



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Boosts Water Storage Project North of Lake Okeechobee

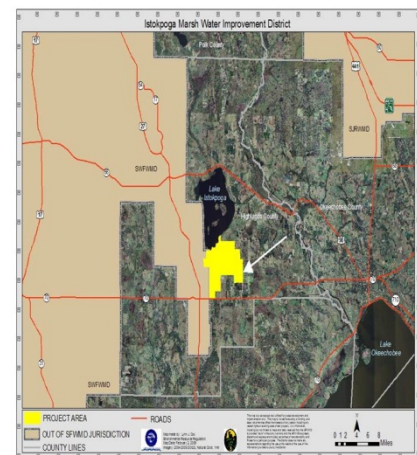
Restoration site will store and treat stormwater runoff before it enters the big lake

West Palm Beach, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today approved an investment to advance a restoration project in Highlands County that will store water and reduce nutrients and stormwater runoff before it enters Lake Okeechobee.

“Expanding water storage and treatment are essential across the entire South Florida ecosystem,” said SFWMD Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “Each project we move forward brings us closer to attaining benefits for Lake Okeechobee, the coastal estuaries and our vital communities.”

Strategically located in a 19,000-acre watershed northwest of the lake, the project comprises three shallow above-ground impoundments. Together totaling approximately 1,200 acres, the impoundments will hold stormwater that would otherwise flow directly into canals leading to Lake Okeechobee.

The \$2 million investment approved today – along with funding by project partners that include the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Istokpoga Marsh Watershed Improvement District, Highlands County and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – advances the project to the next step, which is final design and construction of the first impoundment.



(Click on the map for a larger version.)

"This is a continuation of efforts by the Department and the South Florida Water Management District to restore Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades with the support of Governor Scott," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Additional water storage and cleaner water are critical to the restoration of Lake Okeechobee."

At 308 acres filled 3.5 feet deep, the first impoundment will hold approximately 900 acre-feet of water. This is equivalent to about 450 Olympic-size swimming pools or about 100 American football fields, without end zones, covered with 9 feet of water.

Scientific study and computer modeling have shown the project, combined with the use of best management practices on local farms, could reduce 70 percent of the phosphorus and 60 percent of the local stormwater runoff flowing into the Harney Pond Canal, which flows into Lake Okeechobee and ultimately the Everglades.

By storing and treating water bound for the lake, the project helps meet key objectives of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. The program is designed to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water into Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie watersheds by building on and consolidating numerous restoration efforts into a broader approach focused on restoring the entire Northern Everglades system.

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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.