

## Restoration Progress Highlights

### Legislative and Public Support for Restoration Remains Strong

In 1996, Congress called for a comprehensive approach to restoring the hydrology of south Florida. In 2000, the resulting **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)** was authorized, providing a blueprint for restoration that will be implemented over four decades. Each individual CERP project requires Congressional authorization. In 2007, the first three major projects were authorized (Indian River Lagoon South, Picayune Strand, and Site 1). In 2014, four more projects (C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project, C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project Phase 1, and Broward County Water Preserve Areas) were authorized.

In 2014, the citizens of Florida passed the **Land Acquisition Trust Fund** amendment to the Florida Constitution that requires the Legislature to appropriate funds annually for land conservation and improvement. A portion of these funds is intended to go toward Everglades restoration. In 2016, the Florida Legislature implemented this amendment in part with the Legacy Florida Act that provides Everglades restoration a dedicated funding source through 2026. The **Legacy Florida Act** will provide approximately \$200 million each year for 10 years to restoration projects for the Everglades.

### Restoring the Heart of the Everglades—Ready for authorization

The **Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)** was completed and submitted to Congress for authorization in August 2015. The goals of CEPP are to improve the quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the northern Estuaries, central Everglades, and Everglades National Park in order to restore habitats and ecological function. The CEPP combines six individual CERP water storage, conveyance, and decompartmentalization projects in the heart of the Everglades. As of September 30, 2016, both the U.S. House and Senate authorizing bills included CEPP.

### Restoration Planning Continues

In 2016, expedited planning was undertaken for three additional CERP projects. Once planning is complete, the following projects will be submitted to Congress for authorization.

The **Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project** will address the quantity and timing of water entering Lake Okeechobee from the major tributary systems north of the lake while improving regional water management flexibility and restoring wetland habitat.

The **Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project** will restore and sustain the overall quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of fresh water to the federally-designated “National Wild and Scenic” Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

The **Western Everglades Restoration Project** will improve the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water in the western Everglades.

### Restoring Wetlands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture supports Everglades restoration by providing financial and technical assistance to private landowners and tribes. The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program** provides agricultural and wetland easements to landowners that protect lands devoted to food production, restore and enhance wetlands, and improve wildlife habitat. During the reporting period, the USDA invested over \$65 million to protect 8,000 acres of land in Florida.

The **Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands CERP** project, authorized by Congress in 2014, will improve the ecology of Biscayne National Park and Biscayne Bay by rehydrating coastal wetlands and allowing water to flow to the bay in a more natural way. Prior to Congressional authorization, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) completed construction of a portion of the project features. The Project Partnership Agreement between the SFWMD and the Corps was executed in 2016, paving the way for completing the rest of the project.



Photos: USACE

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### Restoring Natural Hydrology

The **Picayune Strand Restoration CERP** project will restore an area larger than the District of Columbia that was drained in the early 1960s for residential development that never fully materialized. The project will remove 48 miles of canals and 260 miles of roadways that disrupt the natural flow of water. Three large pump stations are required to reroute the water and maintain flood protection for adjacent development. The first was completed in 2014, the second was completed in 2016, and the last is underway and expected to be complete in 2017. Operational monitoring is also underway and levees required to maintain current levels of flood protection will be constructed in 2018.

The **Indian River Lagoon-South CERP** project will help reduce harmful drainage inflows to the St. Lucie Estuary and the southern portion of the Indian River Lagoon by storing and treating runoff from the watershed and a portion of the flows in the C-44 canal. The C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) feature is currently under construction. When completed, the reservoir will be able to capture enough water to fill 25,000 Olympic swimming pools.

### Partnering to Restore Flow through the River of Grass

Built in the 1920s, U.S. Highway 41/Tamiami Trail unintendedly functions as a dam between the central Everglades and Everglades National Park. Replacing sections of this roadway with bridges will allow more water to flow out of the Central Everglades into Everglades National Park. The first mile of bridging, completed in 2013, proved invaluable when record rainfall fell across the central Everglades in 2016. The bridge allowed water to flow to eastern sections of the park, reducing damaging water levels in the central Everglades.

The National Park Service, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration have partnered to advance the next phase of bridging. A construction contract was awarded in May 2016 and construction will begin in October 2016 on 2.6 additional miles of bridging (**Tamiami Trail Next Steps Project, Phase 1**) that will allow more flow from north to south and will distribute that flow across a wider area to hydrate important deeper water habitats in the park. All of the bridges on Tamiami Trail will ultimately work in tandem with other restoration features to increase flow from Lake Okeechobee through the central Everglades to Florida Bay.

