

## FACTS & INFORMATION



➤ @M2013

**N**urtured by the sun and frequent rain, the greater Everglades ecosystem flourished in south Florida for 5,000 years. Runoff from the Kissimmee River Basin's pinewoods and prairies flowed into Lake Okeechobee. The water then spilled over the south shore of the lake, and in shallow sheets flowed through vast stretches of sawgrass in a slow journey to Florida Bay.

In southwest Florida, the Caloosahatchee River collected runoff and funneled the water west into the Gulf of Mexico. At the river's mouth, where fresh and salt water mixed, a large, lush estuary evolved and provided shelter and forage for an array of fish, shellfish, birds and other wildlife.

Much has changed in the last 120 years as man sought to tame Florida's watery wilderness. In 1881, Philadelphia developer Hamilton Disston purchased from the state some four million acres around Lake Okeechobee for 25-cents an acre. A year later, he succeeded in cutting a canal that, for the first time, directly linked Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River, and opened the region to navigation and development. Over the ensuing years, the river's navigation channel was enlarged, improved, and eventually incorporated into the 1948 Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project as the C-43 Canal. For most purposes, the C-43 Canal and Caloosahatchee River are one and the same.

After heavy rains, agency water managers often release water from Lake Okeechobee into the Caloosahatchee River. The water moves swiftly down the river and into the Caloosahatchee Estuary. An overabundance of fresh water changes estuarine salinity levels and harms brackish marine habitats.

Federal and state agencies conducted a reevaluation of the 1948 flood control project to determine how to reverse such damage. This study produced the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which was approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work with the South Florida Water Management District and other federal, state and local agencies to implement CERP, while enhancing water supplies and maintaining the existing flood reduction benefits of the C&SF Project.

## PROJECT PURPOSE

The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir project will improve the timing, quantity and quality of freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.

South Florida's flood reduction system stores water in Lake Okeechobee during the annual wet season. Excess water is released, and the resulting unnatural surges of freshwater to the Caloosahatchee River reduce estuarine salinity levels. Alternately, during the dry season when irrigation demands are high, little to no water is released to the river. This causes an increase in salinity levels. Both high and low salinity levels can trigger die-offs of sea grasses and oysters, species that are indicators of the estuary's overall health.

The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir will help ensure a more natural, consistent flow of fresh water to the estuary. To restore and maintain the estuary during the dry season, the project will capture and store basin stormwater runoff, along with a portion of water discharged from Lake Okeechobee, and water will be slowly released into the Caloosahatchee, as needed.

This project also will provide secondary benefits once the needs of the estuary are met, along with recreational benefits.

