SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:
Randy Smith
South Florida Water Management District
Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386

SFWMD NEWS:
Web: www.sfwmd.gov/news
Twitter: twitter.com/sfwmd

Momentum for Everglades Restoration Continues with Historic State-Federal Agreements

Key accords with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers support renewed progress for restoration projects

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Terrence "Rock" Salt (left at table), Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and SFWMD Governing Board Chair Eric Buermann (right) sign a series of agreements that will enable federally funded work on Everglades restoration projects to begin.

West Palm Beach, FL — In an historic achievement that lays critical groundwork for Everglades restoration for decades to come, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today approved landmark agreements that allow federally funded work to move forward on key Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects.

"The agreements signed today move America's Everglades significantly closer to realizing restoration goals," said SFWMD Governing Board Chair Eric Buermann. "With our shared goals memorialized in these historic accords, we can now press forward with our federal partners to build on Florida's achievements, bring projects to completion and accomplish the important vision of reviving America's Everglades."

In the most significant of the agreements, the Governing Board approved the Master Agreement, which serves as the umbrella accord between the District and the Corps to govern all Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan projects. The Master Agreement is also an essential step necessary for the Corps to begin work using an infusion of approximately $115 million received this year in Congressional appropriations for CERP project construction.

"The robust partnership forged and strengthened during the negotiation of these significant programmatic accords serves as a model of federal and state cooperation to achieve vital goals," said Terrence "Rock" Salt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, who joined in the momentous signing. "We can now move forward with our partners in restoring America's Everglades to protect this national treasure for future generations."

Key features of the Master Agreement include:

- Focusing on "mutuality" and strengthening the state-federal partnership for Everglades restoration by establishing joint decision-making by the SFWMD and the Corps.
- Establishing and defining conditions under which the Corps and SFWMD will achieve a 50-50 programmatic cost-share on design and construction of CERP projects.
- Defining conditions for the Corps to provide 50 percent of the annual costs for operations and maintenance of all CERP projects, an important cost-sharing provision authorized by the U.S. Congress.

"The District and the Corps share a stalwart resolve to move restoration efforts forward," said Ken Ammon, SFWMD Deputy Executive Director for Everglades Restoration. "The Master Agreement provides the basis for moving forward on significant construction projects to protect America's Everglades and South Florida's ecosystem."

Project Partnership Agreement also approved

While the Master Agreement provides the framework for restoration efforts, project-specific agreements, known as Project Partnership Agreements, are also needed. These are required for the federal government to initiate construction on specific projects. They also provide project-specific credit to the SFWMD for its land acquisition and project construction efforts completed so far.

The Governing Board today approved the Picayune Strand Project Partnership Agreement, defining the terms, conditions and responsibilities specific to this restoration project. Significantly, the agreement allows the Corps to begin investing $65 million in stimulus funding and Congressional appropriations to continue construction on the Picayune Strand Restoration Project.

The Corps' effort on Picayune Strand will build on the significant progress made at this restoration site by the State of Florida and the SFWMD, including investing approximately $150 million to place 55,000 acres in public ownership, filling and plugging 7 miles of the Prairie Canal, completing 25 percent of road removal necessary for restoration and restoring 13,000 acres of natural habitat.

A 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan provides a framework and guide to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of central and southern Florida. The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District have invested approximately $2.4 billion toward this effort, including approximately $300 million in construction. Through June 30, 2009, 59 percent — or approximately 230,000 acres — of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired. For more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov/everglades.

For more information on restoration progress in the Everglades, read ***Reviving the River of Grass*** for further details.

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About the Everglades

America's Everglades once covered almost 11,000 square miles of south Florida. Just a century ago, water flowed down the Kissimmee River into Lake Okeechobee, then south through the Everglades to the Florida Bay – the ultimate destination of the pure sheetflow. Because of efforts to drain the marshland for agriculture, development and flood control, the Everglades is today half the size it was a century ago. Dubbed the River of Grass for the sawgrass that flourished throughout the marsh, the Everglades is a mosaic of freshwater ponds, prairies and forested uplands that supports a rich plant and wildlife community. Renowned for its wading birds and wildlife, the Everglades is home to dozens of federally threatened and endangered species, including the Florida panther, American crocodile, snail kite and wood stork. The mix of salt and freshwater makes it the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles exist side by side.

About the South Florida Water Management District — Celebrating 60 Years (1949-2009)

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.