### The Return of a River

The **Kissimmee River Restoration** project is nearing completion and positive ecological responses are already being observed. During the past two years, features to reduce flood impacts to residential development and restore part of the river's floodplain were completed. Current efforts will remove 9 additional miles of canal, re-carve 4 miles of the historic river, and restore approximately 4,700 additional acres of wetlands. When fully complete, this project will have restored more than 40 square miles of river-floodplain ecosystem, an area nearly the size of San Francisco.



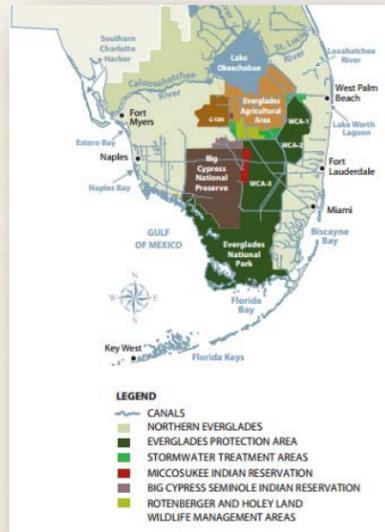
Kissimmee River Restoration. Photo: B. Anderson



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### Continuing to Invest in Water Quality Restoration

The State of Florida's **Restoration Strategies** water quality program includes more than 6,500 acres of new STAs and 116,000 acre-feet of additional water storage. The additional storage is equivalent to enough water to fill the U.S. Capitol rotunda 4,000 times. To date, 3 project components are complete, 28 program milestones have been achieved, and all upcoming milestones are on track to be completed on or before their deadlines.



Source: 2016 S.FL Environmental Report

### Putting Restoration Infrastructure to Work

In February 2016, in response to record setting dry season rainfall, Governor Scott declared a state of emergency in several counties along Florida's east and west coasts. The Governor cited "extensive environmental harm" and "severe economic losses" caused by drainage discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission asked the Corps to temporarily ease regulatory restrictions to move more clean water south from the central Everglades into Everglades National Park.

Multiple state and federal agencies worked together to implement these changes. As water levels subsided, the temporary operations were terminated and a system recovery period was extended through December 2016. The actions were viewed as highly successful and demonstrated the ability of the new infrastructure to move large volumes of water out of the central Everglades and into the eastern portion of the park. Operations like these can become more permanent when construction of the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park and C-111 South Dade Projects are complete.



Lake Okeechobee. Source: Mac Stone

In June 2016, Governor Scott declared a state of emergency for Martin, St. Lucie, Palm Beach, and Lee Counties due to widespread algal blooms impacting Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries. State agencies were directed to conduct additional monitoring, to establish a hotline for reporting algae problems, and to store more water throughout the system.

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Algal Blooms impacting Lake Okeechobee

### The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

The intergovernmental Task Force provides strategic coordination and a system-wide perspective to guide the restoration efforts being planned and implemented in south Florida. The Task Force, Working Group, and Science Coordination Group meet regularly to report on progress, facilitate consensus, and identify opportunities for improvement. The Task Force includes public participation in all its coordination activities. In addition to its regular meetings, the Task Force has developed and employed a workshop process to enhance public engagement in such planning activities as the recent update of the Integrated Delivery Schedule (2015), the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project (2016), and the Western Everglades Restoration Project (2016).

The Task Force regularly issues progress reports on Everglades restoration that can be found on our website [EvergladesRestoration.gov](http://EvergladesRestoration.gov).

**South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force**  
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# Progress Restoring America's Everglades

2014-2016

*America's Everglades* stretches from Orlando to the Florida Keys. Spanning over 18,000 square miles, it is twice the size of New Jersey. In addition to being a unique ecosystem, home to vibrant and diverse populations of plant and animal life, the Everglades also provides drinking water to more than 8 million people and is home to two Native American tribes.

The quality of life and regional economy of south Florida depend on the health and vitality of the Everglades. Historically, water flowed slowly from the Kissimmee River to Florida Bay across the ecosystem's extremely flat landscape. This natural "River of Grass" was extensively altered in the 20th century by multiple drainage efforts that sought to control the flow of water to promote agricultural and urban development.

A healthy Everglades depends upon reversing the unintended consequences of these drainage efforts. To that end, federal, state, tribal, and local government partners are engaged in the world's largest intergovernmental ecosystem restoration effort. The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by Congress in 1996 to provide long-term strategic coordination among agencies and governments engaged in Everglades restoration, and is required to report on restoration progress every two years. This overview summarizes the most recent progress report. The full Biennial Report (2014-2016) can be found at [EvergladesRestoration.gov](http://EvergladesRestoration.gov).



**Greater Everglades Ecosystem**

**Watershed Area - 18,000 square miles**

