



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

OPINION

August 30, 2011

SFWMD Focuses on Core Mission with FY2012 Budget

Contrary to the unsubstantiated cries of a handful of environmentalists, reducing spending at the South Florida Water Management District is not bringing Everglades restoration to a grinding halt. Reducing taxes by more than 30 percent, the District is streamlining operations, eliminating unnecessary expenses and getting back to its core mission of flood control, water supply and ecosystem restoration. In doing so, we are saving South Floridians \$128 million, the majority of which has been realized by cutting excessive overhead and building a leaner, more efficient agency.

Even with these changes, the District still employs a dynamic 1,647 employees, close to half of which are dedicated to operating South Florida's massive flood control system. More than 25 percent of our workforce hold Ph.D. or Master degrees, and we have more than 150 certified professional engineers and geologists. This highly qualified, capable and competent workforce is focused on effectively achieving the agency's water management responsibilities.

As for funding our core mission, more than 70 percent of the agency's \$557 million budget this year will go toward flood control and protecting the environment. With an investment of more than \$850 million in 2011 and 2012 combined, we will bring a half dozen restoration projects to construction completion this year. It is important to note that agency reductions were not made at the expense of restoration. In fact, over the next five years, the District will use reserves to invest another \$350 million primarily to improve water storage and water quality in the northern and southern Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee watersheds. These efforts will engage our federal partners - and those constituents with an interest in being a part of the solution - in achieving our shared restoration objectives.

Just like most businesses, governments and households today, the District is cutting back on excess spending and focusing its resources on priorities. Despite the invalid complaints of a vocal few, prudent fiscal planning and a streamlined operation is allowing the District to both lower taxes and press ahead with important projects that will protect the environmental and economic interests of South Florida.

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