

Program Name: Lake Okeechobee Restoration: Water Quality
Project Name: Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan
Project ID: 1722
Lead Agency: South Florida Water Management District
Funding Source: State of Florida Appropriation

Strategic Plan Goal(s) Addressed: Other

Measurable Output(s): Improve the health of Lake Okeechobee through phosphorus load reductions and increased water storage. Reduction of total phosphorus loads from the watershed to meet the Lake's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of 140 MT/year through implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs), phosphorus reduction projects as well as sub-regional and regional water quality projects. Planning analyses completed in 2008 (Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project), which assumed that no additional lake water could be sent to south through the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) to the Everglades, identified a Lake Okeechobee Watershed water storage goal of 900,000 to 1.3 million acre-feet to be achieved through a combination of above-ground reservoirs, underground storage and dispersed water management projects on public and private lands. This storage goal may need to be refined depending on the opportunities for additional water storage and treatment in EAA.

Project Synopsis: Although there has been a long history of regulatory and voluntary incentive-based programs to control phosphorus inputs to Lake Okeechobee, there had not been any substantial reduction in loading during the preceding decade. As a result, the Florida legislature passed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (LOPA) in 2000, mandating that the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) work together to implement an aggressive program to address the issues of excessive phosphorus loading and exotic species expansion. The SFWMD, in cooperation with FDEP and FDACS, developed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan (LOPP) as required by LOPA, which was submitted to the Florida Legislature in January 2004, and was updated in February 2007.

In 2007, the Florida Legislature substantially expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act to the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP) (Section 373.4595, F.S., 2007). Consequently, the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery (LOER) Plan, announced in October 2005, was migrated into this program. The NEEPP specifically called for the development of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project Phase II Technical Plan (LOWCP P2TP- completed in 2008), along with separate river watershed protection plans for both the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie (completed in 2009 and updated in 2012) developed by the SFWMD, FDEP, and FDACS, collectively known as the coordinating agencies. Recently, the coordinating agencies updated the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan incorporating LOWCP P2TP elements and additional program components designed to benefit the lake ecosystem (SFWMD et al., 2011)

The LOPP contains a phased, watershed-based, comprehensive approach to reduce phosphorus loading to the lake and identifies construction projects, along with on-site measures that prevent or reduce pollution at its source such as agricultural and urban best management practices needed to achieve water quality targets for the Lake. Because the legislature has provided substantial funding for the implementation of the LOPP since 2000, the cooperating agencies have also implemented a large number of phosphorus reduction projects including phosphorus source control grant programs for agricultural landowners, dairy best available technology pilot projects, soil amendment projects, and isolated wetland

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restoration remediation of former dairies and regional public/private partnerships. In addition, the LOPP includes dispersed water management and other projects for increasing water storage north of Lake Okeechobee to achieve healthier lake levels and reduce harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers' estuaries. The LOPP also contains elements of research and monitoring as specified by the act. Accordingly, a comprehensive monitoring program for water quality in the lake and watershed and ecological indicators in the lake has been implemented.

Current Status: The LOPP is currently being implemented and the next update is due in 2014.

Cost: The LOPP includes a phased implementation. In 2011 LOPP update, implementation of near-term projects (2011-2013) and the cost for operations and maintenance of current (constructed or completed) projects are estimated to be \$92.6M.

Project Schedule:

Start Date: 2000
Finish Date: TBD

Detailed Project Budget Information (1000s)

	FY 1999-2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Federal EPA						
*State SFWMD	116,689	54,000	67,890	53,091	27,893	15,566
**Other	84,892	30,336	22,305	8,142	9,097	10,235
Total	201,581	84,336	90,195	61,233	36,991	25,801

Sources:

