

STUDIES UNDER DEVELOPMENT FOR WRDA 2024 CONSIDERATION

SFER TASK FORCE

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Image courtesy of Conservancy of Southwest Florida



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of Engineers



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM Studies for WRDA 24

- Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP)
- Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP)
- Lake Okeechobee Component A (LOCAR)

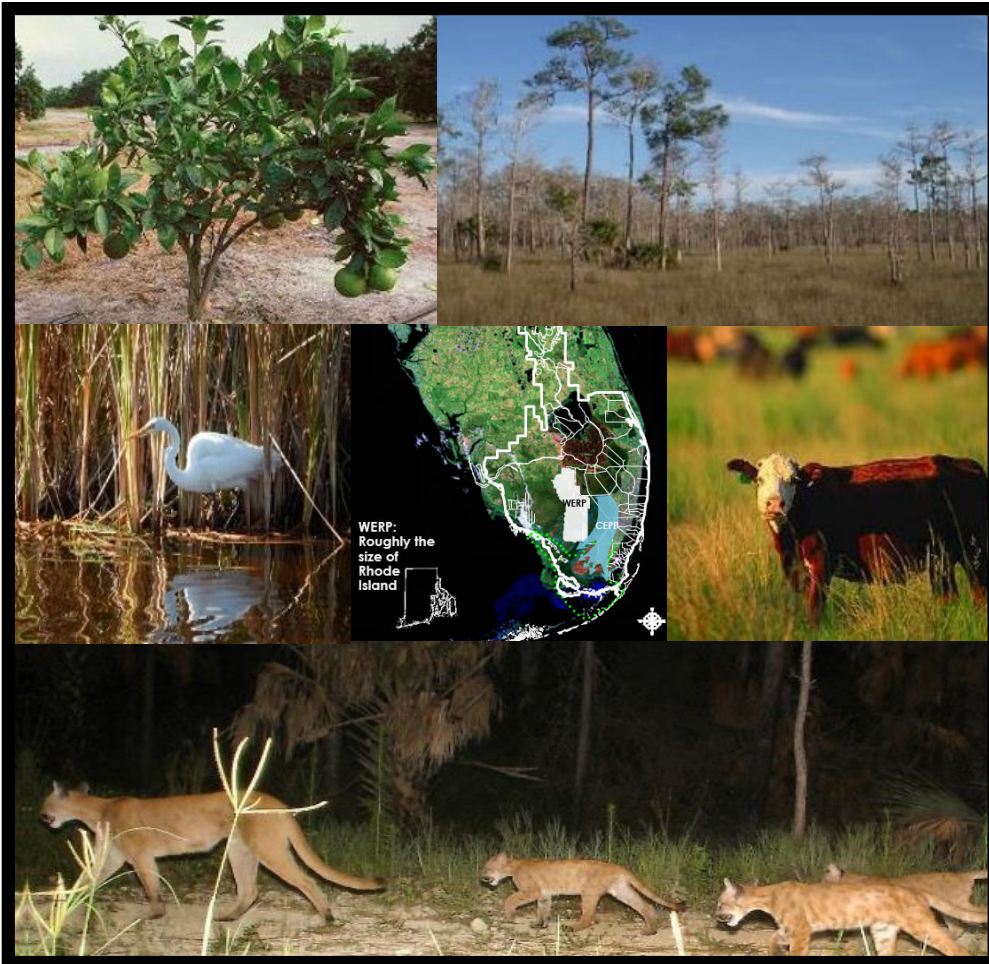




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SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

WESTERN EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECT (WERP)



WERP STUDY OBJECTIVES:

- Restore freshwater flow paths, flow volumes and timing, seasonal hydroperiods, and historic distributions of sheetflow to reestablish ecological connectivity and ecological resilience of the historic wetland/upland mosaic
- Restore water levels to reduce wildfires associated with altered hydrology, which damage the underlying geomorphology and associated ecological conditions of the western Everglades
- Restore aquatic low nutrient (oligotrophic) conditions to reestablish and sustain native flora and fauna

