



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

March 11, 2010

CONTACT:

Randy Smith

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-6197 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386



Health of Biscayne Bay Chief Focus of Cutler Land Buy
Rare opportunity for waterfront acquisition benefits coastal restoration

West Palm Beach, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board today approved an acquisition of 130 acres of waterfront property in Miami-Dade County that will improve water quality in Biscayne Bay, enhance shoreline habitat and restore seagrasses, fish, shellfish and wildlife along Florida’s southeast coast and in Biscayne National Park.

“This tract of land supports a major Everglades restoration initiative – the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project,” said Eric Buermann, SFWMD Governing Board Chairman. “There’s simply no substitute in a coastal restoration effort – waterfront land is essential for projects that will protect and improve fragile shoreline environments.”

The Cutler property was originally part of a proposed residential development adjacent to Biscayne Bay, which is home to Biscayne National Park and a vast array of natural habitats and wildlife found nowhere else in the United States. The proposed development site is within the footprint of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project,

one of the key, expedited projects in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Restoration project construction involves a spreader canal and two flow-ways, located at Deering Estate and Cutler Ridge, to better distribute fresh water flowing to the coast. These will expand and restore wetlands adjacent to Biscayne Bay and deliver additional benefits:

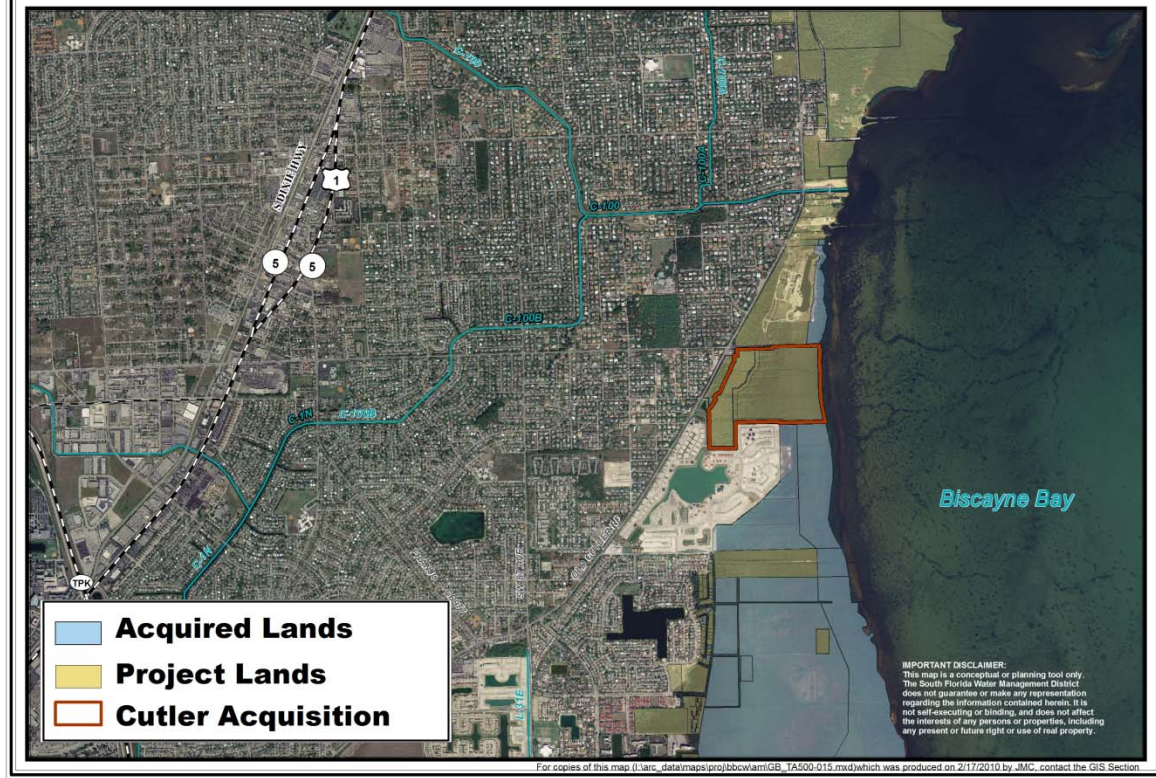
- Restore the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of fresh water to Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park
- Improve salinity distribution near the shoreline, which will re-establish productive nursery habitat for shrimp and shellfish
- Capture, treat and redistribute freshwater runoff from the watershed into Biscayne Bay, creating more natural water deliveries
- Expand spatial extent and connectivity of coastal wetlands
- Provide improved recreational opportunities in Biscayne Bay and adjacent wetlands

Today's acquisition agreement dates to a 2005 application the District received for an environmental resources permit from a development group, Cutler Bay Properties, proposing a waterfront residential development. Exercising its authority to protect regional water resources and regulate activities that could impact wetlands, the District evaluated the application and its potential impacts to the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP project. Harmful impacts were identified, but negotiations with the developer to modify the development's design were unsuccessful.

After years of stalled discussion, public ownership of the waterfront property was negotiated with Cutler Bay Properties, avoiding potentially lengthy legal proceedings and uncertainty associated with a jury trial. A preliminary agreement for the \$24.5 million acquisition was accepted by the SFWMD Governing Board last month, and today's Board action approves the acquisition contract. Closing is scheduled for later this month.

The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, contributes to the goal of restoring, protecting and preserving the water resources of central and southern Florida. CERP is a 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have invested approximately \$2.4 billion toward this effort, including approximately \$300 million in construction. Through December 31, 2009, 60 percent — or approximately 233,277 acres — of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired.

BISCAYNE BAY COASTAL WETLANDS - CUTLER PROPERTIES



For more information about Everglades restoration, visit www.sfwmd.gov.

###

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.