



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is a regional governmental agency that oversees the water resources in 16 counties – from Orlando to the Florida Keys.

OUR MISSION

To **SAFEGUARD** and **RESTORE** South Florida's water resources and ecosystems, **PROTECT** our communities from flooding, and **MEET** the region's water needs while **CONNECTING** with the public and stakeholders

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Major Progress Continues on the Picayune Strand Restoration Project



Faka Union Pump Station.

SFWMD Governing Board Member Charlette Roman Activates the Pump at the Faka Union Pump Station.

The South Florida Water Management District reached a major milestone for the Picayune Strand Restoration Project in Collier County and began using the Faka Union Pump Station in July 2021. This pump station, coupled with other restoration activities, works to rehydrate drained wetlands in the Picayune Strand State Forest and restore the area's natural sheet flow.

Progress on the Picayune Strand Restoration Project includes:

- ◆ 90% of the old roads and 98% of the logging trams are degraded.
- ◆ Over 60% of canals are backfilled.
- ◆ Three pump stations are complete to rehydrate drained wetlands. These pump stations will direct fresh water to drained wetlands and maintain current flood protection for communities north of I-75:
 - **Merritt** – 810 cfs
 - **Faka Union** – 2650 cfs
 - **Miller** – 1250 cfs

Rehydration of these wetlands supports wildlife habitat, water quality improvements, and overall ecosystem restoration efforts in the region.

The South Florida Water Management District has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for years on the Picayune Strand Restoration Project, which is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

In the 1960s, more than 85 square miles of wetlands in western Collier County were drained for a failed real estate development called Southern Golden Gate Estates. Road construction and canal excavations severely impacted the area, reducing aquifer storage, increasing freshwater discharges to estuaries in the Ten Thousand Islands, disrupting native plant communities, and increasing the frequency of wildfires.



Progress on the project includes continued removal of roads and logging trams, plugging the upper three miles of the Faka Union Canal, beginning construction on the Southwest Protection Feature levee to maintain existing levels of flood protection, and beginning construction on the project's conveyance features.

The Picayune Strand Restoration Project is expected to be completed by 2025. Over 55,000 acres of native wetlands and uplands in Southwest, Florida will be restored when this project is complete. The project is expected to result in improved flows of water into Collier Seminole State Park, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.



The Picayune Strand Restoration Project restores surface water flow to these vital wetlands and supports numerous environmental benefits including:

- ◆ Restored and enhanced habitat for fish and wildlife.
- ◆ Reduced drainage of adjacent sensitive ecosystems.
- ◆ Improved aquifer recharge to protect underground water supplies and prevent saltwater intrusion.
- ◆ Reduced freshwater releases/improved health of downstream estuaries.
- ◆ Increased recreational opportunities.