STATUS: Targeting WRDA24

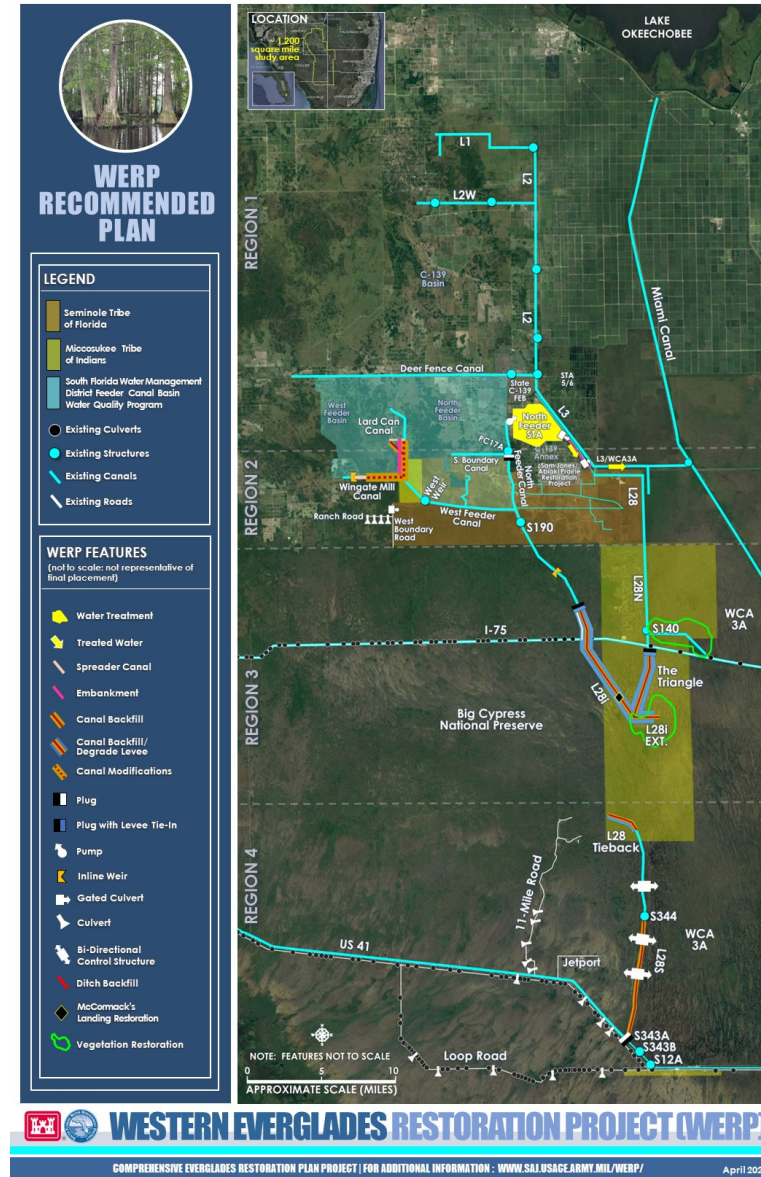
- 17 Apr 24 held project update public meeting
- Final Planning Implementation Report (PIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in policy reviews
- Complete Final Report - June 2024
- State and Agency Review - Aug 2024
- Chief's Report signed - September 2024
- Project Authorization Target - WRDA 2024



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RECOMMENDED PLAN

- The recommended plan is Alternative Hybrid Natural Flow Revised (HNFR.)
- Benefits:
 - ✓ Reduces over inundation of the panther conservation bank and west lands near the Wingate Mill Canal.
 - ✓ Reroutes the North Feeder Basin water into the Northwestern corner of Water Conservation Areas 3A while restoring aquatic low nutrient condition.
 - ✓ Re-establishes some sheetflow and ecological connectivity within the Triangle area, which is very important for the Tribes.
 - ✓ Restores a level of freshwater flow paths that could re-establish some ecological connectivity between Water Conservation Area 3A and Big Cypress National Park area.





