

**Project Name:** C&SF: CERP Picayune Strand Restoration  
(F/K/A Southern Golden Gate Estates Hydrologic Restoration)  
**Project ID:** 2307 (CERP Project WBS # 30)  
**Lead Agency:** USACE / SFWMD  
**Authority:** WRDA 2007  
**Funding Source:** Corps/State

**Strategic Plan Goal(s) Addressed:** 2-A.3

**Measurable Output(s):** 55,000 acres wetlands restored

**April 1999 (Restudy) Project Synopsis:** Involves the restoration of natural water flow across 85 square miles in western Collier County that were drained in the early 1960s in anticipation of extensive residential development. This subsequent development dramatically altered the natural landscape, changing a healthy wetland ecosystem into a distressed environment. Implementation of the restoration plan would also improve the water quality of coastal estuaries by moderating the large salinity fluctuations caused by freshwater point discharge from the Faka-Union Canal at the Port of the Islands. The plan would also aid in protecting the City of Naples' eastern Golden Gate well field by improving groundwater recharge.

The project includes a combination of spreader basins, canal plugs, road removal, and pump stations located in the Western Basin and Big Cypress, south of I-75 and north of US 41 between the Belle Meade Area and the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve in Collier County,.

**Current Project Synopsis:** The plan will restore and enhance over 55,000 acres of wetlands in the former Southern Golden Gate Estates, now Picayune Strand State Forest, and in adjacent natural areas and public lands by reducing over-drainage. Implementation of the restoration plan will also improve the water quality of coastal estuaries by moderating the large salinity fluctuations caused by the freshwater point discharge from the Faka Union Canal.

The project significantly increases the size and improves the major wetland ecosystems in adjacent lands including the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and Collier Seminole State Park; benefiting threatened and endangered species communities such as the Florida panther and the red cockaded woodpecker. In addition, the project provides public access and recreational opportunities. Features include a combination of spreader basins, tie-back levees, numerous canal plugs, miles of road removal, and several pump stations located in the Western Basin and Big Cypress, south of I-75 and north of US 41, between the Belle Meade Area and the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve in Collier County.

In 2003, the state of Florida identified this effort as a state expedited project. A PIR was completed in 2004 and the Report of the Chief of Engineers was signed September 15, 2005. The Assistant Secretary of the Army (ASA) completed a review and referred the project to Congress by letter dated April 2, 2007 and it was authorized for construction in WRDA 2007 for \$375,330,000, dependent upon appropriation funding from Congress.

**Current Status:** The initial phase of the project, plugging of the northern two miles of the Prairie Canal, was completed by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) in 2007 and successfully reduced drainage of the adjacent Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and restored habitat for threatened and endangered species as part of the early-start work.

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Benefits are already being realized as native vegetation is quickly covering the plugged areas and very few nuisance or exotic plant species have been observed. Ospreys and wading birds have been observed foraging in the area as were beneficial surface water flows during the wet seasons.

In August 2009, the SFWMD Governing Board approved the Master Agreement, and Amendment 2 to the Design Agreement and addressed Land Valuation and Crediting Policy for CERP projects in general. The Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) for the Picayune Strand Restoration project was executed August 13, 2009.

Federal construction was implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and initiated with the October 2009 award of the Merritt Pump Station and Road Removal Contract. The cost for the first federally funded CERP project component was \$53 Million with \$40M in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. Merritt Pump Station completed construction on September 17, 2014 and started the one year testing period on October 1, 2014. Merritt Pump Station was transferred to SFWMD in May 2016.

The Faka Union Pump Station & Road Removal contract was awarded in October 2010 for approximately \$79M and is the largest of the three Pump Stations planned for construction. Construction of Faka Union Pump Station started in January 2011 and was completed in January 2016. The project will be transferred to SFWMD at the completion of the one-year testing period.

The construction contract for the Miller Pump Station & Road Removal was awarded in September 2013 for approximately \$76M. Construction of Miller Pump Station started in February 2014 and is scheduled to complete in August 2017.

The construction contract for the Manatee Mitigation features was awarded by SFWMD in April 2015 for approximately \$3.1M. Construction of the Manatee Mitigation features started in May 2015 and was completed in June 2016.

The Southwestern Protection feature modeling effort will resume in October 2015. Design and construction of the Southwestern Protection feature is on hold pending authorization of a project cost increase. A post authorization change Limited Reevaluation Report is scheduled for approval in August 2016.

**Est. Cost:                 \$ 617,762,000**

**Project Schedule:**

2004	PIR completed
2006	Prairie Canal expedited state construction begun.
2009	Merritt USACE construction began.
2010	Faka-Union USACE construction began.
2013	Miller construction began.
2014	Merritt construction physically completed.
2015	Faka-Union construction physically completed.
2015	Manatee Mitigation feature construction began.
2016	Limited Reevaluation Report scheduled to be approved.
2016	Manatee Mitigation feature physically completed.
2017	Miller construction physically completed.

**Detailed Project Budget Information** (rounded):

Picayune Strand	Obligations Thru FY 2016
USACE	\$322,057,113
SFWMD	\$160,856,364
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$482,913,477</b>

**Hyperlinks:** <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/EcosystemRestoration>  
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**Source:** Original project description summarized from the Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Review Study (Restudy) (1999). Detailed information is summarized from the Final Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement (PIR/EIS). Cost estimate information is updated to reflect current price in FY 2015 price levels. Actual expenditures include all federal expenditures through FY15 (Sept, 2015), including real estate in the project footprint per the PPA; and sponsor verified and recorded in kind credit through 4th quarter FY15.

