



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

July 29, 2013

CONTACT:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

www.sfwmd.gov/news

follow us on 

SFWMD Takes Action to Store Water Headed to Caloosahatchee Estuary *Emergency operation at restoration site is part of a broad effort to store water*



The SFWMD installed a temporary pump at the C-43 site in Hendry County to help capture flows from Lake Okeechobee.

Fort Myers, FL – With Lake Okeechobee’s water level continuing to rise from months of above-average rainfall, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is again taking emergency action to capture water from the Caloosahatchee River to reduce freshwater impacts on the downstream estuary.

“Creating storage to capture flows from the rapidly rising lake is crucial to the health of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Mitch Hutchcraft, who represents the Southwest Coast at large. “Every acre we can identify and utilize to hold water benefits the river, the estuary and the system as a whole.”

As part of the District’s sustained effort to identify opportunities for storage, water will be pumped onto the site of the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir, a future Everglades restoration project in Hendry County. Emergency operations will occur as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues discharging water from the lake to the river for flood control and protection of the Herbert Hoover Dike.

This site was identified and successfully utilized in 2012 for the same purpose. Building on that effort, the District has continued to store water, which would have otherwise flowed to the estuary, on the property.

All necessary permits and authorizations have been obtained from partners such as the Corps, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Hendry County to pump additional water onto 3,500 acres at the site as conditions allow. Overall capacity to capture flows from the river is dependent on how much rain falls in the immediate area.

The District was successful in pumping 9,000 acre-feet of water onto the site following heavy rainfall from Tropical Storm Isaac in 2012.

District engineers designed the emergency project, which was accomplished by Clewiston Field Station crews installing two 42-inch temporary pumps that could move 300 cubic feet per second from a tributary of the river.

Existing infrastructure on the property, plus pumping coordination with the LaBelle Private Drainage District, allowed the water to be pumped into the area during the operation from Oct. 13, 2012, through Nov. 29, 2012.

Dispersed Water Management Program

Since 2005, the District has been working with a coalition of agencies, environmental organizations, ranchers and researchers to enhance opportunities for storing excess surface water on private, tribal and public lands.

Managing water on these lands, known as the Dispersed Water Management Program, is one tool to reduce the amount of water delivered during the wet season into the lake and discharged to coastal estuaries for flood protection. Shallow water retention also provides valuable groundwater recharge for water supply, opportunities for water quality improvement and rehydration of drained systems.

Through a combination of public and private projects:

- Approximately 61,261 acre-feet of storage has been created through the Dispersed Water Management Program since 2005.
- An additional 72,000 acre-feet of storage has been created through regional public facilities, including reservoirs, restoration projects and Stormwater Treatment Areas.



(Click on the map for a larger version.)

Caloosahatchee Watershed Projects (Storage capacity, in Acre-Feet)

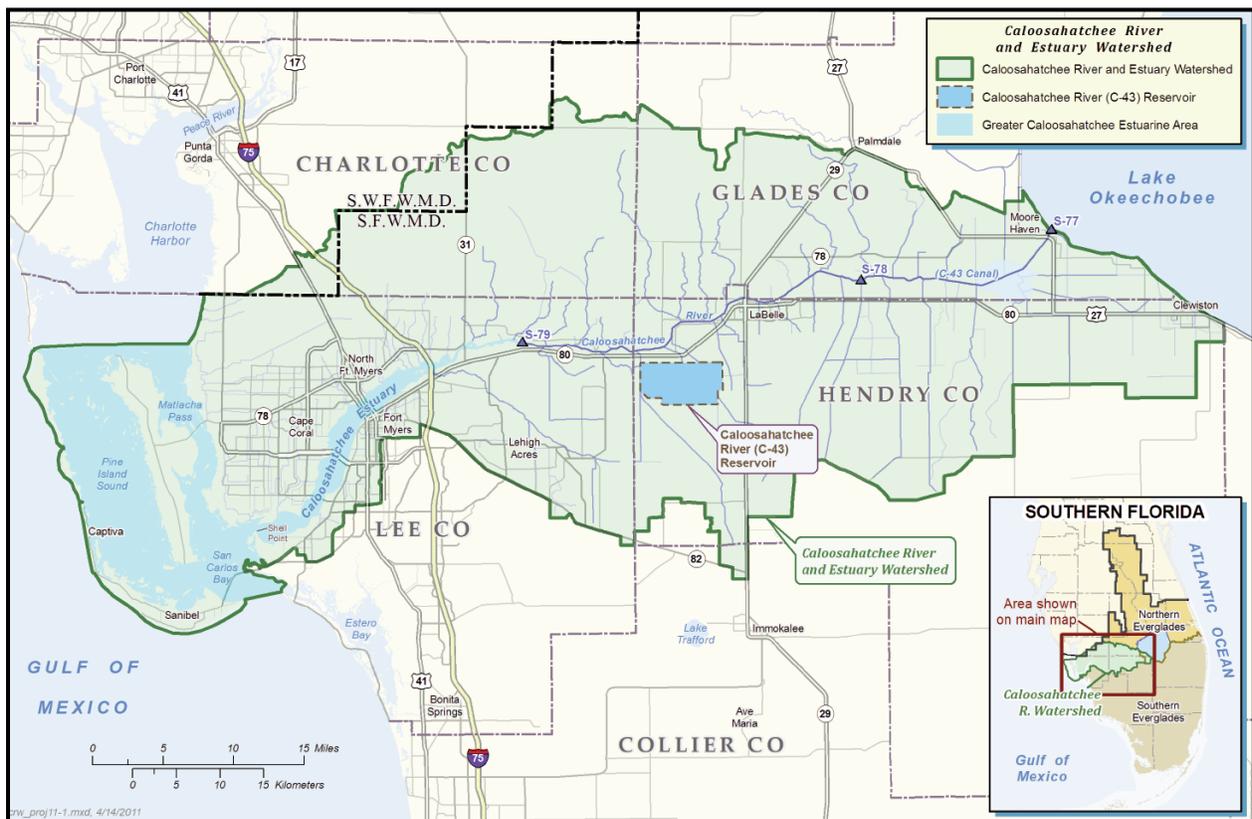
- Boma: 858
 - Mirror Lakes: 1,000
 - Six Mile Cypress Preserve: 1,400*
 - Barron WCD: 5,000
 - Nicodemus Slough: 34,000*
- *In design/permitting stage*

C-43 Background

The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Storage Basin Reservoir, located on former farmland west of LaBelle, is a key project in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. When the restoration project is complete, the reservoir will hold approximately 170,000 acre-feet of water, with maximum depths ranging from 15 feet to 25 feet across the expanse. The restoration project will provide storage needed for the estuary by capturing and storing local basin runoff as well as Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases.

This will reduce lake discharges reaching the estuary, improve the health of the Caloosahatchee ecosystem and revitalize fish and oyster habitats by reducing the frequency of undesirable salinity ranges. Releases of water from the reservoir during the dry season will provide essential flows, resulting in improved salinity balance, survival of young fish and shellfish and improved ecological health.

For more information, click on the map below:



###

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.