



NEWS RELEASE

December 11, 2014

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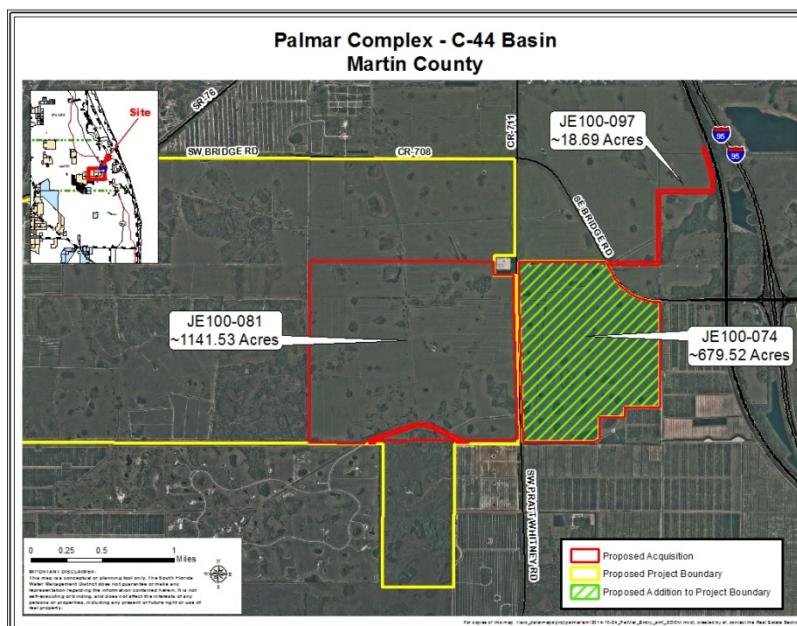
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SFWMD, Martin County Partner to Preserve Natural Lands and Improve Water Quality and Storage

Lands will be used to help protect the St. Lucie River



(Click on the map for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL – In a funding partnership with Martin County, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board today approved the purchase of land that will help improve natural lands, water storage and water quality for the C-44 canal and South Fork of the St. Lucie River.

“The region’s treasured ecosystems benefit each time we add another piece in the broad restoration puzzle,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “Martin County has a long history of preserving and protecting its natural lands, and we commend the county commission’s funding commitment to this important purchase.”

Today’s action places in public ownership approximately 1,840 acres of land in what is known as the Palmar Complex, located in the C-44 Basin. This 190-square-mile basin

drains water throughout western Martin County, through the C-44 canal and into the St. Lucie River and Estuary. The basin is a key area along the Treasure Coast for restoration efforts.

The \$20.4 million investment in the property, locally known as Harmony Ranch, includes \$3.2 million from Martin County, with the balance from the Florida Forever Trust Fund.

“Everglades restoration continues to be a high priority for our region,” said Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard. “This land purchase will help achieve an improved ecosystem and water quality condition that form the basis of a healthy economy, and represents a renewed commitment to continue our long-march progress on full restoration. Martin County is delighted with this land purchase, and is proud to partner with, and appreciates the leadership of the South Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida on this important acquisition.”

Future restoration efforts at the site will be part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Indian River Lagoon-South Project (IRL-South). The property represents the first acquisition for the Palmar project component of IRL-South.

Indian River Lagoon-South Project

The St. Lucie River and Estuary are part of the larger Indian River Lagoon system, the most diverse estuarine environment in North America. The lagoon is home to more than 4,000 plant and animal species, including manatees, oysters, dolphins, sea turtles and seahorses.

As part of CERP, the IRL-South project’s goal is to restore the delicate balance of salt and fresh water in the estuarine system to improve water quality, revitalize habitats and restore the ecosystem.

Overall project components will include:

- 90,000 acres of natural areas, included 53,000 acres of restored wetlands to provide water storage
- 9,000 acres of constructed wetlands
- 922 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation restoration

For More Information:

- [Indian River Lagoon - South](#)

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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.