



NEWS RELEASE

April 9, 2015

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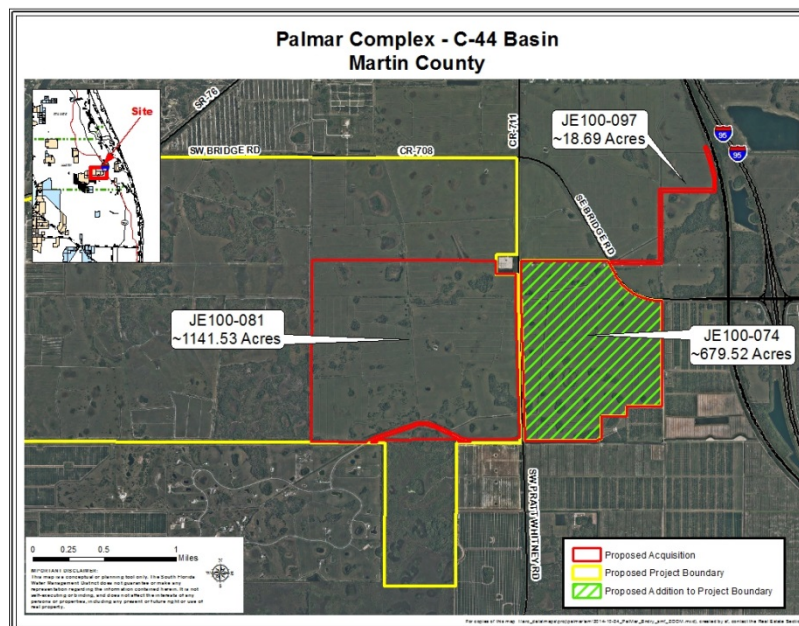
South Florida Water Management District

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SFWMD Approves Funds for Preservation of Martin County Lands *Natural wetlands will help protect the St. Lucie River*



(Click on the map for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — Following its approval in December to purchase the Martin County property known as Harmony Ranch, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today approved a funding agreement with Martin County necessary for the purchase. Acquisition of the site, by both SFWMD and the county, will improve natural lands, water storage and water quality for the C-44 canal and South Fork of the St. Lucie River.

“Partnerships with local communities are dynamic opportunities to restore and protect Florida’s environmentally sensitive lands,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers, whose area of representation includes Martin County. “Notably, restoring this site is also going to help protect the St. Lucie River and Estuary.”

The partnership acquisition with Martin County will place into public ownership 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 the western portion of the 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 includes \$3.4 million from Martin County, with the balance from the Florida Forever Trust Fund.

At its April 7 meeting, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners approved the funding agreement and related items.

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.