



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Invasive Plant Treatment Under Way Along Kissimmee River *SFWMD working to limit spread of Old World climbing fern, Brazilian pepper*

Okeechobee, FL — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has begun a five-month long effort to control several highly invasive, exotic plants — Old World climbing fern, cogon grass, Brazilian pepper trees and other non-natives — growing along the Kissimmee River.

District staff is spraying herbicides approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on exotic plant populations along the length of the river banks, from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee, to limit the spread of these plants. The treatment is scheduled to last through the end of September 2010. Treatment will be primarily applied by helicopter on upland areas and should not impact recreation on the river. Some areas will be sprayed by ground crews.

Since first making its way to Florida in the late 1960s, Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) and Japanese climbing fern (*L. japonicum*) have become two of the most invasive exotic plants in the state. The climbing fern grows quickly in South Florida without the natural pests and conditions that keep the fern in check in its native areas of Australia and Asia. The fern covers and shades out native plants, eventually killing them.

Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) is a South American shrub first introduced into Florida as an ornamental plant in the 19th century. Today, it is considered one of the most noxious, widespread weeds in the state. The peppers readily invade everything from fallow farmland to hardwood hammocks and mangrove forests.

The SFWMD Vegetation Management Division is responsible for managing nuisance and invasive exotic vegetation throughout the District. Implementation of a vegetation management program helps to ensure the continued use and function of the region's water resources and preservation of South Florida's conservation lands. For more information about the current treatment or about the vegetation management program

along the Kissimmee River, please contact the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center at (863) 462-5260.

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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.