



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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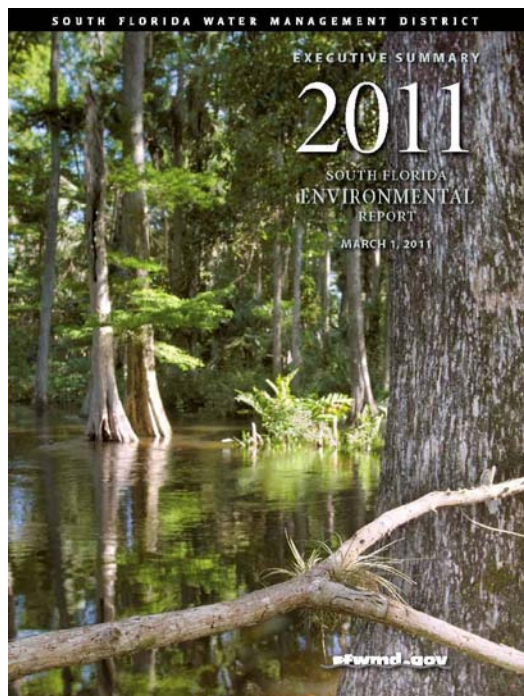
South Florida Water Management District

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### **South Florida Environmental Report Highlights Restoration Commitment, State of the Ecosystem**



*On the Cover: The Loxahatchee River, named the “river of turtles” by the Seminole Indians, winds through Martin and Palm Beach counties. A portion of the Northwest Fork is one of only two national Wild and Scenic Rivers in Florida. The diverse ecosystems of the river’s watershed include canopies of majestic, centuries-old cypress trees.*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today released the **2011 South Florida Environmental Report** detailing a year of restoration, scientific and engineering progress in the Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades and South Florida coastal areas. The 2011 report marks the 13th year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies.

“The State of Florida and the District set out each year to build on successful work accomplished to support the environment on behalf of more than 7.5 million residents. Improving water quality and restoring America’s Everglades throughout 16 counties are key components of this commitment,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “The *South Florida Environmental Report* provides citizens with a

broad view of our efforts and a picture of the state of South Florida's unique environment."

Spanning three volumes, the *2011 South Florida Environmental Report* contains more than 50 individual reports. The volumes, including a 28-page executive summary, provide extensive research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects. The report covers environmental information for Water Year 2010 (May 1, 2009 through April 30, 2010) and project/budgetary information for Fiscal Year 2010 (October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010).

The 2011 report contains:

- **Water quality improvements continue.** The District's 45,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas treated more than 1.4 million acre-feet of water last year and cut nutrient loads to the Everglades by more than 76 percent. These constructed wetlands and improved farming practices have together prevented more than 3,500 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades in the past decade. Construction of an additional 11,500 acres of treatment area is nearly complete.
- **Lake Okeechobee experiences good health.** Lake Okeechobee's ecological health was reported to be the best in years. Aquatic plants, fish and other animals flourished because of clear water and near ideal conditions. Submerged aquatic vegetation coverage reached 46,418 acres in Water Year 2010, meeting the lake's goal of more than 40,000 acres. These conditions have been a boon for recreational opportunities such as fishing and boating, which support the regional economy.
- **Kissimmee River restoration continues.** Recognizing its vital role as the headwaters to the Everglades, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project began in June 1999 to return flow to 40 miles of the river's historic channel and restore about 40 square miles of river/floodplain ecosystem. In 2010, backfilling of the C-38 canal re-established flow to an additional 6 miles of reconnected river channel. To date, more than 102,000 acres of land have been acquired for the project and 13 miles of the C-38 canal have been backfilled in three phases. This work has restored flow to 24 miles of the meandering channel of the river.
- **District increases water storage.** Since 2005, the District has been working with a coalition of other agencies, environmental organizations, ranchers and researchers to enhance opportunities for storing excess surface water on private, public and tribal lands. Dispersed water storage in the Northern Everglades watershed has expanded to nearly 130,000 acre-feet.

The *2011 South Florida Environmental Report* is available online at [www.sfwmd.gov/sfer](http://www.sfwmd.gov/sfer).

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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.*