



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

December 20, 2010

CONTACT:

Randy Smith

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386

www.sfwmd.gov/news

follow us on 

SFWMD Highlights Water Conservation, Restoration in 2010
2010 accomplishments benefit residents by protecting water resources



West Palm Beach, FL — From fostering year-round water conservation to leading work on restoration projects, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) marked another year of service to 7.5 million Central and South Florida residents and significant progress on environmental restoration and water resource protection initiatives in 2010.

“Each year brings us new challenges and yet allows us to highlight significant successes in our missions to provide flood control, protect South Florida’s water supply and restore the Everglades,” said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. “To effectively carry out these critical responsibilities, we constantly implement ways to improve our operations, achieve greater efficiencies and adhere to good business practices with the tax dollars entrusted to us.”

Among the most significant achievements in 2010 was adoption of the first-ever Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule for South Florida. Designed to reduce wasteful outdoor irrigation practices, the District estimates that these measures may reduce overall potable water demand by 5 to 10 percent.

Conservation is especially critical for this dry season, which has already produced the driest October since recordkeeping began in 1932 and continuing rainfall deficits across the region. Forecasts call for a continued strong La Niña, which tends to create drier-than-normal conditions.

As part of continuing water quality and ecosystem restoration efforts, the District acquired 26,800 acres of strategically located property for Everglades restoration with an option to purchase another 153,000 acres for up to 10 years. The acquisition provides construction opportunities for environmental and water quality improvements.

The District also led or participated in the engineering, design and/or construction for 92 restoration and flood control project components. This work included expansions of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) to clean water flowing to the Everglades, groundbreakings on the C-111 Spreader Canal and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands projects and the refurbishment or replacement of water management structures and facilities.

Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects

In addition to construction starts and progress, other key accomplishments in 2010 were the signing of Project Partnership Agreements – which are necessary for projects to move forward – with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for several joint efforts.

The projects included the L-31N Seepage Management Pilot to test technology for preserving clean water in Everglades National Park. If proven effective, technology developed during the pilot project will significantly benefit Everglades restoration and water quality improvement efforts in the park as well as beyond its boundaries. An agreement was also signed for the Indian River Lagoon – South project to advance construction on a host of components critical to restoring the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary.

A third agreement, for the Melaleuca Eradication/Biological Control projects, supports a science facility to raise insects for use as biological controls. These insects will be used to control the spread of invasive exotic plant species, such as melaleuca, *Lygodium* and Brazilian pepper.

The District also treated more than 1.4 million acre-feet of runoff water in STAs in Water Year 2010 and airlifted and transplanted vegetation to improve phosphorus-removal performance of the constructed wetlands. Since 1994, STAs and agricultural “Best Management Practices” have together prevented more than 3,500 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.

Operations and Maintenance

While the 2010 storm season was busy, only one storm impacted the region. The District was able to successfully manage water flows through the regional flood control network during a wet dry season and Tropical Storm Nicole.

The District also completed a major bank stabilization, erosion control and right-of-way cleanup project on the Hillsboro Canal (included 10,000 cubic yards of material), along with completing 44 water control structure inspections, blasting and painting 20 structure gates, overhauling 14 hydraulic cylinders and implementing six bypass pumps.

Continuing its commitment to good stewardship of public land, the District treated 38,019 acres of exotic vegetation and completed 6,000 acres of aerial treatment for torpedograss and cattails in Lake Okeechobee. Staff also completed mapping of four

invasive plant species – Australian pine, Brazilian pepper, melaleuca and *Lygodium* – within the Everglades region (1.8 million acres).

To help protect South Florida wildlife, the District partnered with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in the successful reintroduction of the red-cockaded woodpecker, a species of special concern, with the release of an additional five pairs of juvenile birds from donor sites in north Florida. The birds are known as a “keystone” species because their nests attract other wildlife.

The District also launched the Legacy program with local high schools to foster land stewardship principles and provide environmental education opportunities on District-owned public lands. Access to recreational opportunities was also enhanced. Boaters and outdoor enthusiasts now have a new public recreation spot for access to the restored Kissimmee River with the opening of the Istokpoga Canal Boat Ramp Area.

Regulatory and Public Affairs

Along with work to adopt the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule, the District strengthened its commitment to public access with the redevelopment of the agency’s external website to improve customer service and the delivery of public information. Developed over more than a year, the website features easier navigation, cutting-edge multimedia, powerful search tools and a host of high-tech, user-friendly improvements.

The District also continued to successfully implement all provisions as outlined in the 2009 legislative action delegating the authority to approve permit applications related to water resources and the environment to the executive director. An expanded monthly noticing and meeting process provides enhanced opportunities for public comment on pending Water Use and Environmental Resource Permit applications. Meetings are video-conferenced and webcast to promote wider accessibility, and special workshops are conducted for permits of heightened public concern.

Working with local governments, the District completed all FY10-approved WaterSIP projects, providing 0.6 MGD of water savings for a \$334,000 cost-shared investment. Water quality performance measures, mandated by the Everglades Forever Act, were achieved for the Everglades Agricultural Area and C-139 Basins and amendments were adopted to refine the Best Management Practice (BMPs) source control program for reducing phosphorus from the C-139 Basin.

In other efforts, the District secured \$60 million in state appropriations for environmental restoration, developed and adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Big Cypress Basin and successfully enrolled more than 26,000 acres of land in the Fisheating Creek Basin into the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wetland Reserve Program.

Agency Management/Corporate Resources

Efficiency and public accountability are always at the forefront of District actions and initiatives. In 2010, the agency identified and implemented additional measures and improved business practices, including revamping the budget development process with an emphasis on fixed overhead costs, baseline operations and funding ongoing costs with recurring revenues.

The use of “green” initiatives continue to reflect a multiyear decline in kilowatt and water usage, reducing the headquarters’ annual electric bill by more than \$200,000 and using 1.5 million fewer gallons of water (30.6 percent reduction).

The District was also recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial reporting and distinguished budget presentation (18th consecutive year).

In carrying out its emergency management responsibilities, the Emergency Operations Center was activated in preparation for Tropical Storm Nicole utilizing new WebEOC computer information management software. In addition, all District structures have been evaluated for security assessments in accordance with Homeland Security guidelines and requirements.

For more information, see [*Just the Facts: South Florida Water Management District 2010 Accomplishment Highlights*](#).

#

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.