



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Invites Stakeholders to Develop Restoration Vision for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary

Collaborative effort will focus on the ecology of the water body



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

Fort Myers, FL – Further recognizing the critical importance of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today announced a public initiative to collaboratively develop a restoration vision for the Caloosahatchee watershed that focuses on the ecological conditions of the system.

The effort builds on today's action by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to implement [Basin Management Action Plans](#) for reducing nutrients of concern flowing into the estuary, Hendry Creek and the Imperial River and to increase storage options and restore more natural water flows.

To achieve an ecological restoration vision for the Caloosahatchee, the District will bring together stakeholders representing government, environmental, business and agricultural entities along with other interested parties. In a series of facilitated workshops

"Successfully addressing pollution in all of the state's water bodies requires cooperation and partnerships between public and private stakeholders. It also takes leadership and committing public funds to meaningful projects to restore and protect our water bodies. I applaud the South Florida Water Management District's leadership, as well as the efforts of the local governments and stakeholders of this basin. Efforts such as this serve as a great model for other communities in the state."

*— Department of Environmental Protection Secretary
Herschel T. Vinyard Jr.*

starting in early 2013, stakeholders will focus on determining key ecological attributes in the Caloosahatchee that are fundamental to a restored system.

“Today’s signing of the management action plans is another significant step forward on improving these water bodies, and we are going to build on this work,” said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa L. Meeker. “Clearly defining what the ecology of a healthy river and estuary should look like is the goal of this stakeholder process. It is a vision that will help guide projects and programs for years to come.”

To be successful, the vision will take into account the constraints of the current system, including existing infrastructure, navigation requirements and existing legal land and water uses. Stakeholders can then identify, for example, what plant and animal species are expected to occur in the freshwater, transitional and estuarine portions of the system.

Developing an overall restoration vision has been a proven success for the District. In 2006, a similar process produced a Restoration Vision for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Stakeholders from Martin and Palm Beach counties helped define five Valued Ecosystem Components, including the cypress swamp, hydric hammock, fish, oysters and seagrasses. These components have helped guide management decisions and operational and structural modifications to help achieve restoration flow to the river.

More information:

- [Website: Protecting and Improving the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary](#)
- [Just the Facts: Protecting and Improving the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary](#)
- [Map: Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Watershed](#)
- [Map: Completed Local Projects](#)

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.