



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Construction Set to Begin on Wetlands to Clean Water for St. Lucie River *Stormwater Treatment Area will use plants to remove nutrients to protect the river*



Stormwater Treatment Areas are proven tools to clean water to restore South Florida's ecosystems. (Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — A former citrus operation in Martin County is set to become a 6,300-acre wetland to clean local stormwater runoff before it reaches the St. Lucie River and Estuary.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board today invested approximately \$101 million in a contract to construct the treatment wetlands portion of the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA).

“This is the third month in a row the Board has been in a position to approve major steps forward for this critical project,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “Coupled with continued support and an investment of \$60 million by Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature, this is the type of momentum that will help reach the goal of protecting and restoring the river and estuary.”

Today’s action followed several months of progress on the project, including:

- A major agreement to allow the District to expedite work
- A contract to construct the main project spillway

- A Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permit needed to build the reservoir portion of the project

Once complete, the STA will include 32 miles of berms, 30 miles of canals and 56 concrete water control structures. Inside the berms, plants such as cattails, pickerel weed and bulrush will remove and store nutrients, including phosphorus, from the water before it flows into the St. Lucie River and Estuary.

The six cells of vegetation are critical components of the overall C-44 Reservoir Project, which will also include:

- A 3,400-acre reservoir capable of storing about 16 billion gallons of water.
- A pump station capable of moving 1,100 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water, or about 717 million gallons a day, into the C-44 Reservoir.

All project components were originally planned to be built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

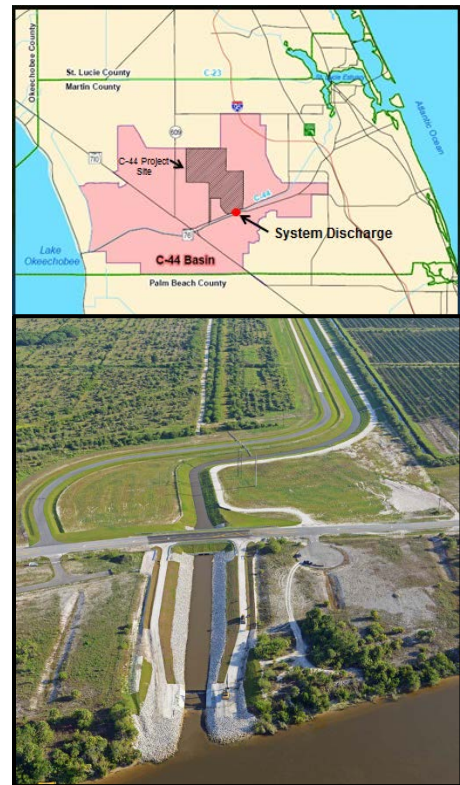
In July, the Governing Board approved a major agreement with the Corps that allowed the SFWMD to expedite construction of the STAs, a pump station and a portion of the project discharge canal.

In August, the Board awarded an approximately \$5.4 million contract for construction of the spillway that will serve as the single point of water movement out of the entire project.

Strategically completing the spillway early in the construction timeline will allow the SFWMD to store additional water on the project, helping to reduce excess water flow to the estuary – even before the reservoir and stormwater treatment area are complete. This work will allow water managers to retain local runoff on approximately 7,000 acres of the 12,000-acre project site.

Also this month, the DEP issued a permit for the Corps to construct the reservoir portion of the project.

The St. Lucie River and Estuary is part of the larger Indian River Lagoon system, the most diverse estuarine environment in North America. It is home to more than 4,000



This former citrus operation will become a wetland to clean water flowing to the St. Lucie River. (Click the map/picture for larger versions.)

plant and animal species, including manatees, oysters, dolphins, sea turtles and seahorses.

For More Information:

- [Indian River Lagoon - South](#)
- [Improving Water Quality: Stormwater Treatment Areas](#)

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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.