



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

October 23, 2015

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### **SFWMD Chief Engineer Earns Prestigious Award for Flood Control Work** *American Society of Civil Engineers' Norman Medal was first awarded in 1874*



*The Norman Medal is the highest honor granted by the American Society of Civil Engineers for a technical paper.  
(Click on the picture for a larger version.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — Designing new flood control systems that will protect South Florida residents in an ever-changing environment requires sound engineering science.

For co-authoring a research paper that “makes a definitive contribution to engineering science” on this subject, Dr. Jayantha Obeysekera, the South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) Chief Engineer, has received the prestigious Norman Medal from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

“I am humbled to join a list honoring more than 140 years’ worth of significant contributions to the field of engineering,” Obeysekera said. “My real reward is providing research that will help engineers in South Florida and around the world adapt to the dynamic changes of flood protection in the future.”

Obeysekera and his co-author Dr. Jose D. Salas received the ASCE’s honor recently in New York City for their paper, “Revisiting the Concepts of Return Period and Risk for

Nonstationary Hydrologic Extreme Events,” published in the March 2014 edition of the *Journal of Hydrologic Engineering*.

As Obeysekera explains, building future flood protection systems such as seawalls, dams and reservoirs will require methods that account for a changing environment. Sea level rise, urbanization, increasing intensity and magnitudes of storms and floods are all dynamic factors that influence the engineering and construction of these systems.

The award-winning research paper explored engineering methodology that will help in determining, for example, the right height of a seawall or the level of protection for a dam in a riverine environment.

At the SFWMD, this work will help a staff that holds 79 Ph.Ds and 149 Professional Engineer licenses understand the future needs of a complex flood control system that serves 8.1 million residents across 16 counties.

Currently, the regional system includes approximately:

- 2,100 miles of canals
- 2,000 miles of levees/berms
- 600 water control structures
- 71 pump stations

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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 flood control, water quality, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*