



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Picayune Strand Restoration Continues Forward

Agreement allows successful ecosystem restoration to take the next steps



West Palm Beach, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board recently took another significant step for Everglades restoration, approving an agreement with the State of Florida that formally authorizes the use of state-owned land for ecosystem restoration and wildlife protection within the Picayune Strand.

“The Picayune Strand is already a proven Everglades restoration success,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Charles Dauray. “This cooperative agreement with the State of Florida allows us to continue with that success and bring the project closer to completion.”

The cooperative agreement provides the District and its restoration partner, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with the formal approval necessary to proceed with planned construction of restoration projects on approximately 55,000 acres within the Picayune Strand State Preserve. The State of Florida has invested approximately \$150 million to purchase the necessary acreage in Southwest Florida as part of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

(CERP). In 2009, the Corps received \$65 million in Congressional appropriations for construction of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project.

The agreement also allows the District to receive credit for the State's expenditures toward fulfilling its 50 percent cost-share obligation under the Picayune Strand Project Partnership Agreement with the U.S. Department of the Army.

"Strong partnerships remain a key to successful Picayune Strand and Everglades restoration," Dauray said. "This agreement is the foundation on which to continue work that will provide lasting benefits to our ecosystem and our residents."

The agreement came two months after the Governing Board approved the first-ever water reservation for America's Everglades, guaranteeing water for the Picayune Strand restoration. A water reservation is a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or public health and safety as set forth in Section 373.223(4) of the Florida Statutes. When a water reservation is in place, volumes and timing of water at specific locations are protected for the natural system ahead of consumptive uses, such as new development.

Located north of Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Southwest coast, the Picayune Strand was drained in the 1960s for a failed real estate development. Road construction and canal excavations reduced aquifer storage, increased freshwater discharges to estuaries in the Ten Thousand Islands, disrupted native plant communities and increased the frequency of wildfires.

In October 2003, Florida began restoring the Picayune Strand as a part of CERP. The restoration project is restoring surface water flow to vital wetlands to ensure that wetland plants and animals thrive, including the endangered Florida panther, and to improve the Ten Thousand Islands estuaries. Expected benefits also include a more natural pattern of fires and improved aquifer recharge.

Construction features on the approximately 55,000-acre project include removing or degrading more than 260 miles of roads, installing three pump stations, backfilling and plugging 40 miles of canals and distributing overland flows via spreader canals.

Progress to date includes:

- Investing approximately \$150 million to place in public ownership 55,000 acres
- Filling and plugging 7 miles of the Prairie Canal
- Completing 25 percent of the road removal necessary for restoration
- Restoring 13,000 acres of natural habitat
- Removing structures, facilities and debris from the area, including tires, asphalt, concrete and vehicles

- Completing 100 percent of the design plans and permitting for the project's restoration elements and pump stations

For more information on the Picayune Strand Restoration Project, please visit the District's Web site at www.sfwmd.gov.

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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.