



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## OPINION

April 18, 2012

### **SFWMD Keeps East Coast Protective Levee Performing Critical Flood Control Function**

For almost 60 years, the East Coast Protective Levee has provided flood protection for residents and businesses in western Broward, Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties. Over its life span, this system of levees and water control structures has withstood the forces of nature during both high winds and heavy rainfall, enduring many tropical storms and hurricanes. As the agency responsible for maintaining the levee, the South Florida Water Management District is working to ensure it offers the same level of service for another 60 years.

Annual inspections conducted jointly by the District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – which built South Florida’s network of earthen levees in the 1950s and 1960s – consistently indicate that the 105-mile-long levee is performing as intended. Over the years, the District has made improvements to specific stretches of the levee to address maintenance items identified by these regular inspections.

In the past three years alone, the District has invested \$3.8 million in this routine maintenance, which is part of a broader program of infrastructure improvements for the regional water management system. We have set aside another \$4.7 million in the current fiscal year for this work, a significant investment in the levee’s ongoing maintenance.

As noted in recent media coverage, we are actively responding to a pair of federal evaluations relating to the condition of the East Coast Protective Levee.

The District has already addressed a number of maintenance issues identified by the Corps as part of their recently initiated nationwide levee inspection program. These include removal of unwanted vegetation and erosion repairs on some portions of the levee.

At Broward County’s request, the District is also working to provide documentation on the East Coast Protective Levee to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a routine update of National Flood Insurance Program maps. Current FEMA maps recognize the 38-mile Broward section as an accredited levee that provides protection from a flood with a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. By May 2014, we will submit documentation to show the levee still meets those high standards.

Through these efforts, the East Coast Protective Levee will continue to safeguard South Florida's most populated areas for many decades to come.

*Tommy Strowd*

*Director, Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division*

*South Florida Water Management District*