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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.

Providing Clean Water for the Everglades

Water Quality Progress Update

Florida has invested $1.8 billion to improve water quality in the Everglades. Constructed wetlands, known as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs), are an important part of this effort. STAs use "green technology" to remove excess phosphorus, which can harm the Everglades ecosystem. Changes in farming methods have also contributed to documented water quality improvements.

Investments that Improve Everglades Water Quality

- Stormwater Treatment Areas are the water-cleaning workhorses of Everglades restoration, using plants to naturally remove phosphorus from water flowing into the fabled *River of Grass*.
- More than 52,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee have been converted to STAs, yielding 45,000 acres of effective treatment area. This includes 5,270 acres of additional wetlands completed in December 2006 as part of a $300 million effort to expand the STAs.
- As of summer 2012, construction is complete on two other STA expansions, and pump station commissioning is in progress on both projects.
  - Compartment B – This 6,817-acre expansion will nearly double the size of STA-2 in western Palm Beach County to 15,500 acres, helping the STA achieve optimal performance.
  - Compartment C – This 4,656-acre expansion in southeast Hendry County will connect STA-5 and STA-6 in the Everglades Agricultural Area and more than double water treatment capability at the site.
- When the two STA expansion projects become fully operational, the combined effective treatment area will total approximately 57,000 acres.
- To date, the constructed wetlands have treated more than 12.3 million acre-feet of water and have retained about 1,560 metric tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades.
- In Water Year 2012 (May 2011 – April 2012), the STAs treated 730,000 acre-feet of water and recorded their best performance to date, retaining approximately 81 metric tons of phosphorus, or 83 percent of the load received.

Best Management Practices (BMPs)

- Improved farming methods, known as Best Management Practices, provide additional phosphorus reductions in water flowing to the Everglades.
- Florida's Everglades Forever Act requires a 25-percent reduction in phosphorus leaving the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), a 470,000-acre farming region south of Lake Okeechobee.
  - The average phosphorus reduction from the implementation of BMPs over the program's 17-year history is 55 percent, more than twice the amount required by law.
  - In Water Year 2012, the EAA region achieved a 71 percent phosphorus reduction.

To date, BMPs and STAs combined have prevented more than 4,060 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.

For more information on this subject, scan this QR code using a barcode reader app on your smartphone.

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