



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Water Managers Acquire Land Interests to Restore Biscayne Bay** *Acquisition of easements moves Everglades restoration forward*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — Laying the groundwork for a restoration project that will improve freshwater flows into Biscayne Bay, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board recently approved acquisition of 90 acres of coastal land interests from Miami-Dade County and a Florida land trust. The acquisition — specifically for construction, operation and flow easements — supports the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), a state-federal partnership for ecosystem restoration.

“Biscayne Bay is one of Florida’s most unique and fragile coastal areas, yet it lies close to an expansive urban area,” said Eric Buermann, SFWMD Governing Board Chairman. “Improving water flow into wetlands along its shoreline will improve natural habitat and coastal water quality, plus provide an educational site for visitors and residents alike.”

Miami-Dade County and the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida granted the easements to the District for the environmental restoration project. In addition, the Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Department is coordinating with the District to include an educational component for the property. Landscaping is partially complete and will be finalized as part of project construction.

The acquisition will be used for construction and operation of a canal extension, pump station and flow structure to be built on a 10-acre segment. Water will then flow across 80 acres located on a portion of the 400-acre Deering Estate property, an environmental, archeological and historical preserve. When complete, the project will redistribute excess freshwater runoff from the watershed, directing it away from existing canal discharges and spreading it out as sheet flow prior to discharging into Biscayne Bay. The result will be healthier coastal wetlands and a more natural and historic overland flow of water to the coast.

This effort is the first phase of a comprehensive project to help restore the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of fresh water into Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park. Improved freshwater flow and salinity distribution near the shore also will help re-establish productive nursery habitat for shrimp and shellfish.

Everglades restoration is a key mission of the South Florida Water Management District. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan provides a framework and guide to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of central and southern Florida. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have appropriated \$2.4 billion toward this effort. Through March 31, 2009, 58.85 percent, or 230,191 acres, of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired. For more information, visit [www.sfwmd.gov/everglades](http://www.sfwmd.gov/everglades).

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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.*