



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SFWMD Highlights Restoration Project Progress in 2014** *Wet season operations protected South Florida's coastal estuaries*



*(Click on the pictures for larger versions.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — A focus on moving projects forward to restore America's Everglades and sending water south to protect coastal estuaries marked the highlights of 2014 for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The agency oversees water resources for 8.1 million residents and ecosystems that span 16 counties.

"This past year, the South Florida Water Management District focused on moving numerous projects forward," said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory. "I am pleased to say we made significant progress on essential work that will help protect water resources throughout South Florida."

#### **Project Progress**

From increasing water storage to improving water quality, a host of projects saw significant progress in 2014. Successfully negotiating resolutions to several complex and

longstanding State-Federal policy issues also allowed the agency to move forward with restoration efforts. Progress included:

- **Indian River Lagoon – South C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA):** To expedite a key project in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the State agreed to construct the STA component, system discharge and pump station components to reduce stormwater runoff to the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon. With the assistance of legislative funding, the Governing Board approved two contracts this year – the C-44 Discharge Spillway and the \$101 million C-44 STA project.
- **Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Reservoir:** On the west coast, the C-43 Reservoir was formally authorized by Congress in the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act. While awaiting federal appropriation of money for construction, the District is designing and constructing project features that will provide interim water storage.
- **Kissimmee River Restoration:** The District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers successfully resolved a complex cost-crediting issue that allows for completion of construction to provide an additional 30,000 acre-feet of storage in the floodplain.
- **C-111 South Dade Project:** The Governing Board took action to amend the latest partnership agreement allowing the Corps to complete the Contract 8 northern detention area, and thereby complete the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park project. This effort is critical to the District's ability to move additional water south.

### **Implementing Restoration Strategies to Improve Everglades Water Quality**

To further improve water quality, components of the Governor's Restoration Strategies plan were well underway in 2014:

- Flow Equalization Basins (FEBs) to capture and store peak stormwater flows
- Additional STA acreage to treat more water
- Increased storage to provide greater water management flexibility to capture, treat and move water

Under construction are the A-1 FEB, which will provide 60,000 acre-feet of shallow storage and treatment, and the L-8 FEB, which will provide 45,000 acre-feet of deep water storage.

The STA-1 West expansion project land swap was also completed this year. Design is underway to add another 4,600 acres of treatment marsh.

To complement Restoration Strategies, initial work on a citrus grove to be restored to more historic wetland conditions started this year on the former Southern Gardens groves, also known as the C-139 Annex site in southeastern Hendry County. In collaboration with the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the name of the restoration site will be known as the Sam Jones/ Abiaki Prairie.

## **Moving Water South and Maximizing Storage**

An analysis of the 2014 rainy season showed District operations successfully moved south about a half foot of water depth off Lake Okeechobee, helping to prevent freshwater releases to South Florida's estuaries this summer. The District used every operational tool practicable while also taking advantage of favorable rainfall patterns across the 16-county region.

The District also took action in 2014 to continue increasing water storage on public and private lands to protect South Florida's coastal estuaries and natural systems, including:

- Completion of Nicodemus Slough in Glades County to create 34,000 acre-feet of new storage.
- With funding assistance from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Governing Board approved contracts for three water farming pilot projects in the St. Lucie River watershed to test the concept of storing excess surface water on privately owned fallow citrus lands.
- In December, the Governing Board approved additional agreements that more than double the overall water retention capacity in its Dispersed Water Management program. The approved contracts will add a total potential of 95,812 acre-feet of storage to the program, or about 36 billion gallons annually. This is the equivalent of 1.5 inches of water in Lake Okeechobee, a 730-square-mile lake at the heart of South Florida's water management 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.*