



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 18, 2014

CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850-245-2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

DEP AWARDS \$3 MILLION FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER STORAGE

~Early Start construction will provide critical interim storage capacity~

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA – As South Florida’s ‘rainy season’ comes to a close, state and regional entities are getting a jump on critical projects designed to bolster water storage and treatment options throughout the region to better protect our water resources. Today, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded \$3 million to the South Florida Water Management District to fund the Early Start phase of the Caloosahatchee River West Basin Storage Reservoir, which will create up to 11,000 additional acre-feet of water storage in southwest Florida, or the equivalent of 5,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools. This storage can help mitigate the harmful effects of damaging high flows on the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

“It is critical we take full advantage now during the dry season to generate as much additional water storage and treatment capacity as we can in South Florida,” said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. “Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature understand this and that’s why they’ve dedicated resources to grow our storage footprint and protect the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.”

Part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project, commonly known as CERP, the Caloosahatchee River West Basin Storage Reservoir, or C-43 Reservoir, was designed to help protect the Caloosahatchee Estuary from the excessive freshwater flows that harm salt water dependent species. These extreme flows are generated by local stormwater runoff and Lake Okeechobee releases prevalent during the rainy season.

“The district and the state put a priority on increasing water storage to protect south Florida’s coastal estuaries,” said South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Blake Guillory. “This funding support from DEP allows us to do just that by beginning early construction work on the C-43 Reservoir that provides increased storage onsite to protect the Caloosahatchee Estuary.”

The Early Start phase of the C-43 Reservoir project focuses on specific elements that can be put in place in order to provide interim water storage until the full C-43 Reservoir can be completed. These elements include a temporary storage facility in

the southwest corner of the reservoir as well as demolition of necessary structures within the site's footprint and the construction of a small pump station and perimeter canal. When completed, the Early Start project will provide interim water storage to a depth of about 4 feet on approximately 3,500 acres of the full C-43 Reservoir project site.

"We must continue to be proactive in the protection of our environment and better prepare for the inevitability of rain in Southwest Florida," said Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto. "It's extremely important that we take every opportunity to provide adequate water storage here in Southwest Florida, and the Early Start project helps do just that."

"We can wait no longer to protect our river and estuary," said Representative Matthew Caldwell. "Our quality of life, our beautiful coastline and our local economy depends on the health and viability of the Caloosahatchee. Projects like Early Start help us ensure these ecological treasures are protected."

When completed, the C-43 Reservoir will help ensure a more natural, consistent flow of freshwater to the estuary. To restore and maintain the estuary during the dry season, the project will capture and store basin stormwater runoff, along with a portion of water discharged from Lake Okeechobee, and water will be slowly released into the Caloosahatchee, as needed. The release of water during the right time of year may also assist in maintaining optimal water flows and levels for the year-round health of the estuary and provide recreational benefits.

For more information about the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, click [here](#).

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida's environment and natural resources. The department enforces federal and state environmental laws, protects Florida's air and water quality, cleans up pollution, regulates solid waste management, promotes pollution prevention, and acquires environmentally sensitive lands for preservation. The agency also maintains a statewide system of parks, trails and aquatic preserves. To view the department's website log on to www.dep.state.fl.us.

<http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/dd4b1d>