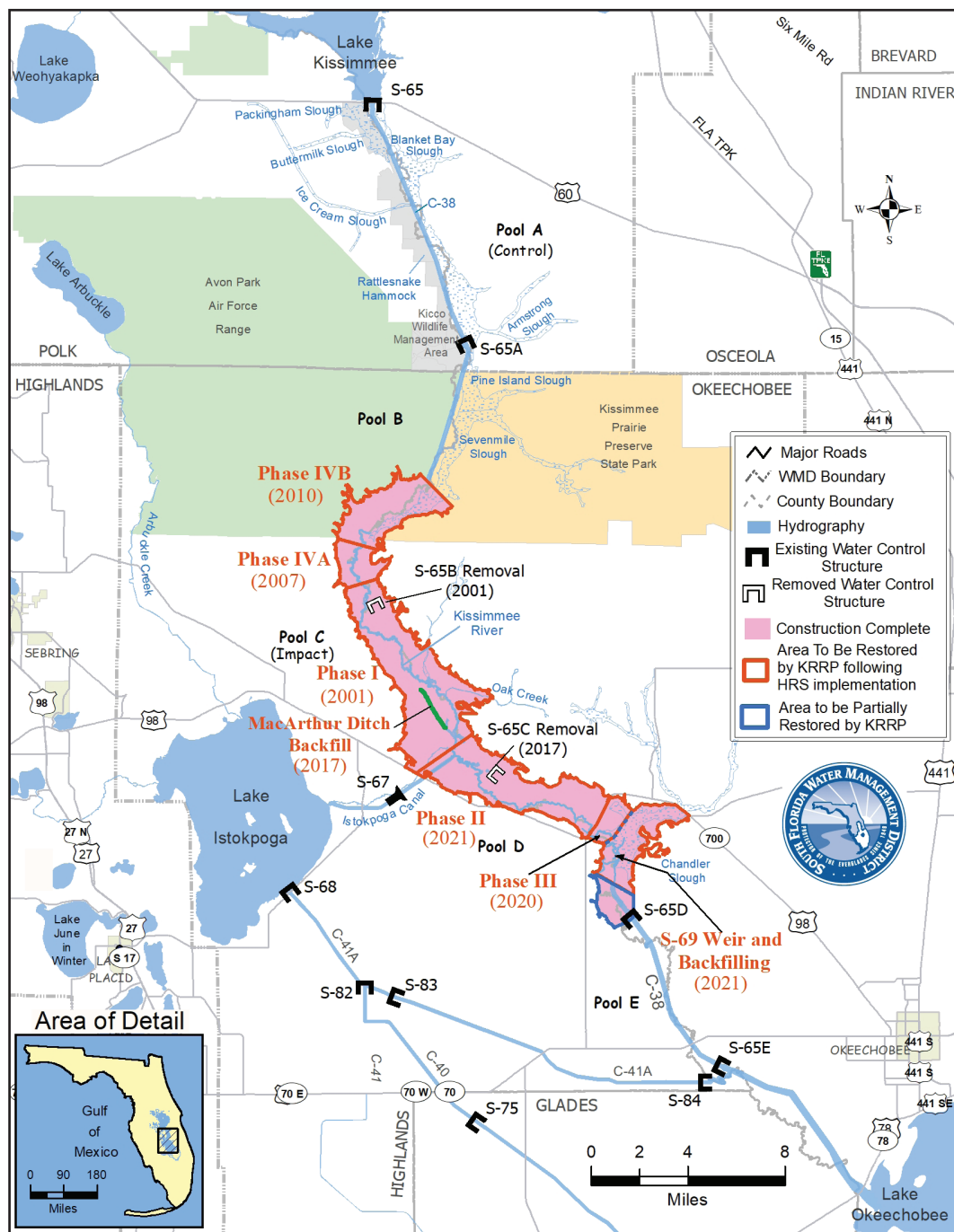
Ron DeSantis, Governor

SFWMD Governing Board

- Chauncey Goss, Chairman
- Scott Wagner, Vice Chairman
- Ron Bergeron Sr.
- Ben Butler
- Charlie E. Martinez
- Cheryl Meads
- Charlette Roman
- Jay Steinle
- Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch
- Drew Bartlett, SFWMD Executive Director

