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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.

## 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 treatment areas. This includes construction of 5,270 acres of additional wetlands completed in December 2006 as part of a \$300 million effort to expand the STAs by approximately 18,000 acres.
  - Construction is under way to nearly double the size of STA-2 in western Palm Beach County to 15,140 acres. Known as Compartment B, the 6,817-acre expansion will help the STA achieve optimal performance.
  - A 4,656-acre expansion of treatment wetlands in southeast Hendry County is also progressing to further improve water quality flowing into the Everglades. Construction of Compartment C, a \$47.5 million investment, will connect STA-5 and STA-6 in the Everglades Agricultural Area and more than double water treatment capability at the site.
- In July 2010, District crews moved nearly 170,000 cubic yards, or 8,500 truckloads, of soil in STA-5 in Hendry County over 32 days, filling deeper areas so that more vegetation can take root and improve the wetland's ability to remove phosphorus from Everglades-bound waters.
- Since inception, the STAs have retained more than 1,400 metric tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades.
- In Water Year 2010, the constructed wetlands treated more than 1.4 million acre-feet of water. They retained 76 percent of the phosphorus 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, a 500,000-acre farming region south of Lake Okeechobee. The average phosphorus reduction from the implementation of BMPs over the program's 15-year history is 53 percent, more than twice the amount required by law.
- Over the past 15 years, the BMP program has kept 2,237 metric tons of phosphorus out of the Everglades.

**Through April 2010, BMPs and STAs combined have prevented more than 3,500 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.**

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