



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

[www.sfwmd.gov/news](http://www.sfwmd.gov/news)

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### **SFWMD Adopts Water Reservation to Benefit Biscayne Bay** *Marine life in the bay depends on coastal freshwater flows*



*(Click on the picture for a larger version or the map for more information on the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project – Phase 1 and water reservation.)*

**Miami, FL** – To help protect Biscayne Bay’s coastal wetlands and wildlife – from American crocodiles to wading birds and manatees – the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today adopted a water reservation for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project – Phase 1. This action secures the long-term availability of water to benefit the bay, which includes Biscayne National Park.

“Science and public input came together in this important step to protect Biscayne Bay’s coastal wetlands,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O’Keefe. “By setting aside water associated with the restoration project, we’re helping to ensure the long-term health of an ecosystem that’s essential to South Florida’s residents and economy.”

A water reservation is a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or public health and safety. When a water reservation is in place, quantities and timing of water at specific locations are protected for the natural system.

For the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, today’s action reserves fresh water flowing through five coastal structures and the associated canal network.

Upon completion, the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project – Phase 1 will divert a portion of the fresh water through flow-ways, pump stations and culverts, redistributing the flows across critical nearshore wetlands. This in turn helps achieve healthier salinity levels that benefit many rare, threatened or endangered species and marine life, such as eastern oysters, blue crab and spotted sea trout.

To date, the District has completed construction and begun operating the Deering Estate Flow-way component of the project. With a 100 cubic-feet-per-second (cfs) pump station, 2.5-acre wetland and related infrastructure completed in 2012, the flow-way moves excess water from the C-100 Basin under Old Cutler Road to rehydrate coastal wetlands at Deering Estate at Cutler.



*Aerial view of the constructed pump station and created wetlands at the Deering Estate Flow-way.*

The Deering Estate section of the project is one of three key flow-ways necessary to help support the bay’s marine/freshwater environment. Two other components of the project will be constructed just south of Deering Estate:

- Cutler Wetlands Flow-way
- L-31E Flow-way

Along with benefitting the environment, the water reservation is also an essential step toward receiving federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) funding for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project. To date, the District has invested \$4.5 million in the Deering Estate Flow-way and related facilities to benefit the bay.

Development of the water reservation began in December 2011. The District hosted a series of public workshops to solicit input from stakeholders, along with providing opportunities to comment at public meetings of the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) and the District Governing Board.

### **Biscayne Bay Background:**

Water once flowed into southern Biscayne Bay through numerous tidal creeks and groundwater springs. Twentieth century construction of the regional flood control system altered this natural distribution of freshwater flows into the bay and reduced water storage within the watershed. These alterations resulted in changes to the salinity regime within the bay.

Today, water is discharged directly into southern Biscayne Bay through a series of canals, producing “point source” discharges of fresh water that impact salinity along the shoreline. The life cycle of several species, such as pink shrimp, blue crabs, American crocodiles and an array of fisheries, depend on lower salinities within the nearshore habitats.

The bay includes about 275 square miles of marine ecosystem and a watershed of about 850 square miles along the coast of Miami-Dade and northeastern Monroe counties.

**Water Reservations:**

Three other water reservation rules — for Picayune Strand (July 2009), Fakahatchee Estuary (July 2009) and the North Fork of the St. Lucie River (March 2010) — have already been adopted. Work continues on a water reservation rule for another CERP project — the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir.

**For More Information:**

- [Water Reservations](#)
- [Protecting and Restoring Ecosystems](#)

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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.*