



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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1961-1969: A New Era of Development



(Click on picture for larger version.)

By 1963, sections of the Everglades are divided into three Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) to help retain rainfall that will supply most of the fresh water for the growing coastal population. Pictured are officials at the dedication of WCA-3 at one of the S-12 spillways.

West Palm Beach, FL — As part of its ongoing celebration of 60 years of public service, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) this month is looking back at the 1960s, an active period for project construction and population growth in the region.

Still known as the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District (FCD), the agency's boundaries were expanded by 135 miles through state legislation in 1960 to

include the Shingle and Boggy Creek watersheds at the headwaters of the Kissimmee River.

Floods in the 1950s underscored the inclusion of the Kissimmee region as part of the federal Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project, a massive system of flood control works designed to harness and control water flow across a 16,000-square-mile area. From 1962 to 1971, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers transformed the 103-mile-long, meandering Kissimmee River into a 56-mile-long, 30-foot-deep canal. The completed Kissimmee Waterway, which included six locks adjacent to major water control structures, made it much easier for boaters to navigate.

During the 1960s, the remnant Everglades was also divided into three Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) ringed by levees to control water levels, separating natural areas from more developed coastal urban areas. To this day, the massive WCAs help recharge underlying aquifers, the underground rock layers that hold water and serve as the primary source for drinking water supplies.

Other C&SF Project construction was under way during the same period on:

- Kissimmee Chain of Lakes canals and structures
- Expansion of the Lake Okeechobee dike system
- Lake Okeechobee pump stations
- Caloosahatchee River improvements, including Franklin Lock and Dam
- New coastal canals in Miami-Dade, Broward, Martin and St. Lucie counties

All the construction and modernization attracted attention to South Florida, especially from retirees from the Northeast and Midwest, who began leaving the snow behind to claim a slice of paradise. To accommodate the population growth, developers created new suburbs in remote locations at a record pace, with plots often selling sight unseen.

The 1960s also marked the beginning of a commitment by the FCD to ensuring public access to public lands, which has continued with the modern SFWMD. During the decade, the Governing Board established several recreation sites and formed a number of recreational committees with local governments and other agencies.

By 1969, the Flood Control District had been in existence for 20 years. Construction of the federal works project that the FCD was established to operate was only half finished, but studies indicated that the completed facilities had already prevented \$194 million in damage during major floods alone. Benefits from increased land use brought the estimated accrued benefits of the project to more than \$500 million.

For more information on the history of the District, please visit www.sfwmd.gov throughout the year.

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About the South Florida Water Management District – [Celebrating 60 Years \(1949-2009\)](#)

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.