

February 2008



## *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.

### **Northern Everglades and Estuary Protection Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan**

*Underscoring the State's commitment to greater Everglades ecosystem restoration, the Florida Legislature in 2007 expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to include protection and restoration of the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. Accordingly, the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan was developed by the South Florida Water Management District, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Plan was submitted to the Governor and Legislature on Feb. 1, 2008.*

- The coordinating agencies evaluated various alternatives using best available technology and scientific information. The development and comparisons of the alternatives – along with extensive input from the public – ultimately identified the best science-based and technologically-feasible options for improving lake and estuary health.
- The technical plan identifies construction projects, along with agricultural and urban practices, needed to achieve water quality targets for the lake. In addition, it includes other projects for increasing water storage north of Lake Okeechobee to achieve healthier lake levels and reduce harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.
- The Plan includes short-term measures for implementation during the first three years of the plan and longer-term measures that will be put into operation post-2010. The plan represents the best blueprint for achieving water quality standards while better managing lake levels.
- Components of the multi-phase plan include:
  - Implementing agricultural management practices on more than 1.7 million acres of farmland;
  - Adopting new regulations that will reduce the impacts of development on water quality and flow;
  - Building treatment wetlands to clean water flowing into the lake;
  - Using other innovative “green” nutrient control technologies to reduce phosphorus loads from the watershed; and
  - Creating between 900,000 and 1.3 million acre-feet of water storage north of the lake through a combination of above-ground reservoirs, underground storage and alternative water storage projects on public and private lands.
- Subject to ratification by the Florida Legislature, the Plan builds upon and dovetails with on-going restoration activities and successfully consolidates many previous Lake Okeechobee restoration efforts into a broader, Northern Everglades-focused approach.
- To view the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan, visit <https://my.sfwmd.gov/northerneverglades>