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just the **FACTs**

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in south Florida.

Northern Everglades and Estuary Protection Program *Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan*

Underscoring the State of Florida's commitment to restoring the greater Everglades ecosystem, the Florida Legislature in 2007 expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to include protection and restoration of the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries. The law required the Coordinating Agencies, including the South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in cooperation with Lee and Martin counties and other affected municipalities, to develop the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plans. The River Watershed Protection Plans were submitted to the Florida Legislature on January 1, 2009. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan was completed in February 2008.

- The Coordinating Agencies and working team evaluated various alternatives using best available tools and scientific information. The development and comparison of the alternatives- along with extensive input from the public- ultimately identified the best-science based and technologically- feasible options for improving ecosystem health in the Caloosahatchee River Watershed.
- The Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan includes three components: a Construction Project, a Pollutant Control Program, and a Research and Water Quality Monitoring program.
- The Construction Project and Pollutant Control Program includes water quality projects, along with agricultural and urban best management practices (BMPs), to maximize nutrient loading reductions to meet Total Maximum Daily Loads as they are established for the Caloosahatchee River Estuary. In addition, it includes water storage projects for improving quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the estuary and to re-establish salinity regimes suitable for maintaining a healthy, naturally diverse and well-balanced estuarine ecosystem.
- The Research and Water Quality Monitoring Plan describes the current state of knowledge regarding hydrology, water quality, aquatic habitat and effects of Lake Okeechobee on delivery of water to the Caloosahatchee River estuary. It builds upon the existing monitoring, research, and modeling efforts and makes recommendations and modifications to these efforts to better achieve and assess the water quality and quantity targets of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan.
- When completed and approved, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan will be implemented using a phased approach. Phase I will include projects initiated or constructed between 2009 and 2012 followed by Phase 2 including projects initiated between 2013 and 2018. The Long Term Implementation Phase will include projects initiated beyond 2018.

- Benefits of the multi-phased Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan include:
 - Implementation of BMPs on more than 430,288 acres of agricultural lands and 145,000 acres of urban lands;
 - Completing Environmental Resource Permit and 40E-61 Regulatory Nutrient Source Control Program rule revisions to better protect water quality and reduce discharge volumes;
 - Construction of approximately 36,000 acres of reservoirs and 15,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas and Water Quality Treatment Areas;
 - The potential for reducing total phosphorus and total nitrogen loads to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary by 166 mt/yr (39%) and 1,840 mt/yr (38%), respectively;
 - Restoring more than 2,000 acres of wetlands within the Caloosahatchee River watershed;
 - Providing approximately 400,000 acre-feet of water storage within the Caloosahatchee River watershed.

- Subject to ratification by the Florida Legislature, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan builds upon existing and planned programs and projects, and successfully consolidates previous restoration efforts into a broader approach focused on restoring the entire Northern Everglades system.

- To view the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan, visit <https://my.sfwmd.gov/northerneverglades>