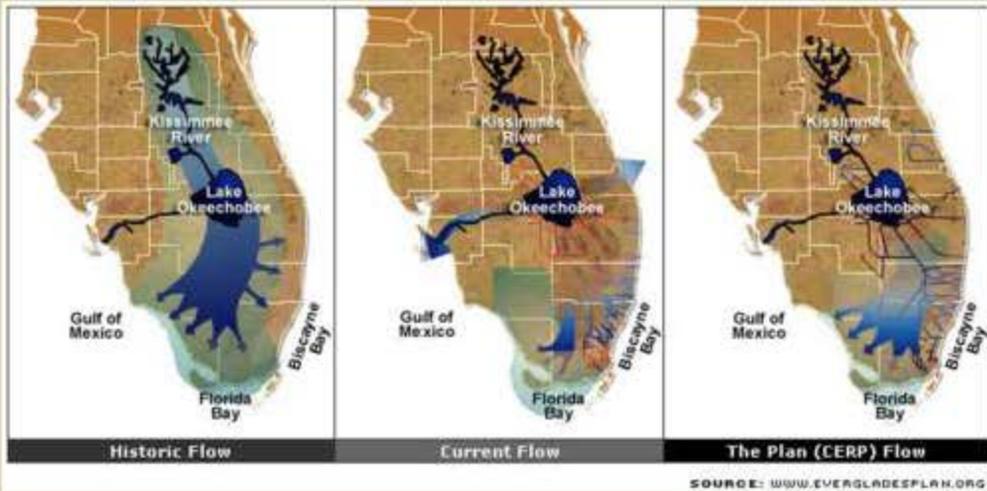




America's Everglades: Annual Update

September 3, 2015

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Recent History: Alligators v. Litigators



- 1988: Federal lawsuit filed against the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
- 1992: U.S. and Defendants enter into a settlement agreement
- 1994: Florida Legislature enacts the Everglades Forever Act
- 2004: Modifications to the act and state rulemaking result in an additional legal challenge
- 2008-2010: Judgements result in a comprehensive plan for achieving water quality standards for discharges into the Everglades.



Recent History: Impacts to Fish and Wildlife

- Fall 1994/Winter 1995: High Water Levels result in wildlife mortality in the Everglades and Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area (EWMA).
- Mix of regulatory releases and above average rainfall, paired with distribution of rainfall and sustained high water levels.
- High water levels resulted in 159 confirmed deer mortalities, 67% occurred in WCA3AS.
- Majority of mortalities (~70%) occurred in 1.5-2.5 age range.
- Adversely effected future recruitment.



Average water levels in Everglades Wildlife Management Area (63, 64, & 65 gauge average)



Recent History: The Everglades Forever Act

- 1994 Everglades Forever Act
~40,000 acres of stormwater treatment areas (STAs)
- 2003 EFA Amendments
 - Compartments B and C expansions (~17,000 acres)
 - 10 part per billion water quality standard for phosphorus



Recent History: The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

- 1992 and 1996: Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project Restudy was authorized.
- 2000: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan was authorized by Congress/Florida Legislature.
 - 68 Projects ranging from the Northern Everglades Watershed to Florida Bay.
 - Improve water quality, quantity, timing and distribution.
 - Specifically identified environmental purposes.
- 50/50 partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD



Recent History: Restoration Strategies Water Quality Plan

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Restoration Strategies – Key Projects



Recent History: Central Everglades Planning Project

- Beneficial impact to seasonal fluctuations in hydrology
- Restore hydropatterns in WCA 3
- Slow/eliminate adverse topographic changes
- Enhance ridge and slough systems and tree islands
- Natural flow path
- Benefit northern estuaries
- Fresh water for Florida Bay



Recent History

Modified Waters/Tamiami Next Steps



- Modified Water Delivery to Everglades National Park/C-111 Project
- Everglades National Park Bridging
- CEPP (Old Tamiami Trail)



Authorities/Funding

State:

- EFA: 373.4592, CERP 373.1501/1502 (50/50), NEEPP: 373.4595
- Funding: Legislative Budget Requests, ad valorem taxes, other revenue (Everglades Agricultural Area/Alligator Alley Tolls)

Federal:

- Administrative budget requests/federal budget process
- NEPA: Environmental Impact Statement/Project Implementation Report
- U.S. Army Corps Approval (Civil Works Review Board, Chief's Report)
- Congressional Authorization (Water Resource Development Act or Water Resources Reform and Development Act)



Challenges Still Facing Ecosystem Restoration

- Water Quality v. Water Quantity
 - Water quality- ecosystem health and habitat- gradual effects
 - Water quantity- flood control, water supply, wildlife, habitat, threatened and endangered species- short term/immediate
- Dedicated funding
- Federal authorization schedule/frequency



FWC's Response

- 2007 FWC Commissioner Bergeron initiated the first High Water Action Meeting between partner agencies with regulatory/operational authorities in the EWMA.
- Develop Operational strategies BEFORE an event occurs.
 - Utilize existing infrastructure in the interim.
 - Identify and use all of the "tools in the toolbox."
 - Avoid, minimize and mitigate for high water level events (depth/duration).
- Developed an internal team with Everglades specific knowledge that reviews and participates in the planning of Everglades restoration projects.
- Developed a position paper with regards to operational water levels in the EWMA for other agencies to use as a guide for future operational plan development.



FWC Ongoing Efforts

- Annual High Water Meetings
- Kissimmee Okeechobee Everglades Big Cypress Coordinating (KOEBC) Team
- Planning level involvement: e.g. Restoration Strategies Reservoir planning
- Holey Land (SFWMD/DEP/SFWMD) regulation schedule
- CEPP: Old Tamiami Trail Removal
- Exotic/invasive Species
- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (SFERTF)
- SFERTF Working Group





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