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Kissimmee River



The Kissimmee Basin encompasses more than two dozen lakes in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, their tributary streams and associated marshes and the Kissimmee River and floodplain. The basin forms the headwaters of Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades; together they comprise the Kissimmee Okeechobee Everglades system. In the 1960s, the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control (C&SF) Project modified the native Kissimmee Okeechobee Everglades system extensively throughout South Florida, including construction of canals and water control structures to achieve flood control in the Upper and Lower Kissimmee basins.



Restoring the Kissimmee River

A Monumental Achievement!

In July 2021, the SFWMD and the USACE hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of construction for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project. The Kissimmee River is a significant part of America's Everglades and this project is vital to restoring the greater Everglades ecosystem.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly completed Kissimmee River Restoration Project. L-R: USACE Jacksonville District Col. Andrew Kelly, SFWMD Executive Director Drew Bartlett, SFWMD Governing Board Member Charlette Roman, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jaime Pinkham, U.S. Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz, SFWMD Water Resources Director Lawrence Glenn, SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Chauncey Goss, FDEP Secretary Shawn Hamilton, County Coalition Chairperson Karson Turner, SFWMD Governing Board Member Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, USACE Major General William (Butch) H. Graham, SFWMD Governing Board Member Ben Butler and Rep. Toby Overdorf.



The historic Kissimmee River once meandered for 103 miles through central Florida.

Its floodplain, reaching up to two miles wide, was inundated for long periods by heavy seasonal rains. Recurring and prolonged flooding impacted local residents and resulted in Congressional authorization of the Central and Southern Florida Project, which included channelizing the Kissimmee River and floodplain. Construction of the C-38 canal achieved flood reduction benefits, but it also harmed the river-floodplain ecosystem. After the waterway was transformed into a straight, deep canal, it became oxygen-depleted and the fish community it supported changed dramatically. More than 90 percent of the waterfowl that once graced the wetlands disappeared and the number of bald eagle nesting territories decreased by 70 percent. The decline of the ecosystem spurred federal, state and local partnerships to embark on one of the world's largest riverine restoration efforts: the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.

The Kissimmee River Restoration Project restores more than 40 square miles of the river floodplain ecosystem, 20,000 acres of wetlands, and 44 miles of the historic river channel. Construction of this major restoration effort was completed in July 2021 through a 50-50 partnership between the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). As part of the project, the SFWMD and the USACE and worked together to:

- ▶ Complete backfilling of 22 miles of the C-38 canal between Lakes Kissimmee and Okeechobee
- ▶ Reconstruct remnant river channels across the backfilled canal to reconnect and restore flow in remnant river channels
- ▶ Remove two water control structures
- ▶ Add two gates to the S-65 water control structure
- ▶ Acquire more than 100,000 acres of land to restore the river and floodplain

Sustaining and Enhancing the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes

Historically, the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the Kissimmee River were an integrated system comprised of headwater lakes connected by broad shallow wetlands and creeks. The Chain of Lakes, like the river, was substantially altered by the construction of the C&SF Project. Today, water managers and scientists are working to enhance and protect these habitats for the environmental, recreational and economic benefits they provide.

Since the project began in 1999, the river and its floodplain have improved in many ways, including the conversion of nearly 20,000 acres of drained floodplain to ecologically beneficial wetlands. In addition, the project's efforts resulted in the recovery of the invertebrate community, a crucial food resource for fish and birds. Additional monitoring will be conducted to measure the project's success, and additional projects and restoration efforts in the region will support continued restoration of Florida's iconic Kissimmee River.