



Report on Fisheating Creek Wetlands Reserve Program Project

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Fisheating Creek Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Project



Fisheating Creek, in the Northern Everglades Watershed, flows southeast into Lake Okeechobee, which in turn flows into the Everglades. The Northern Everglades is one of the last frontiers for large-scale land conservation in Florida and a high priority area for Florida NRCS.

Contiguous natural areas are needed to provide the large open spaces, food resources and connectivity needed to sustain and re-introduce wide-ranging animals such as Florida black bear, whooping crane and the Florida panther.





Project Details

- ❑ **The Fisheating Creek WRP Project:**
 - involves four landowners,
 - five tracts of land,
 - encompasses approximately 26,000 acres in Highlands County, Florida, and
 - has an estimated WRP easement acquisition cost of \$87.8 million.
- ❑ **NRCS's goal is to restore the wetlands within 24 months.**





Partners in the Project

- ❑ USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- ❑ 4 Landowners in Highlands County
- ❑ The Nature Conservancy – Florida (TNC)
- ❑ South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)





Partner Involvement

The Nature Conservancy and the South Florida Water Management District will both sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USDA – NRCS to provide in kind services such as:

- land acquisition staff resources,
- agricultural engineering,
- agricultural project management,
- environmental resource permitting,
- water quality monitoring, and
- land management.





Benefits of the Project

The Fisheating Creek WRP:

- ❑ Will connect several tracts of public and private land and help form a conservation corridor from Central Florida to the Everglades National Park.
- ❑ Restore the natural functions of the wetlands thereby improving water quality by reducing nutrient loading in Lake Okeechobee and ultimately the Everglades.
- ❑ Will improve habitat for more than 19 federally endangered and threatened species that have been documented on these ranches such as the crested caracara, bald eagle, Florida panther, and the red-cockaded woodpecker.
- ❑ Will address the Everglades Restoration goal of improved water quality, quantity and seasonal distribution.



Who Benefits?

- Fisheating Creek
- Lake Okeechobee
- The Everglades
- South Florida Ecosystems
- Wetlands
- Wildlife
- The public





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