



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Protects Water for the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon

Water reservation supports Everglades restoration and protects natural system



(Click on photo for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board took action today to protect fish and wildlife within the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and support Indian River Lagoon restoration by adopting a rule that reserves water for the natural system.

“The St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon provide a foundation for our recreation and destination-based economy, and we must protect the ecosystems that define our way of life,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers, who represents the Treasure Coast. “Water reservations help guarantee that the natural system has the water it requires long into the future.”

Developed with citizen input, a water reservation is a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or public health and safety. When a water

reservation is in place, volumes and timing of water at specific locations are protected for the natural system ahead of consumptive uses, such as new development. The water reservation is also necessary for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with construction on project features such as reservoirs for the Indian River Lagoon - South Restoration, a key component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

The Indian River Lagoon – South Restoration, authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, will reduce harmful freshwater inflows and generate habitat and water quality improvements in the St. Lucie Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon. As of 2009, the District has invested more than \$480 million and acquired 66 percent, or 50,540 acres, of the land necessary for the project.

“The public played an integral role in this process, and their input through six workshops and information sharing with the District shaped the water reservation effort,” said Kenneth Ammon, P.E., SFWMD Deputy Executive Director - Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects. “This action will provide significant benefits for the St. Lucie River, Indian River Lagoon and residents for a long time to come.”

The St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon are home to more than 4,000 species, including 35 species listed as endangered or threatened, making it the most diverse estuarine environment in North America. The lagoon supports a multitude of activities and industries, from fishing and recreation to tourism and agriculture. A recent study concluded that the economic benefits of the Indian River Lagoon totaled more than \$3.7 billion in 2007 alone.

The North Fork water reservation is the second of its kind in Florida. The first water reservation for America’s Everglades was adopted for the protection of the Picayune Strand, Fakahatchee Estuary and related ecosystems and wildlife on Florida’s southwest coast for decades to come. Approved by the Governing Board in February 2009, the first water reservation allowed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to continue construction on the Picayune Strand restoration project, which is designed to restore surface water flow to vital wetlands to ensure that plants and animals thrive, including the endangered Florida panther, and to improve the Ten Thousand Islands estuaries.

For more information, please visit the [St. Lucie River Water Reservation](#) Web page.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage

and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.