



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Begins Comprehensive Assessment of Land Resources *New webpage facilitates public input and transparency throughout the process*



(Click on the image to visit www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment.)

West Palm Beach, FL — As part of an ongoing effort to maximize its resources to meet mission-critical responsibilities, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has started a comprehensive assessment of the nearly 1.5 million acres of land owned by the agency. The assessment process mirrors efforts being undertaken by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the state's four other water management districts.

“Public lands play an important role in the management of South Florida’s water resources, ensuring our ability to both provide flood protection for residents and businesses and to restore and sustain unique ecosystems,” said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker. “Our land assessment process will ensure that each and every parcel continues to be put to its most effective use.”

The first phase of the comprehensive land assessment is a review of the District's 750,000 acres of fee-owned lands – properties in which the agency has full ownership rights. This will be achieved by evaluating lands in five geographic regions, starting with the Upper Lakes Assessment Region in January and followed by the Kissimmee/Okeechobee, East Coast, West Coast and Everglades assessment regions.

During the process, District staff will thoroughly analyze each property to determine how its current use contributes to the agency's core mission of balancing and improving flood control, water quality, natural systems and water supply.

The District is committed to transparency and receiving public input throughout the land assessment process. In keeping with this commitment, a dedicated webpage (www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment) has been developed that will feature:

- Detailed portfolios for the five assessment regions with data, photos, maps and site evaluations of fee-owned lands at three levels: project, unit and parcel. A new portfolio will be posted for public review approximately every 30 days.
- An online comment form to enable members of the public to provide input on lands presented in each regional portfolio. The comment period will be open 30 days for each region.
- Information on the criteria and methodology that the District is using to conduct the land assessment.

In addition to the webpage, public meetings of the SFWMD Governing Board, its Project and Lands Committee and the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) will each include periodic updates on the land assessment effort, along with opportunities for public comment.

District staff will gather comments from the public and internal subject matter experts before submitting draft recommendations on each portfolio to the Governing Board. To provide the most benefit to taxpayers and South Florida's water resources, lands that do not directly support the core mission may be considered for alternative uses or recommended to the Governing Board for surplus.

The entire assessment process for fee-owned lands is scheduled for completion by mid-2013. A review of approximately 700,000 acres of non-fee-owned lands is planned to begin in late 2013. Reassessments of District lands will be conducted as needed, potentially every three to five years.

For more information on the SFWMD land assessment process, please visit www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment.

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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.