



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

# NEWS RELEASE

March 25, 2013

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## Land Assessment Continues with Review of East Coast Region *Public is invited to submit comments on SFWMD lands in the region through April 22*



(Click on the image to visit [www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment](http://www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment).)

**West Palm Beach, FL** – As part of its ongoing comprehensive land assessment, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is beginning an evaluation of agency lands in the East Coast Assessment Region, which includes parts of Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie counties.

The East Coast region is the third of five geographic areas being reviewed in the 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 owned by the agency is being put to its most effective use.

To gather all relevant information for a thorough analysis, the District is seeking public feedback on the use of its lands within the East Coast region. Stakeholders and the general public can examine detailed land portfolios and submit comments on specific properties through April 22 at [www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment](http://www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment). In addition, a

regional public workshop will be held at SFWMD Headquarters in West Palm Beach on April 19.

### **Status of Other Regions**

At the same time as the public comment period is opening for the East Coast region, the assessment of the Upper Lakes and Kissimmee/Okeechobee regions is continuing. For these regions, District staff is currently:

- **Upper Lakes:** Developing recommendations for lands in this region, which includes parts of Orange, Osceola and Polk counties. Recommendations will be based on more than 450 public comments, feedback received during a February public workshop, input from SFWMD subject matter experts and a variety of land-related data. All submitted comments are available on the land assessment website.
- **Kissimmee/Okeechobee:** Analyzing public and internal feedback submitted for this region, which includes the Upper and Lower Kissimmee basins and the Lake Okeechobee watershed. The District accepted nearly 200 public comments for this region from Feb. 18 through March 18 and also held a pair of March public workshops in Okeechobee and St. Cloud to gather additional input.

In the recommendations for each region in the land assessment, current uses of District lands will remain in place for parcels in these regions 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 District's core mission may be considered for alternative uses or possible surplus.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

In mid-April, draft recommendations for the Upper Lakes region will be posted on the land assessment website for public review and comment. The draft recommendations will also be presented at a regional public 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 at its May meeting.

The Kissimmee/Okeechobee region will go through a similar process starting in mid-May, followed by the East Coast region a month later.

The District-wide land assessment for all fee-owned lands is scheduled for completion by mid-2013. A review of the agency's approximately 700,000 acres of non-fee-owned lands is planned to begin in late 2013. Reassessments of all 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 East Coast Assessment Region, visit [www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment](http://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.*