WHAT WE HEARD AND RESULTING CHANGES TO FINAL PIR/EIS



WHAT WE HEARD:

- Removal of west feeder STA
- Impacts to wildlife, mitigation
- Impacts to hunting, fishing and public access
- Water levels on private property, concerns on modeling assumptions, hydrologic effect
- Flexibility on operations for drainage variability where needed
- Consideration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in operations and restoration of flows in native areas
- Avoid cultural resources impacts
- Non-WERP nutrient source control efforts, water quality, state's best management plan (BMP) and monitoring

CHANGES TO FINAL PIR/EIS:

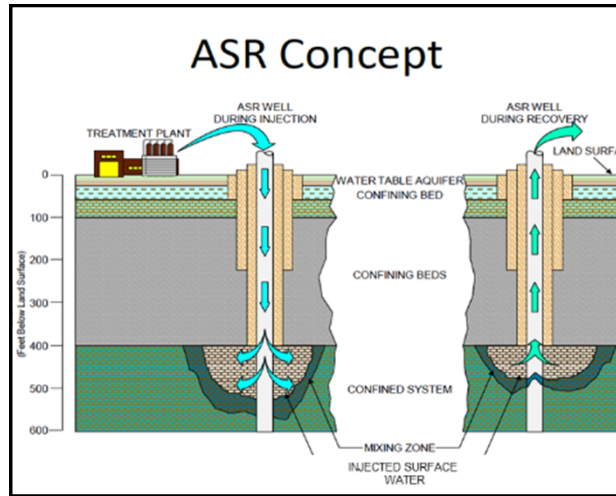
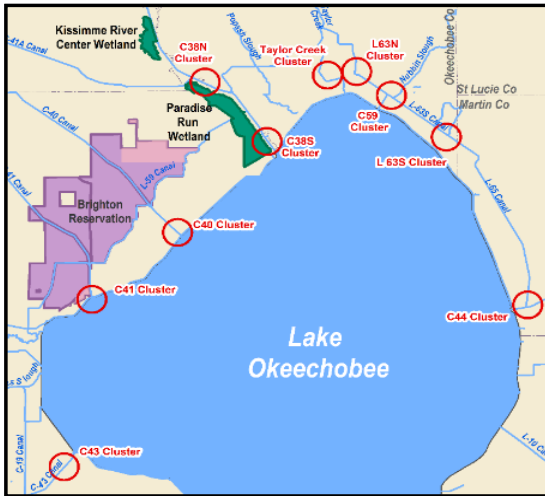
- No STA, more natural flows in west feeder basin
- Optimized design to reduce/eliminate impacts
- Updated the Integrated Implementation Plan
- Improved the Level of Engineering Design/Cost Estimate
- Obtained additional topographic survey information
- Obtained geotechnical borings and structure locations
- Evaluated Operations at the West Boundary Road Culvert entering SBCR
- Received 1501 Report form the Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Received Final Biological Opinion from USFWS April 24
- Improved WQ Monitoring Plan w/Support from DOI
- SFWMD's Feeder Basin Water Quality Program



SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED RESTORATION (LOWRP) PROJECT



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COMPONENTS:

○ Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Wells

WETLAND RESTORATION SITES

- Restore hydrology of isolated, riverine wetlands
- Paradise Run: ~ 4,700 acres
- Kissimmee River Center: ~ 1,200 acres
- Recreational facilities

STATUS:

- First Report: Final LOWRP Wetlands Restoration Planning Implementation Report (PIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in policy reviews and targeting WRDA 2024
- Second Report: LOWRP ASR – Pending additional science from USACE Engineering and Research Development Center (ERDC)

