



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Southern Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Restoration Takes Another Step Forward**

*SFWMD to acquire a parcel of land to help complete the restoration footprint*

**West Palm Beach FL** – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board on Thursday approved the purchase of an additional tract of land to restore the Southern Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed, known as CREW, continuing its commitment to the important project in Southwest Florida.

“Acquiring this land adds another important tract to further restore a vital ecosystem,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Charles Dauray. “We are committed to this effort and will continue moving forward with Lee County, other agencies and the public to complete this significant environmental project.”

The investment of \$260,000 for 13 acres east of Interstate 75 adds to the more than 3,700 acres of strategic land the District has successfully acquired to restore 4,000 acres north of Bonita Beach Road and upstream of the Kehl Canal Weir.

When completed, the restoration project will provide significant benefits to the ecosystem including:

- Restoring wetlands and the natural sheetflow of water.
- Improving regional flood protection and improving drainage.
- Increasing water storage and aquifer recharge capability.
- Reducing the flow of fertilizer, pesticide and septic pollution into the Imperial River.
- Restoring wetlands.

Water once flowed freely across the pristine landscape of what is now Bonita Springs in Lee County. Historic water sheetflow in the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed was later blocked by dirt roads, agricultural ditches and several home sites. This altered the ecosystem and contributed to flooding in residential and other areas. Floods in 1995

led the District to develop the Southern CREW Restoration Project to restore the ecosystem while protecting area residents and their properties.

During the last 15 years, the District acquired approximately 3,700 acres, cleared exotic vegetation from 2,560 acres, removed roads and plugged agricultural ditches in 640 acres. As of January 2009, the District has invested \$27.4 million to conserve the lands, with the U.S. Department of the Interior contributing another \$7 million to the restoration effort.

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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.*