



## SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

December 31, 2008

The Honorable Charlie Crist  
Governor of Florida  
PL 05, The Capitol  
400 South Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

**Subject: 2008 Report on the Long-Term Plan for Achieving Water Quality Goals**

The South Florida Water Management District (District) is pleased to submit the attached 2008 Report on the Long-Term Plan for Achieving Water Quality Goals for the Everglades Protection Area Tributary Basins (Long-Term Plan). This comprehensive document provides the first five-year status report on implementing the Long-Term Plan, the State's plan for ensuring that all waters discharged to the Everglades meet water quality standards.

The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District, together with other stakeholders, have made substantial progress in reducing phosphorus levels discharged into the Everglades. Since inception of this effort, the Everglades Construction Project Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) and agricultural best management practices collectively have prevented more than 2,848 metric tons of phosphorus from impacting the Everglades. This progress will continue, as we have expanded the 40,000 acres of STAs to more than 45,000 acres, with further expansion under way. When complete, the increased footprint for the STAs' effective treatment area will be approximately 56,500 acres—a significant environmental resource for improving Everglades water quality.

As a result of Long-Term Plan enhancements to the STAs and their rehabilitation and recovery from the 2004-2005 hurricanes, these treatment wetlands continue to show improvements in outflow phosphorus concentrations. Overall, phosphorus loads to the Everglades over the last five years have decreased significantly, an achievement that is a direct result of the State's water quality improvement strategies.

The South Florida Water Management District remains fully committed to implementing the Long-Term Plan and, more importantly, to achieving the State's Everglades water quality goals. Implementation of the plan will continue to follow an adaptive management approach, whereby the best available information is used to develop and implement incremental improvement measures. These measures will be integrated as soon as their need and utility is confirmed, consistent with informed and prudent expenditure of public and private funds. Updates are available at [www.sfwmd.gov/sta](http://www.sfwmd.gov/sta).

The District's progress in water quality improvements does not end with this program. In addition to the achievements highlighted in the attached report, which focuses on mandates in the Everglades Forever Act, the District took notable steps this past year to enhance water quality throughout the entire South Florida ecosystem.

- As part of the legislatively mandated Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, we completed the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan and drafted river watershed protection plans for both the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers. These documents are available at [www.sfwmd.gov/northerneverglades](http://www.sfwmd.gov/northerneverglades).
- To improve water quality of flows into Lake Okeechobee, the District constructed and operated four pilot sites testing Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology, which uses a combination of plants and specialized chemicals to reduce nutrients. The systems are anticipated to be a predictable, sustainable and cost-effective method to help achieve water quality targets in the Northern Everglades.
- To enhance water quality within Lake Okeechobee, the District removed vegetated organic material from 230 acres of marsh area; relocated 1,500 native pond apple trees to Kramer Island; and removed 5,000 (50 tons) of discarded tires.
- In 2008, the District completed a total of 65 local habitat, hydrologic and water quality improvement projects to protect South Florida's coastal watersheds.
- The District completed the Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan for Lower Charlotte Harbor and acquired 1,773 acres of land for the Caloosahatchee Water Quality Treatment and Testing Facility.

This agency remains committed to water quality improvements and to sharing with you our continued progress. If you have any questions on the attached 2008 Report or on other water quality initiatives, please call Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources at (561) 682-6597.

Sincerely,



Carol Ann Wehle  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District

CAW/tp

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