



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACTS:

Randy Smith

South Florida Water Management District
Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386

Amy Graham

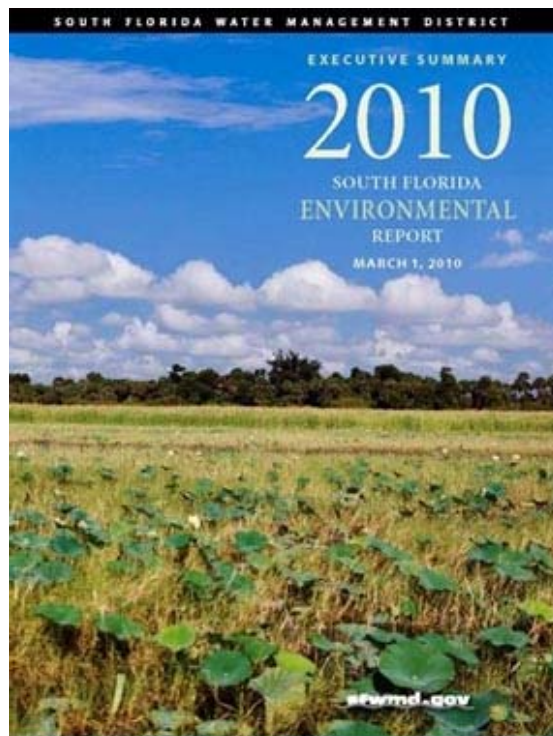
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Office: (850) 245-2085 or Cellular: (850) 778-7258

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South Florida Environmental Report Highlights Restoration Progress, State of the Ecosystem

State-federal restoration partnerships, land acquisition opportunities help define the year



(Click on an image to view the report.)

West Palm Beach, FL — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today released the **2010 South Florida Environmental Report** detailing a year of restoration, scientific and engineering successes in the Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades and

South Florida coastal areas. The 2010 report marks the 12th year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies.

“Each year, the State of Florida and the District work to support and strengthen the commitment to sound stewardship of the environment on behalf of more than 7.5 million residents. This commitment includes restoring ecosystems such as America’s Everglades throughout 16 counties,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “This year’s significant accomplishments are assembled in the report to provide citizens with a comprehensive look inside South Florida’s unique environment.”

The **2010 South Florida Environmental Report** spans two volumes comprising more than 50 individual reports. The illustrated volumes, including a 44-page executive summary, provide extensive research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects. The report covers environmental information for Water Year 2009 (May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009) and project/budgetary information for Fiscal Year 2009 (October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009).

"Protecting and restoring South Florida’s distinct ecosystems help preserve our way of life here in the Sunshine State," said FDEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "This year’s myriad of accomplishments demonstrates our steadfast restoration commitment, and we will work to continue the momentum with an eye on the future."

The 2010 report highlights state-federal partnership agreements between the SFWMD Governing Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that lay critical groundwork for Everglades restoration for decades to come. These agreements allow federally funded work to move forward on key Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects, such as the Picayune Strand restoration, which broke ground earlier this year.

The State and the District also continue to pursue a historic opportunity to broaden Everglades restoration on a scale never before envisioned. In 2009, the Governing Board approved a contract to acquire 73,000 acres of strategic lands to benefit the *River of Grass*, with options to purchase an additional 107,000 acres in the future.

Additional findings documented in the 2010 report:

- **Wading bird nesting records lofty year.** In 2009, the estimated number of wading bird nests in South Florida was nearly 80,000. As the largest nesting effort recorded in the region since the 1940s, this year’s significant increase is more than four times greater than the last breeding season and surpasses the previous record year, 2002, by approximately 11,000 nests.
- **Improving water quality.** The existing 45,000 acres of effective Stormwater Treatment Areas treated about 1.1 million acre-feet of runoff water in Water Year 2009. Since 1994, constructed wetlands and agricultural Best Management

Practices have together prevented more than 3,200 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades Protection Area. Construction on an additional 12,000 acres of valuable treatment marshes is under way.

- **Lake Okeechobee continues rebound.** Lake Okeechobee continues to show signs of recovery from the enduring impacts of the 2004–2005 hurricanes, including lower nearshore turbidity, more submerged aquatic vegetation beds and no severe algal blooms.

"Successful restoration is predicated on strong science, technology and data, which are detailed in the *2010 South Florida Environmental Report*," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "A world-class staff and the continued application of solid science will help us ensure continued future success."

The *2010 South Florida Environmental Report* is available online at www.sfwmd.gov/sfer.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

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.