



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Ranchlands Continue Successful Transformation to Wetlands** *Lakeside Ranch is already benefiting Lake Okeechobee, greater ecosystem*



*(Click on the map for a larger version.)*

**Martin County, FL** — The transformation of ranchlands into water-cleaning wetlands continues as the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) approved a construction contract to build the southern Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) at Lakeside Ranch. These specialized wetlands in western Martin County are designed to remove phosphorus from stormwater before it reaches Lake Okeechobee.

“Reducing the amount of phosphorus entering Lake Okeechobee is an important component of the overall strategy to improve water quality in the lake and in the Everglades,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. “Building this next phase of wetlands at Lakeside Ranch will increase the project’s already proven ability to reduce nutrient loads to the lake.”

### **Exceeding Expectations**

Lakeside Ranch is situated in the Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough sub-watershed, one of the nutrient “hot spots” in the overall Lake Okeechobee watershed.

Phase I, the northern STA, which began operating in 2012, has reduced phosphorus loads in the water it has treated by 82 percent. During the last two years (July 2013 to June 2015), a total of 23 metric tons of phosphorus has been removed, well exceeding the design rate of 9 metric tons per year.

In Water Year 2015 (May 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015) alone, the STA captured 30,851 acre-feet of stormwater runoff, removing 13.89 of the total 16.29 metric tons of phosphorus it received, an 88% reduction. This phosphorus would have otherwise gone into the lake.

### **Construction Begins**

With an investment of approximately \$35 million, the SFWMD Governing Board has authorized Munilla Construction Management to begin work on the Southern STA.

This phase of the Lakeside Ranch project includes construction of:

- 8 inflow/outflow, gated water control structures
- 5 “cells” (retention areas) of aquatic vegetation that remove phosphorus, with an effective treatment area of 788 acres
- Distribution and outlet canals/seepage ditches
- Recreation area with an informational kiosk and restroom

Together the north and south STAs are expected to reduce phosphorus loads into the lake by 19 metric tons annually.

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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.*