



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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New Federal-State Agreement to Benefit Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie Estuary Restoration

Project partnership allows a suite of vital restoration projects to advance



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — With continued cooperation once again advancing Everglades restoration, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently approved an essential agreement, known as a Project Partnership Agreement, to advance construction on a host of components critical to restoring the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary.

“Residents are counting on this incredibly important effort to revitalize the lagoon and estuary, which are intimately connected to our way of life,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. “This is a major step forward that will enable our federal partners to construct key water storage and water quality projects to benefit these two treasured natural resources.”

The new Project Partnership Agreement allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to progress with construction on the C-44 reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA), two priority water storage and water quality improvement components of the Indian River Lagoon South Phase 1 Project, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

The 3,400-acre reservoir and 6,300-acre STA will help capture, store and clean local stormwater runoff from Martin County's C-44 Basin before it flows into the estuary and ultimately the lagoon, which is central to the waterways' restoration. The District, with the help of Martin County, has acquired all the land, or 12,037 acres, for the C-44 project. The Corps plans to award the construction contract in February 2011.

"The Corps is looking forward to breaking ground on a project that will bring much needed relief to the Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie Estuary," said Stu Appelbaum, Army Corps Jacksonville District deputy for ecosystem restoration. "The region's economy is intrinsically linked to a healthy coastal ecosystem. More natural water flows and improved water quality will help in ways that range from protecting the very fragile lagoon and estuary to bolstering an economy that relies heavily on tourism."

Improving the quantity, quality and timing of freshwater deliveries to the lagoon and estuary with water storage and treatment will help accomplish a host of goals, including:

- Improving water quality from the C-44 drainage basin.
- Re-establishing natural pattern of freshwater flows.
- Improving habitat and increasing the diversity and abundance of native plant and animal species.
- Increasing water supply.
- Maintaining existing flood protection.
- Improving opportunities for tourism, recreation and environmental education.
- Enhancing commercial and recreational fisheries and associated industries.

The St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon are home to more than 4,000 species, including 35 species listed as endangered or threatened, making it the most diverse estuarine environment in North America. The lagoon supports a multitude of industries and activities, from fishing and recreation to tourism and agriculture. A study by the IRL National Estuary Program concluded that the economic benefits of the Indian River Lagoon totaled more than \$3.7 billion in 2007 alone.

Authorized by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, the IRL South Project was also made possible by the landmark August 2009 Master Agreement between the SFWMD and the Corps. Laying the groundwork for Everglades restoration for decades to come, the Master Agreement serves as an umbrella accord between the

state and federal partners that governs all CERP projects. In turn, each CERP project requires a Project Partnership Agreement. The Master Agreement was also an essential step necessary for the Corps to begin restoration construction with an initial infusion in 2009 of approximately \$115 million in congressional appropriations.

Project Partnership Agreements Supporting Restoration Projects:

The Indian River Lagoon Project Partnership Agreement represents the fifth Everglades restoration Project Partnership Agreement in recent months between the District and the Corps.

To date, the District and the Corps have signed Project Partnership Agreements that allowed construction to begin or continue on several projects to benefit South Florida's ecosystems, wildlife and residents, including:

- Ongoing restoration of 55,000 acres of wetlands in the Picayune Strand.
- Retaining clean water and improving habitat in the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge by constructing the Site 1 Impoundment Project (Fran Reich Preserve).
- Testing technology for preserving clean water in Everglades National Park with the L-31 N Seepage Management Pilot Project. If proven effective, technology developed during the pilot project will significantly benefit Everglades restoration and water quality improvement efforts in the park as well as beyond its boundaries.
- Constructing and operating a science facility to raise insects for use as biological controls to manage the spread of invasive exotic plant species such as melaleuca, *Lygodium* and Brazilian pepper under the Melaleuca Eradication and Other Exotic Plants – Implement Biological Controls Project.
- Improving water storage and water quality with the Indian River Lagoon South Phase 1 Project.

“Partnership agreements are necessary to construct projects that will improve water quality and provide meaningful restoration benefits to the Everglades and South Florida's ecosystems,” said Kenneth Ammon, P.E., SFWMD Deputy Executive Director - Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects. “This is an important step forward for the Indian River Lagoon and the host of other projects for which the state and federal partners now have signed agreements.”

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is a framework for restoring, protecting and preserving the water resources of central and southern Florida. CERP is a 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have invested approximately \$2.4 billion toward this effort, including approximately \$300 million in construction. Through June 30, 2010, 60 percent – or approximately 234,853 acres – of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired.

For more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov/everglades.

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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 water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.