



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Scientists Fish for Facts About Wading Bird Foraging in the Everglades**  
*SFWMD supports continuing Florida Atlantic University research vital to restoring wading bird nesting colonies*



*(Click on the picture for a larger version.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board recently approved continuing support for a unique study that is helping scientists protect and restore wading bird colonies in the Everglades. The ongoing study is being conducted by biologists at Florida Atlantic University.

“Wading birds are the iconic image of the Everglades, and they tell us a great deal about the overall health of the ecosystem,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “This study will help provide the science necessary to make sound ecosystem management and restoration decisions as we move forward.”

The Governing Board’s investment of \$978,500 allows the study to continue for another five years and helps the District meet an objective of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which calls for restoring nesting colonies of wading birds in the Everglades.

Conducted by the university's Dr. Dale Gawlik, the goal of the study is to gain an understanding of how dry season hydrologic patterns across the landscape affect fish concentrations and corresponding bird foraging. By determining optimal water depth to increase the availability of fish, water managers may be able to make operational changes to water levels that better support and increase the success of wading bird populations, while continuing to meet water supply, flood control and other environmental needs.

The study involves sampling fish and invertebrates throughout freshwater marshes located within Everglades National Park boundaries, the eastern portion of the Big Cypress National Preserve, the littoral zone of Lake Okeechobee, the Pal-Mar and J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area and the Water Conservation Areas.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is a framework for 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 \$600 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.

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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.*