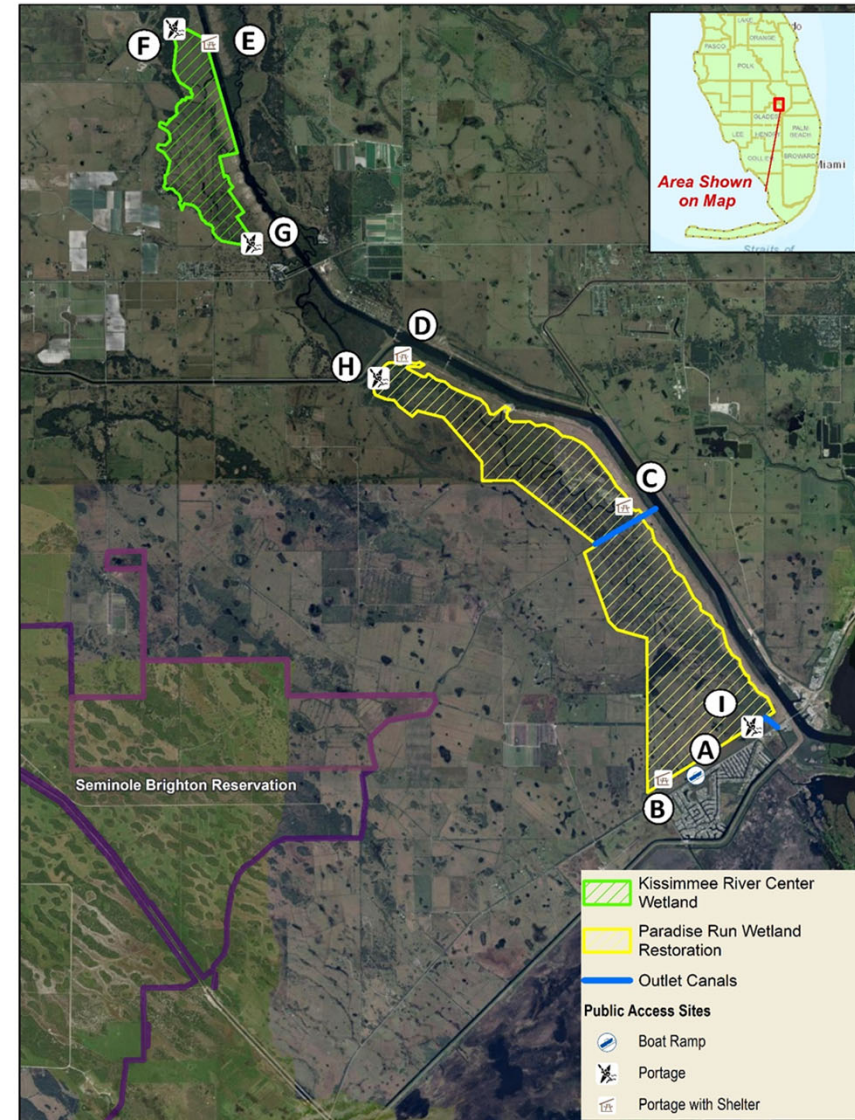




RECOMMENDED PLAN

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- The recommended plan is Alternative Aquifer Storage & Recovery (ASR) and is the wetland restoration features of the project.
- Benefits:
 - ✓ Improve the quantity, timing, and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee, thus providing opportunities for better management of lake water levels for ecological and water supply purposes.
 - ✓ Reduce the frequency and duration of high-volume regulatory lake flows to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries and improves system-wide operational flexibility.
 - ✓ Restore portions of the historic Kissimmee River channel and floodplain.
 - ✓ Recreational features will enhance the existing opportunities for resource-based recreation in the Lake Okeechobee watershed.





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Section 203 North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir (LOCAR) Final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement



South Florida Water Management District initiated planning of the *North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir Section 203 Study* in March 2023

- Also known as the *Lake Okeechobee Component A Storage Reservoir (LOCAR)*

Study Objectives

- Component A of CERP: a storage reservoir north of Lake Okeechobee with ~200,000 ac-ft of storage.
- Store excess water during wet periods.
- Reduce high and low water level events in Lake Okeechobee.
- Reduce large discharges to the downstream estuaries.
- Keep more water in the system for environmental and water supply uses.

WRDA 2024 Status

- Transmitted to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (ASA) for review on February 28, 2024

