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quick facts on...
Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program
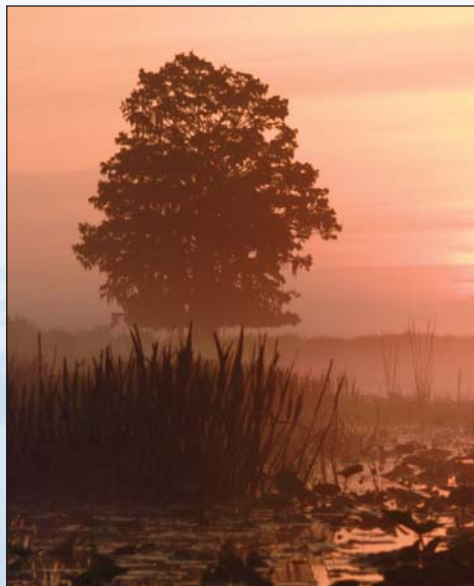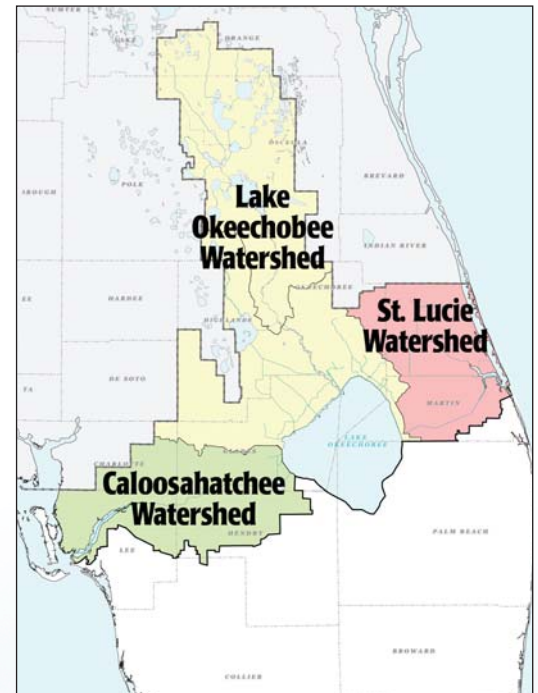
MARCH 2009

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our Mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

Protecting the Northern Everglades & Estuaries

Underscoring the State of Florida's commitment to restoring the Greater Everglades Ecosystem, the Florida Legislature in 2007 expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to strengthen protection for the Northern Everglades by restoring and preserving Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries. The Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program:

• Recognizes that the Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie watersheds are critical water resources of the State.

• Builds upon and consolidates numerous restoration activities into a comprehensive approach.

• Expands the use of the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund to include Northern Everglades restoration and extends it through 2020.

Benefits to the Ecosystem

The Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program recognizes the importance and connectivity of the entire Everglades ecosystem both north and south of Lake Okeechobee. Implementation of this program will improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water to the natural system and re-establish salinity regimes suitable for maintaining healthy, naturally diverse and well-balanced estuarine ecosystems. The health of the Northern Everglades will be enhanced by improving land management to reduce nutrient run-off, by constructing treatment wetlands to improve water quality and by completing water storage projects to better connect, manage and distribute water to the natural system.

Northern Everglades Projects and Plans

The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan

The Plan identifies projects and urban and agricultural best management practices needed to achieve water quality targets for the lake. In addition, it includes projects for increasing water storage north of Lake Okeechobee to achieve healthier lake levels and reduce harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries. The Plan was delivered to the Florida Legislature on February 1, 2008.

St. Lucie River and Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plans

Each River Watershed Protection Plan:

• Includes a construction project, pollutant control program, and research and water quality monitoring program.

• Identifies the best combination of watershed storage projects and water treatment projects needed to help improve the quality, timing and distribution of water in the natural system.

• Incorporates agricultural and urban best management practices to reduce pollutants and best available "green technologies" to help reduce nutrients and improve water quality.

• Builds upon existing and planned programs and projects, and successfully consolidates previous restoration efforts.

The State, in cooperation with local governments, submitted the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plans to the Florida Legislature on January 1, 2009.