



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD, Port St. Lucie Partner to Improve Water Quality for Howard Creek

Agreement is part of a larger project that will also alleviate flooding in the area

West Palm Beach, FL — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board recently approved an agreement with the City of Port St. Lucie to construct a 19-acre treatment wetland adjacent to Howard Creek. The treatment wetland is a component of a larger project designed to improve environmental water quality and alleviate flooding in a heavily urbanized drainage basin that flows into the North Fork of the St. Lucie River.

“The District has consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving the health of the St. Lucie River for the residents and wildlife that depend on it,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers, who represents St. Lucie County. “This agreement will further that goal while contributing to a project that will also help reduce the likelihood of severe flooding.”

Under the agreement, the District will administer \$964,884 in state funding through the St. Lucie River Issues Team for construction of a stormwater treatment area (STA) west of U.S. Highway 1 between Port St. Lucie and Westmoreland boulevards. The city is contributing more than \$1 million to cover the remaining cost of the STA, which will use plants to naturally remove pollutants from water ultimately bound for the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. The treatment wetland is scheduled to begin operation on or before May 2011.

The stormwater treatment area is part of the \$36 million Eastern Watershed Improvement Project in Port St. Lucie. The project will enhance environmental water quality and flood protection in the 1,200-acre Howard Creek Drainage Basin. Other project features include:

- Structures to control discharges into Howard Creek
- Improved flood protection and drainage
- Removal of shoaling — areas that have become shallow — and exotic vegetation within the existing flow-way

The St. Lucie River Issues Team represents 17 federal, state and local governments as well as agricultural and environmental organizations. The goal of the issues team is to prioritize and fund “turn-dirt” projects that provide immediate results toward improving water quality and ecosystem functions in the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon.

Since 1999, the Florida Legislature has provided more than \$63.7 million through the program to improve the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon, while local partners have contributed \$65.7 million with an additional \$2 million from the federal government. The program has funded more than 114 individual projects, totaling more than \$131.4 million, in Martin and St. Lucie counties.

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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.