

Project Name: Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem
Project ID: 1305
Lead Agency: Florida Department of Environmental Protection/South Florida Water Management District
Authority: CARL/Save Our Rivers

Strategic Plan Goal(s) Addressed: 1.A.3 and 2.A.1

Measurable Output(s): 38,282 Acres Acquired

Project Synopsis: This project involves acquisition and restoration of wetland and dry prairie habitat in Okeechobee County. The SFWMD and FDEP purchased 38,282 acres of land in 1997 for conservation as the Kissimmee Prairie State Preserve. Restoration has been initiated on the Preserve as well as the adjacent 7,315-acre Ordway-Whittell Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary owned and managed by the National Audubon Society. The project will restore 13,100 acres of wetlands that were over drained or over impounded by agricultural activities. In addition, the project will enhance another 2,625 acres of wetlands and 9,500 acres of associated dry prairie habitat. Restoration will be accomplished by removing 39.3 miles of ditches and dikes to return sheet flow across the land. Enhancement will include removal of unwanted or invasive vegetation from wetland and dry prairie habitats.

The purpose of the land acquisition project is to preserve the unique wetland and dry prairie habitats that were in agriculture and cattle land use and, using a five-year federal grant, restore and enhance these lands. Approximately 5,000 acres of the project hydraulically linked with the Kissimmee River will be reconnected, thereby restoring wetland habitat to regain historical biological diversity. The remaining 40,000 acres of the project in the project area contain extensive wetland habitats and excellent examples of the dry-prairie community type, which is recognized by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory as endangered at state and global levels. Because of the conversion of similar lands to citrus and improved pasture throughout central Florida, the Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem, in combination with the adjacent Air Force's Avon Park Bombing Range and Audubon's Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary, will form the largest region of dry prairie in public ownership in the State. Its preservation is the most important step in the recovery of the federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow. The endangered whooping crane, Everglades snail kite, and the woodstork utilize the habitats of the project area. Protection of these lands will also provide habitat for the following threatened species: southern bald eagle, Audubon's caracara, Florida scrub jay, and the eastern indigo snake. In addition, the project area contains habitat that supports over 800 species of plants and animals. **This project has been completed.**

Cost: Total: Project size 38,282 acres.
 38,282 acres have been acquired at a cost of \$21,953,790.

Project Schedule:

Start Date: 1996
 Finish Date: 1997

Detailed Project Budget Information (\$1000s)

	Through 2011	Total
Federal		
State	21,953.790	21,953.790
Total	21,953.790	21,953.790

Hyperlink: N/A
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