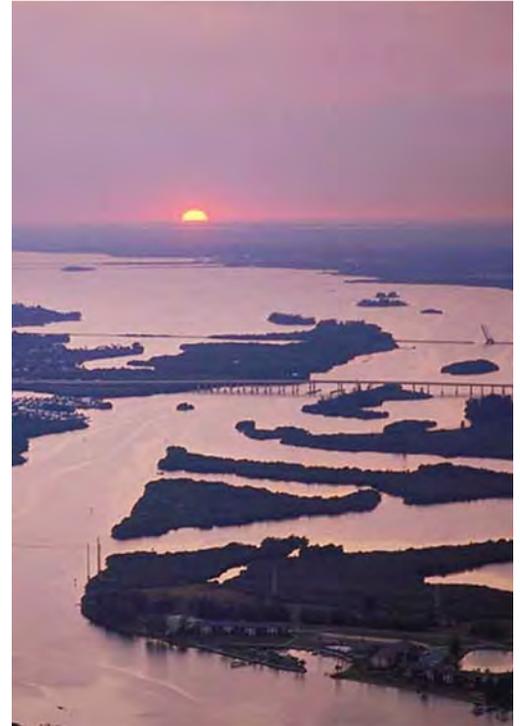


## BENEFITS AND COSTS

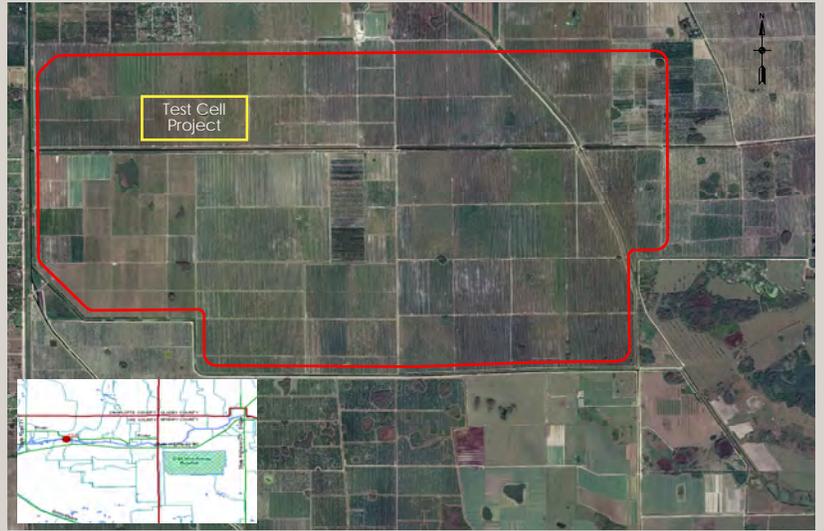
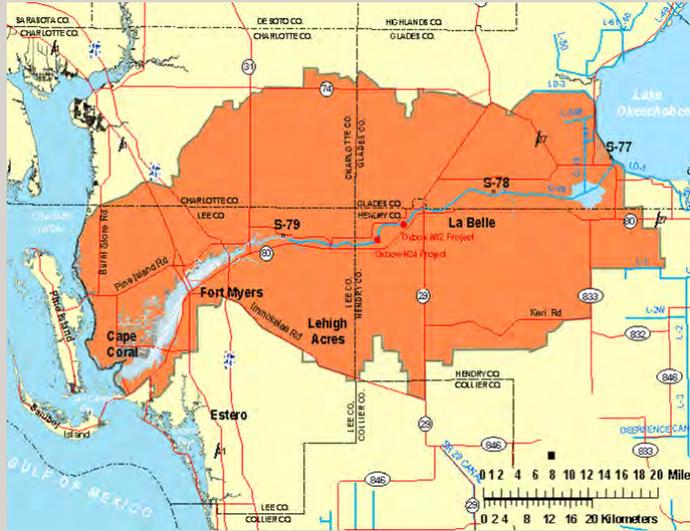
Planning, design, land acquisition, and construction costs are estimated at \$576.6 million. The state and federal governments will share these costs equally. The state designated local sponsor for this project is the South Florida Water Management District, which will also complete an additional \$2.9 million recreation component for the project. Construction is estimated to take three to four years once the project is authorized and funding is appropriated by Congress. The environmental benefits of restoration cannot be expressed solely in monetary terms; so alternative cost benefit studies are conducted. This project is vital to restoration of the Caloosahatchee River estuary. It also provides some new flexibility for managing and restoring Lake Okeechobee, which often is referred to as the “liquid heart” of the greater Everglades ecosystem.

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Project Management Plan (PMP) was approved in February 2002. A follow-on document, known as the Project Implementation Report (PIR), evaluated several alternatives, recommended a preferred plan, and provided an environmental impact assessment of the preferred plan. Public workshops and stakeholder meetings were held during the plan development process to solicit input and provide information on the project and its benefits. The Record of Decision was signed and submitted to Congress in April 2011. Construction is dependent upon congressional authorization.



## CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER (C-43) WEST BASIN STORAGE RESERVOIR CALOOSAHATCHEE WATERSHED C-43 PROJECT LOCATION



### FOR MORE INFORMATION



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