

June 2014

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Chairman's Message

Daniel O'Keefe, Governing Board Chairman



This month the Governing Board met in Kissimmee, an area in central Florida considered the headwaters of the greater Everglades ecosystem. The opportunity to meet away from West Palm Beach headquarters twice a year continues our long-standing practice of conducting business and meeting residents and local officials in the communities we serve.

Our Kissimmee location was ideal for authorizing the next step toward sustaining Kissimmee River restoration by assuring water for the restored river, its floodplain and Upper Chain of Lakes. Rule development for a water reservation — a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or for public health and safety — is now underway. The public process will bring together stakeholders to continue an ongoing review of Kissimmee science and technical data, with the goal of adopting a water reservation rule in 2015.

For the past four weeks, the South Florida Water Management District has been recognizing June as Flood Awareness Month. Our field station crews work year-round to prepare for the summer wet season when heavy downpours or prolonged rains can result in flooding.

Because flood protection is a shared responsibility, we encourage the District's local partners — water control districts, counties, municipalities, homeowner associations and even residents — to make sure their drainage facilities are functional and clear of debris so stormwater can flow readily into the regional system and away from roads and neighborhoods.

During the rainy season, operation of Lake Okeechobee by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is also a timely topic. With last summer's high-volume discharges to the coastal estuaries still on residents' minds, the Board had a good discussion on the potential for greater operational flexibility for managing lake levels. Working within existing federal regulation schedule parameters, the District is conducting a technical investigation into additional guidance that could help reduce discharges to the estuaries and increase water storage, benefiting all water users including the environment. We look forward to follow up briefings on this important topic.

Lastly, in compliance with new legislation that takes effect July 1, we have implemented a water management district Lobbyist Registration process. In addition, a database of registered lobbyists and their principals is posted for public review. There is no cost to register, and further information is now available on the District's website at www.sfwmd.gov/opengov.

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June is 'Flood Awareness Month' in South Florida

SFWMD highlights shared responsibility of flood control as wet season begins

For the third consecutive year, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) recognized June as Flood Awareness Month to highlight the risk of flooding in South Florida and to encourage residents to help reduce that risk.

In an average year, South Florida's wet season begins around May 20 and typically brings 35 inches of rainfall, two-thirds of the annual total in the region. The 2014 season started late, and the National Weather Service's forecast calls for near to slightly below-average precipitation over the coming months. However, flooding may occur any time during the wet season, either when large amounts of rain fall during a brief timeframe or from a single heavy storm, tropical system or hurricane.

Due to South Florida's weather extremes, the District's flood control system must be



prepared to handle intensive rainfall at any time of year, from Tropical Storm Isaac in August 2012 to conditions this past January — the wettest January in more than two decades — during the height of the dry season. The agency coordinates closely with local drainage authorities, whose canal systems move water into the regional system.

Know the Flow

As a result of South Florida's interconnected drainage system, flood control is a responsibility shared by the SFWMD, county and city governments, local drainage districts, homeowners associations and residents.

Residents can do their part to prepare by:

- Keeping ditches, swales, drainage grates and retention lakes clear of debris, trash and other discarded material
- Knowing whether a nearby canal is a primary canal maintained by the District or a secondary canal maintained by a municipality or drainage district
- Reporting the location and condition of any clogged or damaged facilities to the proper authority
- Making sure trees or other vegetation do not encroach on canal maintenance right-of-way

Maintenance: Keeping the Flow Going

The District has an extensive program of structural maintenance and upgrades — carried out primarily during the dry season — that is critical to ensuring the regional flood control system operates at optimal capacity. This system includes nearly 2,100 miles of canals and 2,000 miles of levees and berms. District crews also regularly inspect more than 600 water control structures and 70 pump stations.

During the past five years, the District has invested \$276 million in essential maintenance work, including:

- Hardening pump stations
- Overhauling gated spillways
- Replacing project culverts
- Dredging canals
- Stabilizing canal banks
- Enhancing Stormwater Treatment Areas

For more information, see:

- [Rainy Season Readiness](#)
- [Below the Surface: Managing Flood Water Before and After the Storm \[PDF\]](#)
- [Know the Flow \[PDF\]](#)
- Follow the District's Emergency Management Twitter feed: [@SFWMD_EM](#)

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SFWMD Advances Water Reservation for Kissimmee Restoration

Restoring the historic floodplain and its wildlife depend on fresh water

To provide water essential for the protection of fish and wildlife in the Kissimmee River, its vast floodplain and the Upper Chain of Lakes, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) in June authorized the next step in a public process to reserve water for the ecosystem. The area extends from Orlando to Lake Okeechobee and is known as the headwaters of the Everglades.

