



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Executive Director Supports Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Restoration at National Review

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers evaluates effort as one of the nation's top projects



(Click on the pictures for larger versions.)

West Palm Beach, FL – South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Executive Director Melissa Meeker appeared before a key federal review board on September 27 to promote the benefits of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands restoration project. The effort to restore Biscayne National Park and its coastal wetlands, a priority project for the District, was among the top national projects reviewed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works Review Board.

The review moves the restoration project one step closer to potential congressional authorization and construction funding.

“Sustaining this momentum is essential to achieving restoration goals for Biscayne Bay and the Everglades ecosystem,” said Ms. Meeker. “Assisting our federal partners in moving forward with this vital project builds on the restoration being expedited by the District.”

The Civil Works Review Board is a checkpoint for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure there is consistency in the water resources projects it recommends to Congress. The next steps include final reviews and reports on the project by the Corps' Chief of Engineers and the White House Office of Management and Budget. The project may then be submitted to Congress by the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works.

Since 2010, the District has been constructing the Deering Estate flow-way and a portion of the L-31E tidal restoration, two of the major components of the project, to rehydrate coastal wetlands and improve freshwater flows into the bay. To date, the District has invested approximately \$77 million in land acquisition, design and construction for the project.

Congressional authorization and funding will allow the Corps to continue construction on the project to achieve restoration goals. These goals will be accomplished by diverting water from a network of Miami canals — designed in the early 1900s to empty stormwater directly into the bay — and distributing it across a large area of coastal wetlands.

Improved distribution of freshwater flows will result in healthier coastal wetlands and a more natural overland flow of water that will mimic historical conditions. This will restore critical low-salinity habitat that is essential for a variety of estuarine plants and animals such as seagrasses, eastern oysters, blue crab and spotted sea trout. In addition, the wetlands will become more productive for wading birds, amphibians and mammals such as the river otter.

Progress to date includes:

- More than 80 percent of the land needed for the project has been acquired.
- Construction is near completion for the Deering Estate flow-way to redistribute water from the C-100 Basin, south of Kendall, into coastal areas for rehydration and to reduce discharges into the bay.
- A series of culverts along the L-31E Canal in Homestead was constructed in June 2010. These culverts help reduce point-source water discharges from the C-102 and C-103 canals and re-establish a more uniform sheetflow of fresh water to rehydrate coastal wetlands along Biscayne Bay, including Biscayne National Park. The coastal wetlands filter water before it reaches the bay and provide wildlife habitat.
- Design of the Cutler flow-way is complete. Like the Deering Estate project, this flow-way will also help spread water across coastal wetlands.
- Additionally, the District coordinated with the Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Department to develop an educational site on the Deering Estate property.

The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Restoration Project is a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), 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 \$300 million in construction. Through June 30, 2011, approximately 60 percent — or 243,149 acres — of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired.

Click [here](#) for a more information about the Deering Estate flow-way project. For more information on the District's Everglades restoration efforts, please visit www.sfwmd.gov/everglades.

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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.