



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

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Land Assessment Process Moves into Kissimmee/Okeechobee Region *Public is invited to submit comments on SFWMD lands in the region through March 18*



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

West Palm Beach, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is moving forward with its comprehensive land assessment by beginning an evaluation of agency lands in the Kissimmee/Okeechobee Assessment Region, which includes the Upper and Lower Kissimmee basins and the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

The Kissimmee/Okeechobee region is the second of five geographic areas that are being reviewed in the ongoing assessment of approximately 750,000 acres of fee-owned lands – properties in which the District has full ownership rights. As part of a broader effort to maximize its resources to meet mission-critical responsibilities, the District is conducting the assessment to ensure that each parcel the agency owns is being put to its most effective use.

To ensure all relevant information is available for a thorough analysis, the District is seeking public feedback on the use of its lands within the Kissimmee/Okeechobee region. Stakeholders and the general public can examine detailed land portfolios and

submit comments on specific properties through March 18 by visiting www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment. In addition, public workshops have been scheduled at the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center on March 8 and at the SFWMD St. Cloud Field Station on March 12.

Upper Lakes Assessment Region

At the same time as the public comment period for the Kissimmee/Okeechobee region, District staff will be reviewing feedback received on lands in the Upper Lakes region, which includes parts of Orange, Osceola and Polk counties. The District accepted more than 450 public comments through its website on four project areas in the region, as well as additional input during a public workshop on Feb. 12 in St. Cloud.

The District is analyzing these public comments plus input from SFWMD subject matter experts and a variety of land-related data to develop recommendations for each parcel in the Upper Lakes region. Current land uses will remain in place for parcels that are determined to contribute fully to the agency's core mission of balancing and improving flood control, water quality, natural systems and water supply. 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 possible surplus.

Timeline and Next Steps

Draft recommendations for the Upper Lakes region will be presented at a second regional workshop and during public meetings of the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) and the Governing Board's Project and Lands Committee. Final recommendations for the region will be submitted to the full Governing Board for approval at its April meeting. The Kissimmee/Okeechobee region will follow a similar process after the public comment period for the region is complete.

The District-wide land assessment for all 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 or to submit comments on lands in the Kissimmee/Okeechobee region, 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.