Freshwater flows are essential to achieve — and sustain — environmental restoration of



about 44 meandering miles of the historic Kissimmee River and floodplain plus more than two dozen interconnected lakes that together support a vast array of fish and wildlife.

"The District and its partners have invested extensive resources in returning the Kissimmee Basin to its natural beauty and ecological health," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Daniel O'Keefe. "Now we will ensure there is sufficient water for the impressive diversity of life returning to the restored waterway."

A water reservation is a legal mechanism to set aside water for the protection of fish and wildlife or for public health and safety. When a water reservation is in place, quantities and timing of water at specific locations are legally protected for the natural system.

Rule development for the water reservation will bring together stakeholders to continue an ongoing public review of Kissimmee science and technical data, with the goal of adopting a final rule in 2015.

To date, Florida has invested close to \$400 million in headwaters projects encompassing lakes, the river and floodplain. This accounts for almost 25,000 acres of wetland habitat critical to the protection of fish and wildlife, including endangered or threatened species.

When implemented, the reservation will guarantee that water needed to keep these ecosystems thriving will not be allocated for consumptive use.

For more information, see:

- [Water Reservations](#)
- [Just the Facts: Water Reservation for the Kissimmee Basin](#)
- [Protecting and Restoring Ecosystems](#)

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SFWMD Promotes Transparency with Lobbyist Registration Process

Public will be able to access list of registered lobbyists in online database



In keeping with its commitment to open government, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) will require any person who intends to lobby the agency to register with the District Clerk's Office, beginning July 1.

Lobbyists must submit a registration form and principal's authorization before talking with an SFWMD official or employee on behalf of the firms, corporations or groups they are paid to represent. Registration will be renewable at the beginning of each calendar year. The District is not charging a fee to register.

To further increase transparency, a database of registered lobbyists will be easily accessible on the District's website at www.sfwmd.gov/opengov. Members of the public can click on lobbyists' names in the database to see the principals they represent.

Passed during the 2014 state legislative session and recently signed into law by Governor Rick Scott, Senate Bill 846 requires Florida's five water management districts to develop a lobbyist registration process. A separate registration form must be submitted to each water management district that a person will be lobbying.

For more information, see:

- [Lobbyist Registration – Instructions, Documents and Reference Information](#)
- [Registered Lobbyist Database](#)
- [FAQs: Lobbyist Registration Process \[PDF\]](#)

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SFWMD Offers Recreational Hunting Opportunities

South Florida's natural areas are abundant in small game and waterfowl



In an ongoing effort to provide recreation opportunities on its public lands, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has approved continued seasonal hunting in Miami's Rocky Glades and the C-23/C-24 area on the Treasure Coast. In addition, more acres are now available for hunting use at the Lake Marion Creek and Southern Glades management areas.

Open for a ninth season, hunters will have access this year to approximately 5,143 acres in the popular Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area in western Miami-Dade County. Non-native reptile hunting is also available there. Open for a seventh season, hunters will have access this year to approximately 1,185 acres in the C-23/C-24 Public Small Game Hunting Area in St. Lucie County.

The SFWMD Governing Board also authorized expanded hunting for the 2014-2015 season in the following areas:

- In Miami-Dade County, the District incorporated 357 additional acres for hunting into the Southern Glades Wildlife and Environmental Area. Hiking, biking, fishing and wildlife viewing are also available.
- Approximately 342 additional acres adjacent to the Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area in Polk County were opened to hunting. The larger 8,083-acre management area is part of the headwaters of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and includes activities such as hiking, camping and wildlife viewing.

All hunting activities are administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), in partnership with the SFWMD.

The District continues increasing recreational access to its public lands while managing them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions. At present, the District owns 621,000 acres of land that are open to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have enhancements such as picnic tables, informational kiosks, campsites and hiking trails.

For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District's 16-county region, visit www.sfwmd.gov/recreation.

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