



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD, West Palm Beach to Store Stormwater to Protect Coastal Ecosystems

Pilot project to capture and recycle rainfall runoff and benefit water supply

West Palm Beach, FL — In an effort to protect coastal ecosystems, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the City of West Palm Beach are partnering in a pilot project to store stormwater that would otherwise be lost to tide. The project has the potential to help protect coastal ecosystems such as the Lake Worth Lagoon by reducing canal discharges while also providing benefits to the city's water supply.

"With forecasts of an active storm season, we are taking advantage of every possible opportunity to find and implement enhanced water storage," said SFWMD Governing Board member Patrick J. Rooney Jr. "This pilot effort will benefit coastal environments and the local water supply."

Tasked with providing service to approximately 111,000 people, the City of West Palm Beach relies on a diversity of surface and groundwater supply sources to meet its needs. Lake Okeechobee serves as a back-up supply, and a series of canal conveyances are used to move water more than 20 miles from the L-8 canal to the M-Canal, through Grassy Waters and into Lake Mangonia and Clear Lake for storage.

"I'm pleased that this new effort will expand our city's conservation efforts, benefit our water supply and continue our commitment to sustainability," said City of West Palm Beach Mayor Lois J. Frankel.

At no cost to the SFWMD, the pilot project involves first intercepting water from the C-51 canal in Palm Beach County — which runs parallel to Southern Boulevard — during times when the canal is releasing water to tide for flood control purposes. The intercepted water would then be treated at the city's existing facility known as the Renaissance Project and stored in Clear Lake, near Okeechobee Boulevard.

The West Palm Beach pilot project is the latest District effort to take advantage of water storage opportunities. Working with a host of agencies, environmental organizations, ranchers and researchers, the District has added 126,350 acre-feet of surface water

storage capacity since 2005 on private, public and tribal lands around Lake Okeechobee to reduce the discharge of water to tide during heavy rain events and in preparation for storms.

More short-term storage is potentially available through ongoing projects. The District is currently examining the feasibility of storing water north and south of the lake on District lands and sites that are part of Everglades restoration projects. Everglades restoration efforts also promise to substantially increase water storage over the long-term to the benefit coastal estuaries.

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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.