



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SFWMD Highlights Restoring Natural Systems, Flood Control in 2012** *Accomplishments benefit residents by protecting water resources*



**West Palm Beach, FL** — From a major agreement to improve Everglades water quality to moving Tropical Storm Isaac's historic deluge away from populated areas, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) marked another year of service to 7.7 million Central and South Florida residents and significant progress on environmental restoration and water resource protection initiatives in 2012.

"We saw success in all facets of our core missions this year, including a milestone Everglades restoration agreement between the state and the federal government," said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker. "With continued strategic planning, sound science and effective use of taxpayer dollars, we are poised to begin another year of protecting and improving South Florida's water resources."

Among the most significant achievements in 2012 was consensus between the State of Florida and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on new strategies for improving water quality in America's Everglades. Based on months of scientific discussions, these restoration strategies will expand water quality improvement projects to achieve the ultra-low phosphorus water quality standard established for the Everglades.

#### **Natural Systems Accomplishments in 2012**

In addition to the new restoration strategies, the District completed significant work this year to restore South Florida's natural systems. To improve water flow to the

Everglades, the agency awarded a contract for design and construction of a pump station and six massive pumps that will deliver water from the 15-billion-gallon L-8 Reservoir in Palm Beach County. This milestone paves the way for the reservoir to provide some of the increased water storage that is essential for Everglades restoration.

In the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary region, the District and its local partners completed several important projects to increase water storage and improve water quality. Built and constructed by local communities and supported by the District, 2012 projects include:

- [Powell Creek Filter Marsh](#): Completed in October by Lee County, the 18-acre filter marsh and wetland preserve is improving water quality by cleaning water before it reaches the river, increasing storage and improving wildlife habitat.
- [Dispersed Water Management C-43 Reservoir Interim Project](#): With Lake Okeechobee's water level rising in October from above-average rainfall, the District took emergency action to capture water on the site of a future Everglades restoration project to reduce freshwater impacts on the estuary.

Throughout its 16 counties, the District increased water storage by 6,855 acre-feet. This included the award of Northern Everglades Payment for Environmental Services contracts, encompassing eight agreements with private landowners to store water on their land. The District also finalized the assessment of water farming on agricultural lands in the St. Lucie River and Estuary Watershed.

In Lake Okeechobee and Lake Istokpoga, the District planted more than 5,000 cypress pond apple and red maple trees. In Lemkin Creek, a pilot project and study was initiated to enhance the production of apple snails, the primary food source of the endangered Everglades snail kite.

Important restoration work for natural systems improvements was also accomplished, including:

- Completing 30 percent of design for the A-1 flow equalization basin as part of the new restoration strategies
- Assisting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to speed planning for projects in the Central Everglades
- Completing the Lakeside Ranch STA - Phase 1, which is transforming ranch land into a 2,000-acre wetland that will clean stormwater runoff bound for Lake Okeechobee
- Completing the Deering Estate Flow-way to help restore freshwater flows to Biscayne Bay
- Coordinating with local governments and administering programs to implement 23 local restoration, habitat and water quality improvement projects

### **Water Quality Improvements**

Restoration of South Florida's natural systems includes improvements in water quality. To date, \$1.8 billion has been invested in Stormwater Treatment Area (STA)

construction, creating 57,000 acres of effective treatment area. In 2012, the District continued this work, including:

- Treating more than 700,000 acre-feet of water in the STAs, removing more than 178,000 pounds of phosphorus
- Implementing Best Management Practices on 640,000 acres of land, with an average phosphorus reduction of 55 percent over the program's 16-year history
- Achieving a 71-percent phosphorus reduction in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA)
- Reducing phosphorus in the C-139 Basin by more than 15 metric tons

Scientific monitoring remains a key component of this work. In 2012, District staff collected 38,260 water quality samples supporting 83 projects and studies and conducted 263,262 water quality data analyses.

### **Flood Control During Record Rainfall**

Several large rainfall events impacted South Florida in 2012, the most notable being Tropical Storm Isaac. During the 1-in-100-year storm, nearly 15 inches of rain fell in a 72-hour period in western Palm Beach County. In response, the District moved more than 105 billion gallons of water away from residents in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties.



[Tropical Storm Isaac photo gallery](#)

The District also constructed an emergency weir and flow-way to relieve pressure on a levee adjacent to a residential area in Palm Beach County's western communities. The 140-foot weir can move enough water out of the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area to fill a residential swimming pool every 2.7 seconds until a long-term solution is completed.

Along with responding to storms, the District completed several important projects to ensure the regional flood control system is operating as designed, including:

- Replacing Golden Gate weirs 6 and 7 in the Big Cypress Basin
- Continuing East Coast Protective Levee repairs
- Overhauling 9 main pumps and refurbishing engines
- Completing 494 inspections resulting in 45 infrastructure improvement projects
- Completing 300 survey and mapping requests

### **Mission Support Continues Efficiencies**

In 2012, the District remained focused on ensuring accountability, transparency and public involvement in agency decisions. Efforts were directed toward accomplishing core functions, streamlining operations and achieving consistency across water management district boundaries. This work included processing 619 public records requests, conducting 55 Governing Board, Water Resources Advisory Commission

(WRAC) and monthly regulatory meetings and expanding the District's website, [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov).

Mission support success was also achieved in related work, including:

- Updating the District's 5-year Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Program
- Completing budgets in compliance with new state statutory guidance
- Completing a financing plan for Everglades restoration strategies water quality projects
- Achieving \$8.9 million in cost avoidance through contract negotiations

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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.*