



November 19, 2009

CONTACT:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

www.sfwmd.gov/news

follow us on 

Next Phase of *River of Grass* Restoration Public Planning Begins

West Palm Beach, FL — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board has approved taking the next step in the public planning process for Everglades restoration on land being acquired from the United States Sugar Corporation. The second phase of planning involves the in-depth analysis of data generated during 15 project planning workshops to determine the most beneficial restoration project features.

“The extensive public participation so far in this planning process is helping to ensure that the U.S. Sugar property can provide maximum benefit to America’s Everglades, South Florida’s environment and residents,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “The public input will help us move forward with this opportunity to restore the Everglades on a scale never before envisioned.”

The first phase in evaluating conceptual project configurations began in January 2009 with a series of SFWMD Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) Issues Workshops. A broad range of agricultural, environmental, governmental, tribal and public interests came together with the goal of determining viable configurations for constructing a managed system of water storage and treatment to support ecosystem restoration.

Working collaboratively with SFWMD engineers and hydrologists, the stakeholders generated nine conceptual configurations identifying specific water storage, water quality treatment and conveyance features. Each configuration was evaluated for its performance in meeting Everglades restoration goals.

“The public process is a critical component of the District’s efforts to maximize the environmental benefits offered by this historic acquisition,” said Ken Ammon, SFWMD Deputy Executive Director of Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects. “Acquiring this land offers water managers the unprecedented opportunity to protect Florida’s

coastal rivers and estuaries while improving the delivery of cleaner water and reducing phosphorus deliveries from entering America's Everglades."

The second phase of the public planning process seeks to build on the work done so far by achieving several goals, including:

- Identifying the best performing features from the nine configurations.
- Developing optimized configurations based upon the best performing features.
- Refining evaluation tools to better test the performance of the optimized configurations.
- Utilizing all data collected to develop preferred/recommended conceptual plans for consideration by the SFWMD Governing Board.

Phase II began with an Everglades Science Workshop hosted by the District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) this week. The forum reviewed the latest science associated with hydrologic stage and flow targets and presented modeling results and ecological data that support restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem.

The next *River of Grass* public planning meeting of the WRAC Issues Workshop will be held on December 18 in West Palm Beach. For more information about the project planning process and the acquisition, visit www.sfwmd.gov/riverofgrass.

#

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.