



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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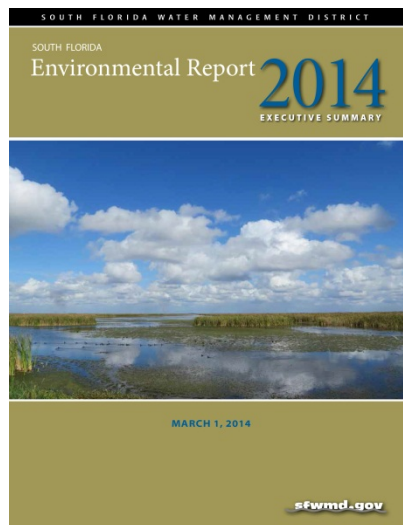
South Florida Water Management District

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**Annual Environmental Report Highlights Restoration Progress,
State of the South Florida Ecosystem**
Water quality improvements are among the 2014 highlights



On the Cover:

Stormwater Treatment Areas

These vast freshwater wetlands, located south of Lake Okeechobee, use “green” technology to reduce excess phosphorus from waters flowing to the Everglades. Their expansive, shallow waters and rich plant life also make them outstanding habitat for wading birds and other wildlife.

West Palm Beach, FL – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) have released the [2014 South Florida Environmental Report](#) detailing a year of science, engineering and environmental restoration progress to improve the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee Basin and South Florida coastal areas. The 2014 report marks the 16th year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies.

“With the support of Governor Rick Scott and his landmark \$880 million Everglades water quality plan, we have accelerated projects designed to improve water quality and flow to the River of Grass,” said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. “That commitment continues in 2014, with Governor Scott’s \$130 million recommendation to further Everglades restoration.”

Spanning three volumes, the *2014 South Florida Environmental Report* unifies more than 75 individual documents. The volumes, plus a 27-page executive summary,

provide extensive peer-reviewed research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects.

“We continued to make progress during the last year to construct projects that improve Everglades water quality and increase water storage while also managing record rainfall,” said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory. “The *2014 South Florida Environmental Report* documents these efforts and our plans to move forward with the state’s Restoration Strategies initiative to benefit the entire South Florida environment.”

Highlights in the 2014 report include:

- **Expanded network of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) is cleansing water.** With 57,000 acres of treatment wetlands operating, South Florida’s network of STAs treated 1.2 million acre-feet of water, achieving their best performance to date. Working together with best management and improved farming practices over nearly two decades, the treatment marshes have prevented approximately 4,270 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.
- **Restoration Strategies are being implemented.** Work is underway on several key construction projects in the State of Florida and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s milestone agreement to achieve state water quality standards for the Everglades. This includes construction progress on two shallow reservoirs, known as flow equalization basins, that will help optimize the performance of the STAs and moving forward with science plan studies.
- **Best Management Practices (BMPs) continue reducing nutrients.** Working in conjunction with the STAs, the Everglades Agricultural Area delivered a 41-percent reduction this year when compared to the pre-BMP baseline time period. To the west, the C-139 Basin reduced phosphorus discharges to historic levels.
- **Projects and initiatives are improving South Florida’s ecosystems.** A host of restoration work was completed or moved forward in the past year, including a three-year update to the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan and the start of DEP’s development of the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan to help meet target phosphorus levels. Wading bird nesting on the lake was at its highest since 2006, while white ibis, great egrets and federally endangered wood storks led a moderate improvement in overall nesting throughout South Florida. Progress was also made on a suite of watershed construction projects to benefit the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.
- **Kissimmee River restoration continues to see success.** The first three phases of Kissimmee River restoration have re-established flow to 24 miles of river channel and returned flow to more than 7,700 acres of floodplain.

These highlights and numerous other efforts featured in the *2014 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 2014 report covers environmental information for Water Year 2013 (May 1, 2012, through

April 30, 2013) and project/budgetary information for Fiscal Year 2013 (October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2013).

The *2014 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.