



Florida Department of Environmental Protection



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GOVERNOR SCOTT AND DEP ANNOUNCE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECTS WILL MOVE FORWARD

~ DEP issues permits, consent orders ~



Projects to benefit America's Everglades will include additional stormwater treatment area acreage and flow equalization basins.

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Rick Scott announces that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection issued final permits and consent orders to the South Florida Water Management District authorizing the operation and maintenance of existing stormwater treatment areas and requiring the construction and operation of treatment area expansions and water storage features as part of the historic plan designed to improve water quality in the Everglades. DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. signed the permits Monday, following a 21-day administrative period.

"This plan is an historic step forward in restoring America's Everglades," said Governor Scott. "This plan will result in significant water quality improvements to the Everglades without raising or creating new costs for Floridians."

Last October, Governor Scott directed Secretary Vinyard and South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker to work collaboratively with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to expand water quality improvement projects necessary to achieve the ultra-low state water quality standard established for the Everglades.

"Governor Scott made this historic plan a priority. And because of his leadership, we are addressing a long-standing environmental problem," Vinyard said. "In less than a year, Florida developed an economically feasible plan that sets us on a landmark path to solve water quality issues in the Everglades."

This plan to improve water quality builds upon Florida's \$1.8 billion investment in Everglades water quality improvements to achieve the 10 parts per billion ambient water quality standard for the Everglades Protection Area. The schedule for implementing new projects balances economic realities with engineering, permitting, science and construction limitations. The plan proposes to utilize a combination of state and district revenues to complete the projects.

After the Department was notified in June by EPA that a proposed National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and associated consent order satisfied EPA's previous objections, the Department began the administrative process to issue both a federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and a state Everglades Forever Act permit with associated consent orders. On Aug. 9, water management district staff presented the projects to the district's Governing Board, which approved the projects, paving the way for the 21-day period, which ended Thursday. During that period, parties had the option of petitioning the permits.

The Department's permits and consent orders include milestones for project completion, as well as enforcement mechanisms to ensure the milestones are met. The plan calls for 6,500 acres of state-of-the-art stormwater treatment areas and close to 110,000 acre-feet of associated water storage. Core project components will be designed, constructed and operational within six years.

"This step is an important milestone in our significant and unprecedented progress to restore the Everglades. The South Florida Water Management District is grateful for Governor Scott's leadership in setting us on a clear path toward resolution of this decades-long water quality challenge," Meeker said. "With a science-based plan and state oversight, the District is well positioned to construct this comprehensive suite of remedies that promises to bring lasting protection to America's Everglades."

Highlights of the water quality improvement strategies include:

- State-issued and enforceable Everglades Forever Act and Clean Water Act permits, including stringent discharge limits, for each of the District's stormwater treatment areas. Design, construction and completion of 90 percent (99,000 acre-feet) of the required associated storage within four years. Capable of storing 32 billion gallons of water, storage areas known as Flow Equalization

Basins will be located adjacent to existing stormwater treatment areas in the Everglades. This advanced combination of “green” technologies will better optimize water deliveries to new and existing treatment facilities, allowing water managers to treat runoff to extremely low levels of phosphorus.

- Doubling the size of Stormwater Treatment Area 1-West adjacent to the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The District will construct 4,700 acres of additional treatment by 2018 and start construction on another 1,800 acres that same year. This expansion spanning ten square miles will increase by 50 percent the treatment capacity of water quality facilities currently discharging into the refuge.
- Improving treatment in the western Everglades by adding 11,000 acre-feet of associated storage in the C-139 Basin that is capable of storing 3.5 billion gallons of water.
- Improving the operation of existing treatment wetlands in the western Everglades by retrofitting 800 acres of constructed wetlands in Stormwater Treatment Area 5.
- A robust science plan to ensure continued biological, ecological and operational research to improve and optimize the performance of water quality treatment technologies. The District’s constructed wetlands and flow equalization basins utilize cutting-edge science and engineering and are the largest of their kind in the nation.
- Utilizing thousands of acres of land already in public ownership, which minimizes impacts to Florida’s agricultural-based economy and accelerates construction of new projects.
- Regional source controls in areas of the eastern Everglades where phosphorus levels in runoff has been historically higher.
- Creation of approximately 1,550 direct jobs and 15,350 indirect jobs through construction of these facilities.

To reduce nutrient pollution to the Everglades and achieve state and federal water quality requirements, the District constructed massive treatment wetlands known as stormwater treatment areas that use plants to naturally remove phosphorus from water flowing into the Everglades. State law also requires best management practices on the 640,000 acres of agricultural land south of Lake Okeechobee.

More than 45,000 acres — or 70 square miles — of treatment areas are today operational and treating water to average phosphorus levels of less than 40 parts per billion and as low as 12 parts per billion. The District this summer completed construction of an additional 11,500 acres, which are now operational. Together with best farming practices, stormwater treatment areas have prevented more than 3,800 tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades since 1994. This past year, the treatment wetlands treated 735,000 acre-feet of water and reduced the total phosphorus loads to the Everglades Protection Area by 79 percent.

Copies of the permits and consent orders are available on the Department's [website](#).

More background on Everglades restoration projects are available on the [DEP Online Newsroom](#).

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the state's principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida's environment and natural resources. DEP 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 DEP's Web site log on to www.dep.state.fl.us.

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