



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Launches Review of West Coast Region for Land Assessment *Public is invited to submit comments on District lands in the region through May 28*



(Click on the image to visit 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 West Coast Assessment Region, which includes parts of Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades counties.

The West Coast region is the fourth 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 West Coast region. Stakeholders and the general public can examine detailed land portfolios and submit comments on specific properties through May 28 at www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment. In addition, a regional

public workshop will be held at the SFWMD Lower West Coast Service Center in Fort Myers on May 22.

Status of Other Regions

At the same time that the public comment period is opening for the West Coast region, the assessment of three other regions is progressing. For these regions, District staff is currently:

- **Upper Lakes:** Accepting public comments on draft staff recommendations for lands in this region, which includes parts of Orange, Osceola and Polk counties. Comments may be submitted through the land assessment website until May 6. In addition, District staff hosted a public workshop in St. Cloud on April 25 to receive further public input and will be presenting the draft recommendations during the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) meeting on May 2.
- **Kissimmee/Okeechobee:** Developing staff recommendations for lands in this region, which includes the Upper and Lower Kissimmee basins and the Lake Okeechobee watershed. Recommendations will be based on nearly 200 public comments, feedback received during a pair of March public workshops, input from SFWMD subject matter experts and a variety of land-related data. All submitted comments are available for review on the land assessment website.
- **East Coast:** Analyzing public and internal feedback submitted for this region, which includes parts of Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie counties. The District accepted nearly 200 public comments for this region from March 22 through April 22 and held a public workshop in West Palm Beach to gather additional input.

In the staff recommendations for each region in the land assessment, current uses of District lands 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 District's core mission may be considered for alternative uses or possible surplus.

Timeline and Next Steps

Incorporating public and WRAC input, final staff recommendations for the Upper Lakes region will be submitted to the full Governing Board at its May 9 meeting. The remaining regions will each go through a similar process that will conclude at Governing Board meetings over the following four months.

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.

To submit public comments either on lands in the West Coast Assessment Region or draft staff recommendations in the Upper Lakes Assessment Region, visit www.sfwmd.gov/landassessment. Other information featured on the website includes:

- [Regional Land Portfolios, Staff Recommendations and Other Materials](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Land Assessment Objectives and Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [Land Assessment Schedule \[PDF\]](#) – updated April 19, 2013

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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.