

November 2013

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## Chairman's Message

**Daniel O'Keefe, Governing Board Chairman**



The Governing Board continues working to improve water storage and water quality throughout the region, as both are equally vital components in restoring South Florida's ecosystems.

At the November meeting, the Board approved additional funding for a key water storage project north of Lake Okeechobee. Located in Highlands County near Lake Istokpoga, the 1,200-acre project consists of three above-ground impoundments to hold storm water that would otherwise flow directly into canals leading to Lake Okeechobee and the coastal estuaries.

The District joins numerous partners investing in this important project, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Istokpoga Marsh Watershed Improvement District, Highlands County and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. When complete, the project will allow more flexibility for water management in the northern Everglades system, particularly during the challenges of very wet or very dry times.

While permanent storage projects such as this one continue moving forward, the District also took emergency steps over the summer to store water during an extremely wet 2013 rainy season. Through agreements with private landowners and also storing water on our pre-construction project sites, the District captured more than 6,600 acre-feet of water, which equates to more than 2 billion gallons. This was in addition to water retention on our public lands and coordinating closely with local drainage districts and other partners to retain as much water as possible in their systems.

This month the Board also discussed strategic planning for the next generation of Everglades restoration projects, many of which will provide even more water storage options. These include the Central Everglades Planning Project, as well as the C-111 Spreader Canal, C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands and Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration. Moving restoration projects forward continues to be one of this agency's most important goals, and I look forward to providing updates here in the months ahead.

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## SFWMD Boosts Water Storage Project North of Lake Okeechobee

**Restoration site will store and treat stormwater runoff before it enters the big lake**



The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) recently approved an investment to advance a restoration project in Highlands County that will store water and reduce nutrients and stormwater runoff before it enters Lake Okeechobee.

"Expanding water storage and treatment are essential across the entire South Florida ecosystem," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O'Keefe. "Each project we move forward brings us closer to attaining benefits for Lake Okeechobee, the coastal estuaries and our vital communities."

Strategically located in a 19,000-acre watershed northwest of the lake, the project comprises three shallow above-ground impoundments. Together totaling approximately 1,200 acres, the impoundments will hold storm water that would otherwise flow directly into canals leading to Lake Okeechobee.

The \$2 million investment approved by the SFWMD Governing Board — along with funding by project partners that include the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Istokpoga Marsh Watershed Improvement District, Highlands County and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services — advances the project to the next step, which is final design and construction of the first impoundment.

"This is a continuation of efforts by the Department and the South Florida Water Management District to restore Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades with the support of Governor Scott," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Additional water storage and cleaner water are critical to the restoration of Lake Okeechobee."

At 308 acres filled 3.5 feet deep, the first impoundment will hold approximately 900 acre-feet of water. This is equivalent to about 450 Olympic-size swimming pools or about 100 American football fields, without end zones, covered with 9 feet of water.

Scientific study and computer modeling have shown the project, combined with the use of best management practices on local farms, could reduce 70 percent of the phosphorus and 60 percent of the local stormwater runoff flowing into the Harney Pond Canal, which flows into Lake Okeechobee and ultimately the Everglades.

By storing and treating water bound for the lake, the project helps meet key objectives of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. The program is designed to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water into Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie watersheds by building on and consolidating numerous restoration efforts into a broader approach focused on restoring the entire Northern Everglades system.

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## Conserve Water ... and Give Thanks

### ***Enjoy friends, family and food without gobbling extra water***



At the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Thanksgiving is a time to be thankful for South Florida's water resources and encourage a year-round ethic of conservation.

Thanksgiving falls in the early part of the dry season, which typically lasts from October until May. With many months of the dry season still ahead, this is the ideal time to remind people to conserve water both indoors and outside the home. During the dry season, reduced rainfall levels have the potential to strain the water supply — even coming on the heels of a wet summer.

During the holiday season, water is typically used at every step of the big meal — from defrosting to cooking to cleaning up after the feast. The amount of water used indoors can escalate with the preparation and clean-up process for large meals and gatherings.

Here are five ways to save water over the holiday weekend:

- Defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator the night before they are needed instead of running hot water over them the same day.
- Rinse vegetables and fruits in a sink or pan filled with water instead of under running water. As an added bonus, use this water on houseplants.
- Select the proper size pans for cooking. Large pans require more cooking water than may be necessary.
- Scrape food scraps into the garbage can or a composting bin, rather than rinsing them into the sink's garbage disposal.
- Run the dishwasher only when you have a full load of dishes.

If every American household reduced water use by 10 gallons on just Thanksgiving Day, it would save more than 1 billion gallons of water, as well as save energy or materials used to pump, heat and treat tap water.

For more information on saving water year-round, visit [www.savewaterfl.com](http://www.savewaterfl.com).

For information on the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule currently in effect, please visit [www.sfwmd.gov/2days](http://www.sfwmd.gov/2days).

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