* Lake Okeechobee Program adopted budget - state appropriations

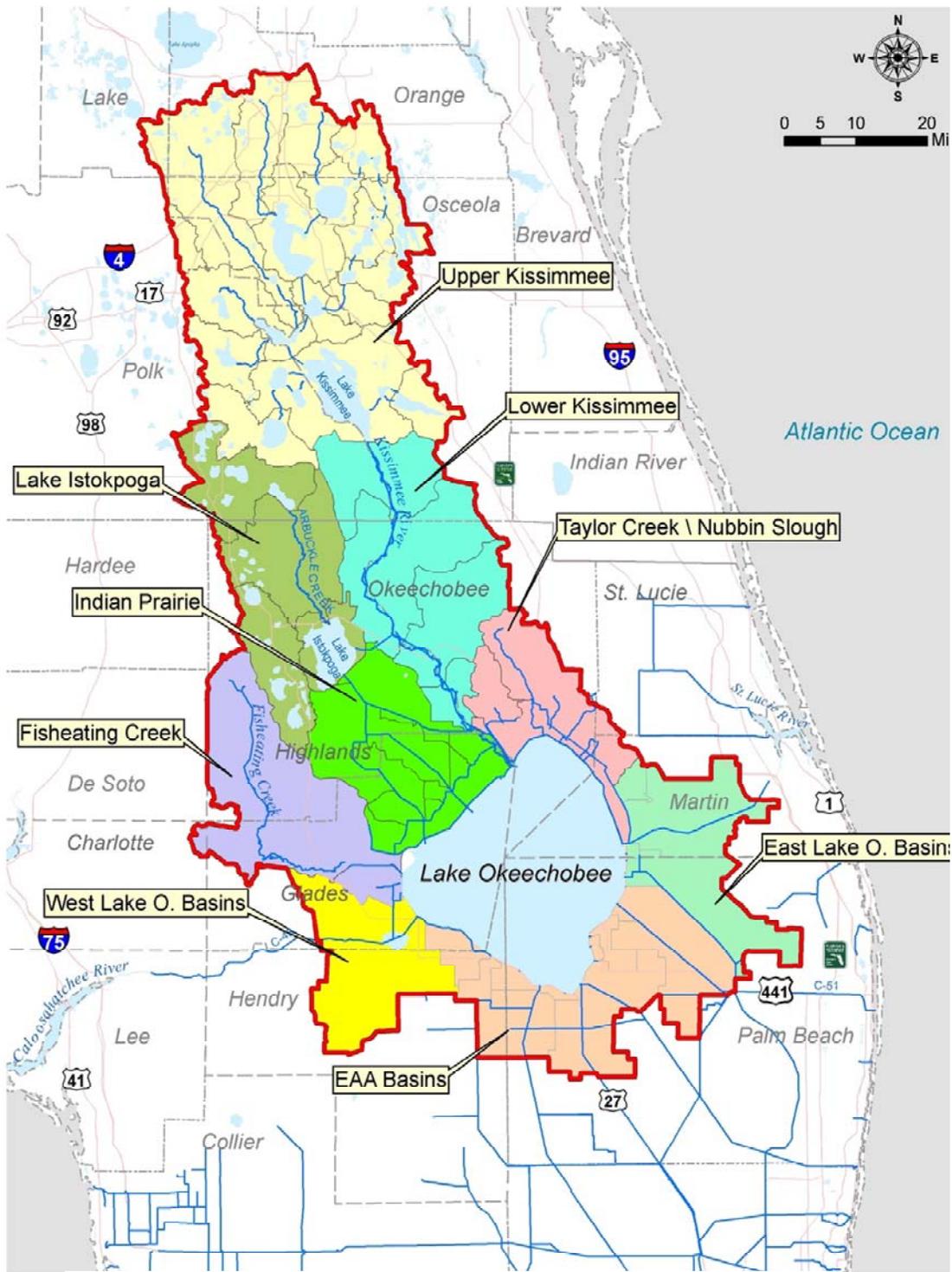
** Lake Okeechobee Program adopted budget - non-state appropriations

Note: Adopted budget may include fund balances from prior years.

Hyperlink:

http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/lopp_update_2011_ex_sum.pdf

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Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan Boundaries and Sub-Watersheds