



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

March 19, 2012

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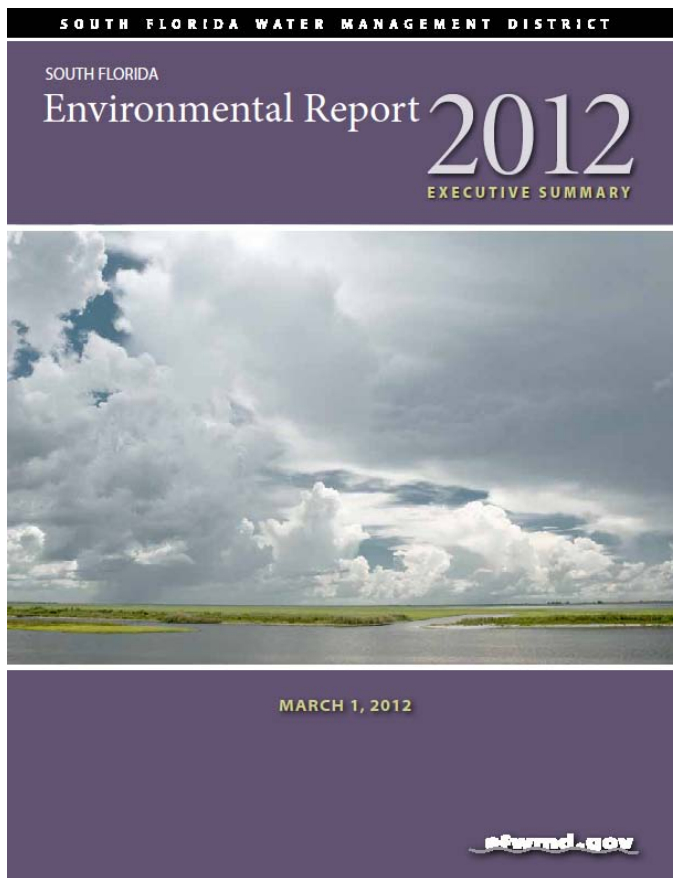
South Florida Water Management District

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South Florida Environmental Report Highlights Restoration Progress, State of the Ecosystem



On the cover: The Everglades is a diverse mosaic of sawgrass marshes, freshwater ponds, prairies and forested uplands. The 2012 South Florida Environmental Report documents the extensive scientific and engineering efforts to protect and restore this unique ecosystem.

West Palm Beach, FL — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) released the **2012 South Florida Environmental Report** detailing a year of restoration, scientific and engineering accomplishments in the Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades and South Florida coastal areas. The 2012 report marks the 14th year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies.

“The considerable progress detailed in this report demonstrates Florida’s commitment to the environment and our continued focus on improving water quality and restoring America’s Everglades,” said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. “The *South Florida Environmental Report* provides a comprehensive overview of the science, research and resource management that allows us to protect South Florida’s unique ecosystems.”

Spanning three volumes, the *2012 South Florida Environmental Report* contains more than 50 individual reports. The volumes provide extensive research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects. An illustrated Executive Summary is viewable online via a newly added PDF viewer, which makes the document more reader-friendly on a computer monitor.

The *2012 South Florida Environmental Report* covers environmental information for Water Year 2011 (May 1, 2010, through April 30, 2011) and project/budgetary information for Fiscal Year 2011 (October 1, 2010, through September 30, 2011).

“This comprehensive report provides a centralized source for documenting a year’s worth of work to improve South Florida’s ecosystem,” said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker. “It represents the depth of our scientific expertise as well as the considerable environmental benefits being achieved on behalf of Florida’s taxpayers.”

The 2012 report includes the following highlights:

- **Enhanced Stormwater Treatment Areas reduce nutrients.** The District’s 45,000 acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas treated more than 735,000 acre-feet of water last year and cut nutrient loads to the Everglades by more than 79 percent. Enhancements to the STAs helped to deliver outflow concentrations of phosphorus at the lowest range observed since STA operations began in 1994. In addition, construction is nearly complete on 11,500 acres of STAs, which will increase treatment capacity by another 25 percent.
- **Source controls contribute to improved water quality.** For the 16th consecutive year, the Everglades Agricultural Area exceeded its 25 percent phosphorus-reduction requirement by delivering a 79 percent reduction – three times what is required by law. To date, these best management practices, along with Stormwater Treatment Areas, have prevented more than 2,411 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.
- **Kissimmee River restoration attracts wildlife.** The Kissimmee River Restoration Project continues toward completion, with 24 miles of re-established river channel and intermittent inundation of 7,710 acres of floodplain. Environmental monitoring has recently shown an increase in waterfowl and other aquatic life in restored portions of the river, which serves as the headwaters to the Everglades.
- **Projects to improve rivers and coastal estuaries continue.** Healthy coastal estuaries depend on fresh water. In the Loxahatchee River, a pilot project successfully added fresh water to river flows during the dry season. In lower Biscayne Bay, portions of a flow redistribution project have begun. Water control

improvement projects were also completed to benefit Fakahatchee Estuary and Naples Bay.

The *2012 South Florida Environmental Report* – now entirely electronic at a savings of \$98,000 – is available to view or print at www.sfwmd.gov/sfer.

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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.