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## just the FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.

## Dramatic Improvement in the Everglades

### *How Florida's plan to restore water quality is working*

*When Florida set out to improve water quality in America's Everglades in 1994, it faced a daunting challenge to reduce levels of the environmentally damaging nutrient phosphorus to meet restoration goals. The effort has proven to be a marathon. By constantly striving and making science-based decisions, Florida is nearing the finish line of that marathon more than 20 years later. The latest water quality data show efforts have worked. Several new projects will get Florida over the finish line and restore water quality in the 11,000-square-mile Everglades ecosystem.*

### What Florida has done

- Established a numeric standard to reduce total phosphorus in the Everglades to ultra-low levels. At the start, some areas had more than 150 ppb — even a little excess phosphorus in the nutrient-poor Everglades environment can cause overgrowth of unwanted plants.
- Invested \$1.8 billion to accomplish that goal.
- Worked with the agricultural community to establish mandatory Best Management Practices on roughly 470,000 acres of farmland in the Everglades Agricultural Area south of Lake Okeechobee to stop phosphorus at the source before it gets into stormwater runoff.
- Built five Stormwater Treatment Areas encompassing more than 57,000 acres of wetlands south of Lake Okeechobee. In these treatment areas, plants remove more phosphorus from the water.

### How it has worked

- This year, testing found that phosphorus levels in 90 percent of the southern Everglades region are below 10 ppb. The few monitoring stations not below this threshold are close to meeting that goal.
- In total, the state's water quality efforts have removed approximately 5,000 metric tons of phosphorus.
- Stormwater Treatment Areas have treated more than 16 million acre-feet of water and removed more than 2,012 metric tons of phosphorus.
- Best Management Practices in the Everglades Agricultural Area have reduced phosphorus levels by an annual average of 56 percent since 1996, more than double the level of improvement required by state law.

### How Florida will reach the finish line

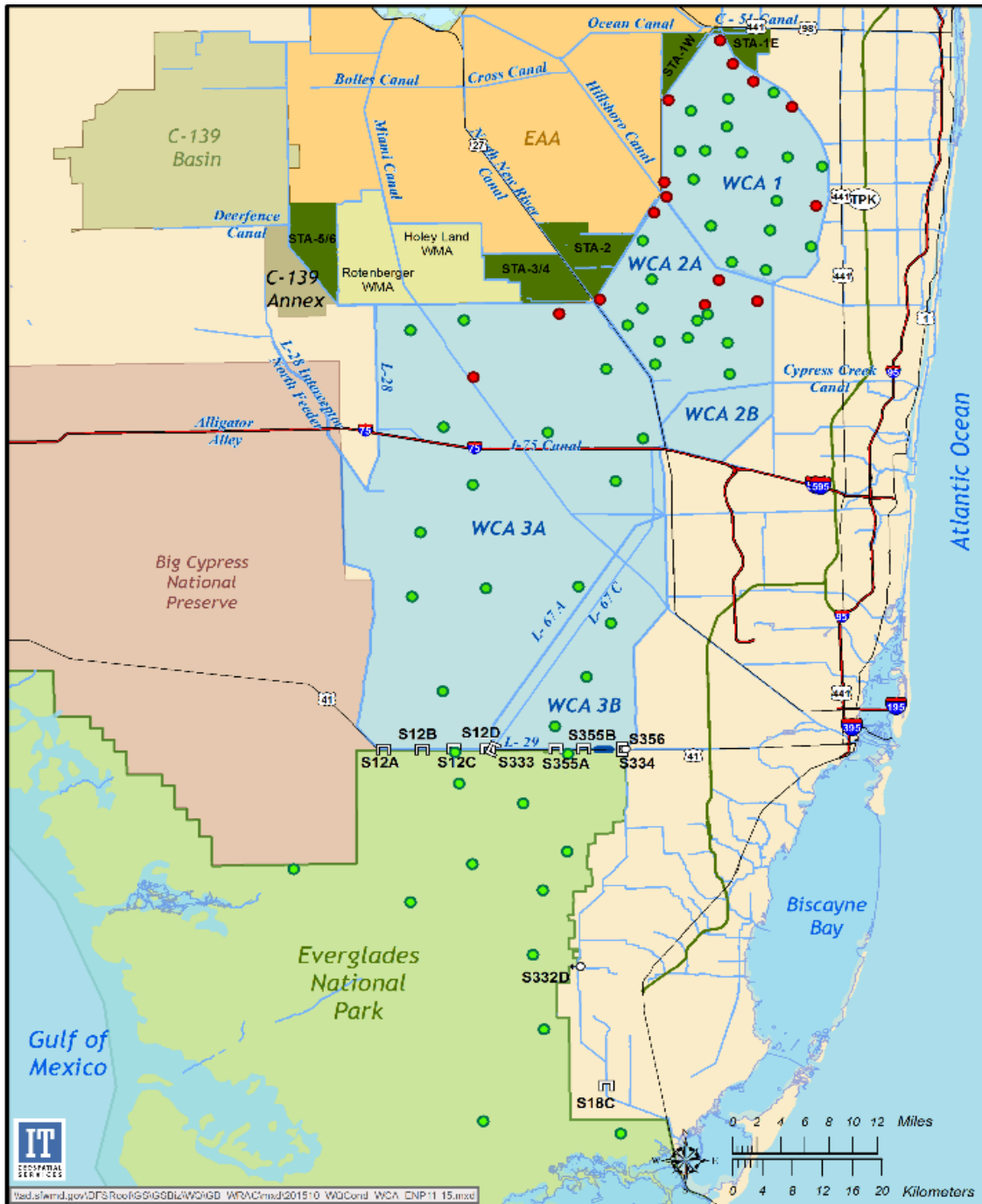
- As part of its Restoration Strategies Plan, Florida will spend another \$880 million to build 6,500 more acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas and 116,000 acre-feet of water storage capacity.
- Florida will help to establish and enforce more source controls to reduce phosphorus in stormwater runoff.
- The Department of Environmental Protection is implementing Basin Management Action Plans, including construction of stormwater treatment areas and other projects, to accomplish additional water quality improvements in the northern Everglades.

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*The green dots show sampling stations that are at the 10 parts per billion or lower goal set by the state for total phosphorus in the water. Red dots show stations, mostly near canals flowing into the water conservations areas that are still above 10 parts per billion but are still much lower than they were 20 years ago. After 20 years of water quality restoration efforts, testing this year found that 90 percent of the Everglades is at 10 parts per billion or less of total phosphorus.*