



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

OPINION

November 7, 2011

Scientific Monitoring Continues to Guide Restoration Efforts at SFWMD

To the Editor:

A more streamlined, mission-focused budget at the South Florida Water Management District will continue to deliver progress in Everglades restoration without abandoning the science that supports it, as some critics fear. In streamlining operations and returning the agency to its core mission of flood control, water supply and ecosystem restoration, the District is, appropriately, assessing the scope of science, research and monitoring at the agency.

Science has an important role in our work. In fact, over the past six years we have invested more than \$250 million in the monitoring and assessment of South Florida's ecosystem and flood control system. To gather water quality information alone, the District annually collects samples from close to 2,000 monitoring stations and runs more than 300,000 laboratory tests. To evaluate water flow, we gather data from 4,500 sensors at more than 500 sites throughout the greater Everglades.

The District has committed more than \$32 million for the coming year on monitoring throughout the Everglades to produce data that will be helpful to restoration projects. This funding is further enhanced by significant investments made by other government, academic and environmental organizations for monitoring and assessment in the Everglades.

As a partner in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the District also specifically finances a Monitoring and Assessment Program, in which we have invested \$75 million over ten years together with our federal partners. While some good information has come out of this dedicated science effort, it was based on an assumed CERP implementation schedule and designed to assess both pre-restoration project conditions and environmental response after project construction. We now have in-hand more than a decade of pre-project data, plus the knowledge that some of the data being collected is not as applicable to restoration objectives as originally thought.

As CERP projects become authorized by Congress and construction a reality, we can verify the level of pre-project data and refocus our monitoring efforts on measuring the response of the ecosystem to implemented restoration projects. In the meantime, it's incumbent upon state, federal and local partners to reevaluate the MAP program and

ensure our available resources are invested wisely. Most important, we must strike the right balance between allocating taxpayer dollars toward monitoring the environment and building the projects that will improve it.

Melissa Meeker
Executive Director
South Florida Water Management District