



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

OPINION

March 26, 2016

SFWMD Governing Board Taking Action to be Great Environmental Stewards

Attention on the health of South Florida's environment was intensified this winter by unprecedented rainfall and weeks of Lake Okeechobee releases to the coastal estuaries.

But finger pointing at the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, and agenda-driven criticism of our west coast Board member as a poor steward of the environment, is sorely misdirected.

Actions by the Board have achieved significant results in recent years. Everglades water quality is a great example. Flows in the 1980s contained more than 150 parts per billion of phosphorus. Florida has invested \$1.8 billion to improve Everglades water quality by building 57,000 acres of stormwater treatment areas. During the past 5 years, nutrients discharged into Everglades National Park averaged *just 9 parts per billion*, surpassing water quality standards – and far exceeding the prediction of skeptics.

The District has made significant progress building restoration projects, and we're working ahead of the federal process within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan to achieve results as early as possible. The District has dedicated \$1.993 billion to restoration projects, far more than the federal government has spent, including the restoration of the Picayune Strand and the C-111 Spreader Canal.

This work includes construction now underway of the important C-43 Reservoir along the Caloosahatchee River. This enormous facility will hold 170,000 acre-feet of water – *that's more than 55 billion gallons* – to benefit the river and estuary.

The District's commitment to restoration is far from over. The Governing Board is committed to completing restoration projects like the Lakeside Ranch stormwater treatment area, Lake Hicpochee hydrology enhancement on the Caloosahatchee and to construct all of the projects in Governor Scott's \$880 million Restoration Strategies plan including 6,300 acres of additional stormwater treatment areas. Several of the Restoration Strategies projects, including the massive A-1 and L-8 flow equalization basins in Palm Beach County are already complete or nearing completion and benefitting South Florida.

This Board's achievements are proof positive of great stewardship.

Daniel O'Keefe
Governing Board Chairman
South Florida Water Management District