

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Ernie Marks, South Region Director  
**Date:** September 3, 2015  
**Subject:** Everglades Update

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this item is to present a brief update on water levels in the Everglades, FWC's partnership with state and federal agencies regarding Everglades restoration and the current status/timelines for restoration efforts.

**Summary:**

Since the late 1800's to mid 1900's the south Florida landscape has changed dramatically. Industry, agriculture and population growth has changed the region into an urban/agricultural/wetland mosaic. Efforts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at the request of the State of Florida, resulted in one of the largest flood control systems in the world today. The system, operated and maintained by the State of Florida, consists of more than 2,000 miles of canals, 2,800 miles of levees and approximately 1,200 structures.

While the original intent was to provide water supply and flood protection for south Florida, it became the default border for the remainder of the Everglades system today (approximately 1.5 million acres). The system we have in place contains approximately half of the extent of the original Everglades ecosystem, though the rainfall remains unchanged. Everglades restoration is comprised of multiple competing interests such as water supply, flood control, water quality, water quantity, distribution, timing, habitat preservation and ecotourism.

Recent efforts have specifically focused on water quality and water quantity within the water conservation areas and FWC has been integrally involved in the planning and development of projects to address issues such as high water levels in the conservation areas, exotic/invasive species management and reasonable access to the habitats created by these large water resource projects. This presentation serves to provide a brief history of the issues, the status of restoration efforts and FWC's expanded involvement in this historic endeavor.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff is presenting this for informational purposes and any feedback that the Commission may have.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Ernie Marks, South Region Director