



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

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Lake Trafford Restoration Cleans Water Flowing to Southwest Florida
SFWMD, partners mark completion of project to improve water quality, revitalize lake



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — In a significant step to improve water quality in Southwest Florida and protect an economic resource, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and its partners recently marked the completion of the effort to restore Lake Trafford.

“The largest lake in Southwest Florida is a vital component of the regional ecosystem and represents an important ecotourism destination and economic engine for our area,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Charles Dauray. “This dredging project is an important step that is now providing many benefits to the lake, the environment and our residents.”

With an investment of approximately \$21.4 million, the District achieved a host of restoration goals, including:

- Removing 3 feet of muck from the lake bottom during 2004 - 2007
- Removing 2 feet of muck from the near shore areas during 2009 - 2010
- Restoring native fisheries
- Developing a Watershed Protection Plan to reduce nutrients

Restoration of Lake Trafford will not end with the completion of dredging. Other plans to maintain the health of the lake include:

- Re-establishing native submerged aquatic vegetation, such as *Vallisneria*, through littoral plantings
- Monitoring the long-term health of the lake using water quality parameters (dissolved oxygen), environmental indicators and the recovery of native fish communities
- Promoting additional studies to develop best management practices to control nutrient runoff and minimize growth of invasive aquatic vegetation

Lake Trafford is a shallow, 1,600-acre lake, marking the headwaters of the Corkscrew Swamp and the Imperial and Cocohatchee River watersheds, along with the Camp Keais Strand and Panther Preserve watershed that drains into the Ten Thousand Islands. Lake Trafford is the largest lake south of Lake Okeechobee in South Florida, serving as an important ecotourism resource for recreational boating and fishing.

At one time, the lake was sand bottomed. However, nutrient runoff in the watershed resulted in a shift from native aquatic vegetation to dense mats of hydrilla, an invasive exotic plant. The hydrilla has been controlled using herbicides, however, dead plant material accumulated on the bottom of the lake, releasing nutrients, triggering algal blooms and impacting prime habitat for native fish species.

The District began the first phase of dredging Lake Trafford in 2004, with a focus on its center, completing the project two years later. A second muck-removal effort began in November 2006 for the near shore area and, after being placed on hold because of drought conditions in 2007, was completed recently.

Restoration of Lake Trafford was a unique example of local citizens, public agencies and private organizations working together to restore a precious natural resource. The project was conceived and initiated by the Immokalee Chamber of Commerce. A Lake Trafford Task Force was formed, jointly sponsored by the Big Cypress Basin of the South Florida Water Management District and Collier County, with support from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Environmental interest organizations, such as the Audubon Society and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, also have supported the project. The Task Force and the Friends of Lake Trafford (a grassroots group) mobilized users of the lake and continue to be the proud supporters of this successful restoration project.

For more information:

- [Quick Facts: Lake Trafford Restoration](#)
- [Everglades Restoration](#)

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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.