



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## OPINION

October 8, 2012

### **SFWMD Continues Improving Land Resource Management**

The South Florida Water Management District is the largest land owner in South Florida. Over the course of several decades, our land acquisitions have been made to support flood control infrastructure, protect South Florida's water resources and restore the region's impaired ecosystems.

With more than 1.4 million acres in hand, we are today focused on comprehensively evaluating each parcel to assure its most effective use for Florida's taxpayers. Many properties will continue to serve their intended purpose. Others may be leased until needed for project construction, swapped for lands in more critical locations or leveraged to gain the resources needed to carry out restoration work.

To achieve this, we have made significant improvements in our acquisition and land management programs over the past year. Aided by an extensive database of our inventory, we are conducting a comprehensive assessment of all District lands, scheduled for completion next year. Other enhancements already in place include:

- Updating the agricultural lease policy, providing for greater transparency and public access.
- Organizational changes that better align real estate, land stewardship and land management functions.
- Website posting of land-related documents, including a searchable database of leased lands.
- Updated protocols, with increased public involvement, for leasing and surplus lands not immediately needed for project purposes.

These steps reflect our implementation of Governor Scott's direction to focus District-wide on reviewing and improving the agency's business, administration and operational practices. We fully recognize the significant financial investment of taxpayer dollars in its public lands. Managing these lands prudently, effectively and in public view is our ongoing commitment.

*Melissa L. Meeker  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District*