



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Up in the Sky: It's a Bird, It's a Plane ... No, It's 1,500 Pounds of Plants**  
*Helicopter airdrops plants into treatment wetlands to improve Everglades water quality*

*TV stations: Click [here](#) for B-roll*



*(Click on photos for larger versions.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — Over three days this week, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) airlifted 60 tons of aquatic plants to two constructed treatment wetlands to help improve the quality of water flowing into America's Everglades.

SFWMD staff harvested three native species of submerged aquatic plants — Southern naiad, chara and Illinois pondweed — already growing within sections of the District's Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs). The plants were loaded into a large cargo net and flown by helicopter to STA-1 East and Cell 2 of STA-2, where they were released at low

altitude into shallow waters. Approximately 80 flights each carried between 1,400 and 1,500 pounds of plants.

Known as submerged aquatic vegetation because it grows beneath the surface of the water, the airlifted plants should quickly re-establish themselves in their new habitats and increase phosphorus removal from water moving through the STAs. In STA-1 East, District scientists are trying to encourage growth of native Southern naiad over exotic vegetation that has been growing in the transplant area. Meanwhile, the District is converting Cell 2 of STA-2 from emergent cattails to the three submerged aquatic species.

Stormwater Treatment Areas are the water-cleaning workhorses of Everglades restoration, using plants to naturally remove phosphorus from water flowing into the fabled River of Grass. The District operates a network of six STAs south of Lake Okeechobee with a combined area of more than 52,000 acres. Since 1994, the treatment areas have retained more than 1,200 metric tons of total phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades.

For a multimedia look at how STAs work and what water quality improvements they have delivered, please visit the District's [Improving Water Quality website](#).

Television stations can get B-roll footage of District staff working at STA-2 at this [link](#) (1.3 GB).

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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.*