



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Water Farming Pilot Project to Benefit St. Lucie Estuary
Project goals include reducing flow to the estuary by increasing water storage on land



Water Farming Pilot Project Snapshot

- 450 acres of property strategically located along the St. Lucie Canal
- Captures an average of 6,780 acre-feet of water a year
- 1 acre-foot = 325,851 U.S. gallons
- Reduces flows from Lake Okeechobee and surrounding basin into the St. Lucie River and Estuary

Click on the picture for a larger version.

West Palm Beach, FL — As part of the broad effort to restore and protect the St. Lucie River and Estuary, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) approved a water farming pilot project to store excess water on fallow citrus land before it can flow to the estuary.

“Working with local landowners to identify property for water storage is an integral part of our strategy to address high flows into the estuaries,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chair Daniel O’Keefe. “This pilot project on citrus land highlights the District’s expanded efforts to implement near-term solutions that make a difference.”

Under the pilot program, Caulkins Citrus Company will pump water onto 450 acres of its property located along the St. Lucie Canal in Martin County. This can capture an average of 6,780 acre-feet of water a year that would otherwise flow along the canal from Lake Okeechobee and surrounding basins into the St. Lucie River and Estuary.

The three-year pilot project will provide vital information on the proposed concept of retaining storm water on citrus properties.

With Lake Okeechobee still rising from above-average rainfall, the private landowner on this project is already pumping water onto the property on an emergency basis under an agreement with the District. To date, approximately 200 acre-feet of water have been diverted from the watershed that drains to the St. Lucie Estuary.

Pilot Project Background

The District issued a request for water farming pilot project proposals in April in close coordination with several partner agencies including:

- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service



(Click on the map for a larger version.)

Five proposals were evaluated and ranked. Caulkins Citrus Company, the first ranked respondent, came to an agreement with the District, which will invest approximately \$1.2 million in the project, or about \$76 per acre-foot per year of storage.

SFWMD Dispersed Water Management Program

Since 2005, the District has been working with a coalition of agencies, environmental organizations, ranchers and researchers to enhance opportunities for storing excess surface water on private and public lands.

Managing water on these lands, known as the Dispersed Water Management Program, is one tool to reduce the amount of water flowing during the wet season into the lake and discharged to coastal estuaries for flood protection. Private ranchlands in this program currently provide a storage volume of more than 60,000 acre-feet.

Shallow water retention also provides groundwater recharge for water supply, potential for water quality improvements and rehydration of drained ecosystems.

The program encourages property owners to retain water on their land rather than drain it, accept and detain regional runoff or do both.

For more information on the District's water storage efforts, visit www.sfwmd.gov/storage.

Public/Private Storage Projects (Storage capacity, in acre-feet)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Storage created since 2005: Approximately 61,300• Additional storage created through regional public facilities, including reservoirs, restoration projects and Stormwater Treatment Areas: 72,000

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.