



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

STATEMENT

August 31, 2010

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Re: Special Master's report to the Court

"We are pleased with the Special Master's recommendations for improving water quality in America's Everglades. To help achieve this goal, the District's Governing Board took bold action this month in approving the amended *River of Grass* land acquisition.

"The 26,800 strategically located acres in the initial purchase are critical to expanding the existing network of more than 52,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas, which have proven to be the most effective green technologies for cleaning water bound for the Everglades.

"Given limited resources, the District has seized a rare opportunity to acquire lands in a cost-effective way, enabling us in the coming years to implement proven water treatment projects. We will continue to work with our state, federal, tribal and private partners to fulfill our shared restoration and water quality improvement goals for the Everglades."

Background

Twenty years ago, the United States filed suit in federal district court compelling the State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District to implement and enforce state water laws to protect Everglades National Park and the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. As a result, the State and federal government entered into a Settlement Agreement, which was approved by the Court and sets out an adaptive, comprehensive plan for controlling and reducing phosphorus.

Since 1994, the network of six STAs south of Lake Okeechobee — with a combined area of more than 52,000 acres — have retained more than 1,400 metric tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades. To date, the State of Florida has invested more than \$1.8 billion to improve Everglades water quality.

- Report of the Special Master to the United States District Court of the Southern District of Florida ([Aug. 30, 2010](#))

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About the Everglades

America's Everglades once covered almost 11,000 square miles of south Florida. Just a century ago, water flowed down the Kissimmee River into Lake Okeechobee, then south through the Everglades to the Florida Bay – the ultimate destination of the pure sheetflow. Because of efforts to drain the marshland for agriculture, development and flood control, the Everglades is today half the size it was a century ago. Dubbed the River of Grass for the sawgrass that flourished throughout the marsh, the Everglades is a mosaic of freshwater ponds, prairies and forested uplands that supports a rich plant and wildlife community. Renowned for its wading birds and wildlife, the Everglades is home to dozens of federally threatened and endangered species, including the Florida panther, American crocodile, snail kite and wood stork. The mix of salt and freshwater makes it the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles exist side by side.

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.