



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Randy Smith

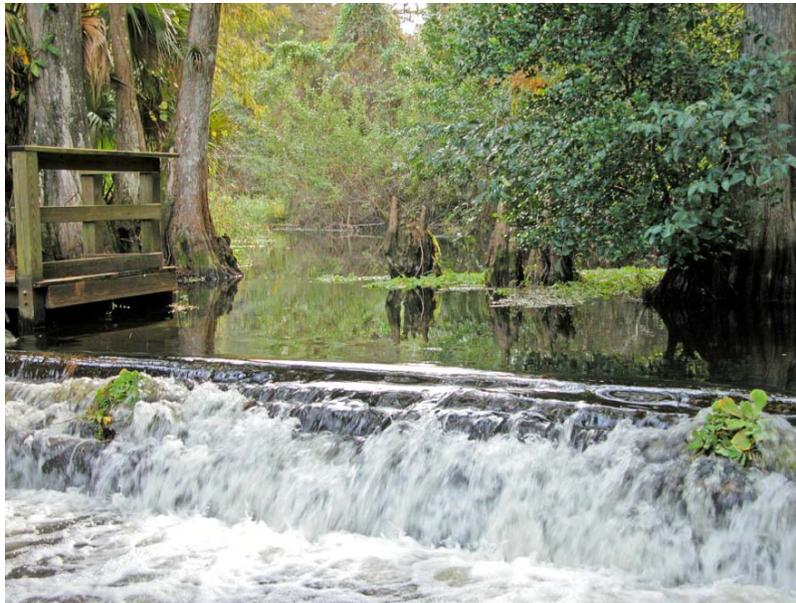
South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386

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SFWMD Begins Pilot Program to Help Restore the Loxahatchee River *30-day flow test to provide supplemental water to benefit the river's ecosystems*



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL – South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) scientists and engineers began a pilot test this week to provide additional water to the federally designated “Wild and Scenic” Loxahatchee River from a reservoir in central Palm Beach County.

“The Loxahatchee River is a unique and special slice of Florida, and providing the right amount of water is critical to its health and our community,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. “What we learn from this effort is intended to provide information necessary to help transform a test into lasting benefits for the ecosystem and residents.”

The pilot test involves delivering water to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River from the L-8 Reservoir, located northwest of the Village of Wellington, through Grassy Waters Preserve in West Palm Beach. The test will provide the District with a picture of

how the system would operate with a practical estimate of how much water could be delivered to the river during the dry season. District scientists will document factors such as evapotranspiration and seepage as water is pumped from the reservoir through a series of existing canals and wetlands to the river.

The 950-acre L-8 Reservoir was constructed to store and convey water for the restoration and preservation of natural resources associated with the Loxahatchee River watershed. The District expedited the reservoir's construction as well as several additional water control structures, which reconnected historical flow paths. The project will eventually be eligible for a 50-50 cost share with the federal government as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) once federal approvals are obtained.

"The L-8 Reservoir, with its unique geological features, represents an important resource to store a significant amount of water," said Ken Ammon, P.E., SFWMD Deputy Executive Director – Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects. "This tool gives us an additional option to help meet the critical freshwater needs of the Loxahatchee River."

The pumps were turned on Monday and began delivering 20 cubic feet per second of water toward the river. The City of West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County and the Loxahatchee River District are assisting the District with the test, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Based on findings from the test, the District will work with its partners to evaluate the best path forward to make water deliveries as part of the overall effort to restore and protect this important regional waterway. The information will also aid the District in determining the appropriate size of pumps needed to make the L-8 Reservoir fully operational.

"I applaud DEP and SFWMD for their efforts to fast track key components of Everglades restoration. Because this project is happening, the river is receiving supplemental flows and saltwater intrusion is being abated," said Albrey Arrington, Executive Director of the Loxahatchee River District. "This is great news for the river."

On May 17, 1985, 7.6 miles of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River was designated as a national Wild and Scenic River through the National Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968. Under the act, free-flowing rivers with outstanding scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, historic and cultural values are designated for preservation for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations.

The Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River – from Riverbend Park in Jupiter downstream to Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County – was the first river in the State of Florida to receive such a designation.

Since 1985, the SFWMD has acquired more than 20,000 acres of land in the river corridor and tributary watersheds for preservation and restoration. Through the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative, numerous agencies and local governments have worked together on 65 habitat and water quality restoration projects, most of which have been completed. Nearly \$18 million in legislative appropriations have been matched by more than \$23 million in local funds to accomplish this work.

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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.