



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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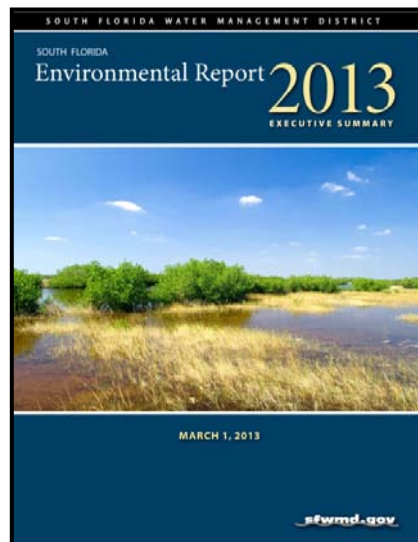
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South Florida Environmental Report Highlights Restoration Progress, State of the Ecosystem

A major restoration agreement, water quality improvements are among highlights



On the Cover:

Fakahatchee Strand

Southwest Florida, Collier County

The Fakahatchee Strand, part of the Big Cypress Swamp in Collier County, is one of the largest wilderness areas in South Florida. Wildlife inhabitants include the Florida black bear, Florida panther and Everglades mink as well as the most diverse and abundant assemblage of rare bromeliads and orchids in North America.

West Palm Beach, FL — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) have released the [2013 South Florida Environmental Report](#) detailing a year of environmental restoration, scientific and engineering progress to improve the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee Basin and South Florida coastal areas. The 2013 report marks the 15th year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies.

“The South Florida Water Management District and other vested stakeholders continue to focus on creative solutions to water quality challenges throughout the region,” said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. “Governor Scott has made Everglades restoration a priority and the Department remains focused on cleaning up the state’s waters with our partners.”

Spanning three volumes, the **2013 South Florida Environmental Report** unifies more than 75 individual documents. The volumes, plus a 24-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 2012 (May 1, 2011, through April 30, 2012) and project/budgetary information for Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011, through September 30, 2012).

“Each year, considerable science, research and project status updates are compiled to provide the public with a comprehensive picture of South Florida’s ecosystems,” said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker. “The **2013 South Florida Environmental Report** details our continued progress in improving water quality and constructing projects to benefit the Everglades and the entire South Florida environment.”

Highlights in the 2013 report include:

- **Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) expand to improve water quality.** The existing network of Stormwater Treatment Areas south of Lake Okeechobee treated more than 700,000 acre-feet of water and recorded their best performance to date, retaining approximately 81 metric tons of phosphorus, or 83 percent of the load received. Construction was also completed on 12,000 acres of additional treatment area — increasing the STA treatment capacity by 25 percent and bringing the total treatment area to 57,000 acres. This means greater volumes of water can be routed through the constructed wetlands in coming years.
- **Restoration Strategies advance with major agreement.** The State of Florida and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reached a milestone agreement on further efforts to achieve state water quality standards for the Everglades. Under the science-based Restoration Strategies plan, the District will create more than 6,500 acres of new STAs and 110,000 acre-feet of additional water storage through construction of upstream reservoirs.
- **Best Management Practices (BMPs) continue reducing nutrients.** Working in conjunction with the STAs, the Everglades Agricultural Area once again exceeded its 25 percent phosphorus-reduction requirement, delivering a 71-percent reduction this past year when compared to the pre-BMP baseline time period. A combination of source controls (improved farming practices) and treatment marshes have prevented approximately 4,100 metric tons of phosphorus from entering Everglades waters to date.
- **Projects and initiatives improve South Florida’s ecosystems.** A host of restoration work was completed or moved forward in the past year, including completing the C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project to benefit Everglades National Park and Florida Bay; completing construction on Phase 1 of the Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area, a 2,000-acre wetland northeast of Lake Okeechobee; increasing water storage on public and private lands with the Dispersed Water Management Program; updating watershed protection plans for the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries; and continuing construction on the Deering Estate Flow-way component of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Phase 1 project.

- **Kissimmee River Restoration continues to see success.** Water management operations maintained continuous inflow to the Kissimmee River restoration area throughout Water Year 2012 despite below-average rainfall in the Kissimmee Basin. This key restoration goal for water flow has been achieved in 8 of the last 11 years under the interim regulation schedule. Wading bird abundance was higher in the 2011–2012 season, raising the three-year running average above the restoration target. Waterfowl abundance was also greater and continued to exceed its restoration expectation.

These highlights and numerous other efforts featured in the **2013 South Florida Environmental Report** continue to provide the scientific foundation of agency programs and projects that year after year are improving the entire South Florida region.

The **2013 South Florida Environmental Report** is available to view or print at 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.