

# FLORIDA'S HISTORIC EVERGLADES RESTORATION

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Florida is currently undertaking the largest environmental restoration project in the nation's history. No other government in the world has invested as much time or money in improving the quality of one natural ecosystem.<sup>1</sup>

By restoring the Everglades, The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), which protects, conserves and manages Florida's natural resources, including protecting and restoring Florida's water quality, together with the South Florida Water Management District is implementing a 30-year, \$10.9

billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)<sup>2</sup>, which covers 16 counties over an 18,000 square mile area.

To date, Florida has committed \$2.4 billion toward the 50-50 state/federal cost-share, acquiring nearly 59 percent (more than 229,000 acres) of the land needed for restoration.<sup>3</sup> Florida has also invested an additional \$1.8 billion to improving water quality in the Everglades.<sup>4</sup>

The Florida Everglades, formed over thousands of years, is a vast wetland ecosystem encompassing over 4,500 miles of rivers, lakes and estuaries. Its unique water and vegetation provides home to thousands of animals, birds, fish, plants, and reptilian species.<sup>5</sup> In fact, its rare mix of salt and freshwater makes it the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles exist side by side.<sup>6</sup> The Everglades Ecosystem extends from the Kissimmee River Chain of Lakes south of Orlando, through the Kissimmee River, engulfing Lake Okeechobee and the waters of the Florida Bay.

By restoring the Everglades, Florida will improve the quality of life for the seven million residents of South Florida, provide improved flood control for the region, establish a reliable supply of water for millions of Floridians, supply the essential amount of water for restoration,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/>

<sup>2</sup> In 2000, Congress authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the largest environmental restoration effort in history. CERP will enhance Everglades wetlands and associated lakes, rivers, and bays in South Florida and will capture and store much of the 1.7 billion gallons of water a day currently lost to the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, to revitalize south Florida's natural environment. See [http://www.evergladesplan.org/facts\\_info/fact\\_sheets.aspx](http://www.evergladesplan.org/facts_info/fact_sheets.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/about/about\\_dep.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/about/about_dep.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tigerhomes.org/animal/florida-everglades.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/about/default.htm>

protect the natural plant life and revive the habitat for 60 threatened and endangered species that currently exist in the Everglades.<sup>7</sup>

There have been many accomplishments to date in Florida's Everglades' restoration efforts. Florida is designing and has initiated construction on a number of CERP projects to move restoration ahead. Additionally, in 2007, the Florida Legislature expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to strengthen protection for the Northern Everglades by restoring and preserving the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.<sup>8</sup>

Further, in June 2008, Governor Charlie Crist announced a unique opportunity for Florida to acquire more than 180,000 acres of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area from the United States Sugar Corporation, subject to obtaining appropriate financing. This proposal was approved by the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) on December 16, 2008. Note: A Revised proposal was approved by the Board in May 2009.<sup>9</sup>

In August 2009, lead state and federal agencies signed an interagency master agreement to begin construction of important CERP projects. The Master Agreement contains important provisions that determine how the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District will address key issues related to project construction including cost-sharing, operations, maintenance, repair and oversight by agency technical staff.<sup>10</sup>

Most recently in September 2009, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board entered an agreement with the North Springs and Coral Springs improvement districts that will reduce stormwater discharges into a part of the remnant Everglades known as Water Conservation Area 2A while maintaining flood control for northwest Broward County residents.<sup>11</sup>

While the Everglades Restoration Plan is an enormous task that will require long-term commitment and cooperation from state and federal agencies and organizations, long-term funding commitments, and will take decades to complete, restoring both the natural and man-made environments of the Everglades to a healthy and sustainable ecosystem provides the framework for future restoration projects throughout the world. Undoubtedly, Florida has proven itself a leader and an example to the nation with this historical environmental undertaking.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/default.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/>

<sup>9</sup> In April 2009, Governor Crist shared details of a revised strategy to achieve this historic acquisition. The revised approach incorporates today's fiscal realities by saving \$800 million at closing, providing ready access to strategically located acreage for restoration projects and preserving thousands of jobs. On May 13, 2009, the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District approved this revised proposal.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.evergladesplan.org/docs/pr\\_081309\\_eg\\_master\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.evergladesplan.org/docs/pr_081309_eg_master_agreement.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/pg\\_grp\\_sfwmd\\_aboutsfwmd/pg\\_sfwmd\\_home2](https://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/pg_grp_sfwmd_aboutsfwmd/pg_sfwmd_home2)



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