



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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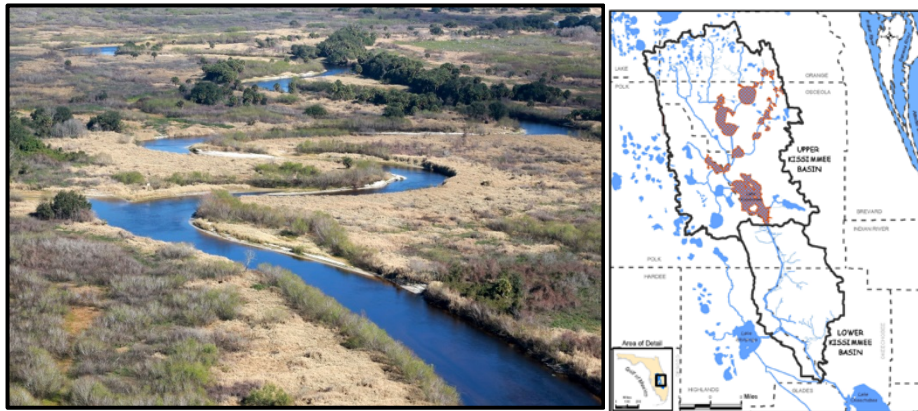
South Florida Water Management District

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SFWMD Advances Water Reservation for Kissimmee Restoration *Restoring the historic floodplain and its wildlife depend on fresh water*



Fish, wading birds, reptiles and a host of wildlife require a year-round supply of water. (Click on the picture and map for larger versions.)

Orlando, FL – To provide water essential for the protection of fish and wildlife in the Kissimmee River, its vast floodplain and the Upper Chain of Lakes, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) this month authorized the next step in a public process to reserve water for the ecosystem. The area extends from Orlando to Lake Okeechobee and is known as the headwaters of the Everglades.

Freshwater flows are essential to achieve – and sustain – environmental restoration of about 44 meandering miles of the historic Kissimmee River and floodplain plus more than two dozen interconnected lakes that together support a vast array of fish and wildlife.

“The District and its partners have invested extensive resources in returning the Kissimmee Basin to its natural beauty and ecological health,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “Now we will ensure there is sufficient water for the impressive diversity of life returning to the restored waterway.”

A water reservation is a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or for public health and safety. When a water reservation is in place, quantities and timing of water at specific locations are legally protected for the natural system.

Rule development for the water reservation will bring together stakeholders to continue an ongoing public review of Kissimmee science and technical data, with the goal of adopting a final rule in 2015.

To date, Florida has invested close to \$400 million in headwaters projects encompassing lakes, the river and floodplain. This accounts for almost 25,000 acres of wetland habitat critical to the protection of fish and wildlife, including endangered or threatened species.

When implemented, the reservation will guarantee that water needed to keep these ecosystems thriving will not be allocated for consumptive use.

The Kissimmee Basin supports extensive and diverse wildlife:

- **52 species of fish**, including largemouth bass, black crappie, red ear sunfish and bluegill
- **98 species of wetland-dependent and wading birds**, including the snail kite, wood stork, sandhill crane and whooping crane, which are endangered or threatened
- **24 species of amphibians and reptiles**, including the American alligator and several species of frogs, toads, salamanders and turtles
- **4 mammals**, including the river otter and round-tailed muskrat

For More Information:

- [Water Reservations](#)
- [Just the Facts: Water Reservation for the Kissimmee Basin](#)
- [Protecting and Restoring Ecosystems](#)

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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.