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quick facts on...

# District Everglades Program

OCTOBER 2006

**The South Florida Water Management District** is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

**Our Mission** is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

## 2006 Key Accomplishments

- **STAs and improved farming practices combined have prevented more than 2,200 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades since 1994**
- **More than 40,000 acres have been converted to STAs with another 18,000 acres being built through *Acceler8*, going beyond requirements to improve water quality**
- **STA enhancements construction ongoing and six enhanced cells were brought back online in FY06 to provide improved water quality treatment**
- **STA initial expansions on schedule for flow-capable status by Dec. 31, 2006**
- **Very good year for wading bird nesting in Water Conservation Areas**

**T**he District Everglades Program is focused on the South Florida Water Management District's responsibilities for controlling and reducing phosphorus outlined in the Everglades Forever Act and the Settlement Agreement of the Federal Lawsuit. The Settlement Agreement was approved by the Court and entered as a Consent Decree in 1992. The Everglades Construction Project (ECP) is the first major step in Everglades Restoration and part of the Everglades Forever Act, which was passed by the Florida Legislature in 1994.

This Act directs the District to acquire land and design, permit, construct and operate a series of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) in order to reduce phosphorus levels from stormwater runoff and other sources before it enters the Everglades Protection Area. The Everglades Forever Act also requires that the District implement basin-specific solutions to achieve compliance with long-term water quality standards by controlling phosphorus at the source.

During the 2003 legislative session, the 1994 Everglades Forever Act was amended to include the Conceptual Plan for Achieving Long-Term Water Quality Goals (Long-Term Plan) as the appropriate strategy for achieving the long-term water quality goals for the Everglades Protection Area. In 2004, the state stepped up to the plate and implemented the *Acceler8* initiative to expedite key federal-state Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan projects. This action consists of eight projects (some with multiple components) that, when completed, will provide immediate water quality, flood control and water supply benefits. The water quality components of this program are funded through the Everglades Forever Act.

## Agency Strategic Priority

**Achieve Everglades water quality standards**

## Program Goal

**To restore, Everglades water quality, hydrology and ecology**



*Stormwater treatment areas are large, constructed wetlands that contain aquatic plants that remove phosphorus from the water before it enters the Everglades.*

## Strategies

- Complete construction of the Everglades Construction Project
- Implement Long-Term Plan projects
- Implement Everglades Regulatory and Everglades Stormwater programs
- Expand Everglades stormwater treatment areas through *Acceler8* construction on Compartments B and C
- Implement a research and monitoring program to evaluate the ecological and hydrological needs of the Everglades



Scientists monitor phosphorus, a nutrient found in lawn and farming fertilizers, in the Everglades. Too much phosphorus causes undesirable effects such as the uncontrolled growth of algae and invasive vegetation, which can be detrimental to the low-nutrient ecosystem.



Over the last decade, 40,000 acres of stormwater treatment areas and improved farming practices combined have prevented 2,200 tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades. Another 18,000 acres of these constructed wetlands are being built in Florida's *Acceler8* projects, going beyond federal requirements to improve water quality.

## Success Indicators

- Complete *Acceler8* STA Expansion projects by December 2006
  - STA-6 Section 2
  - STA-2 Cell 4
  - STA-5 Flow-way 3
- Implement Long-Term Plan
  - Complete 5 phosphorus source control projects for the Everglades Stormwater Program by December 2006
  - Complete STA-1 West Cell 1 levee construction by October 2007
  - Complete 22 projects designed to optimize the performance of the STAs
  - Complete 6 activities designed to accelerate the recovery of impacted areas in the Everglades
  - Ongoing operation and maintenance of the Everglades Construction Project STAs
  - Complete maps of Stormwater Treatment Area vegetation types
- Achieve phosphorus load reduction targets mandated by the Everglades Forever Act
- Annual Everglades status reports



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 Lower West Coast  
 239-338-2929 or 800-248-1201

Martin/St. Lucie  
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