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just the FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.



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Restoring Lake Okeechobee Water Quality

The Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area in western Martin County is a key component of the 2007 Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program that aims to strengthen protection for the northern Everglades region. Lakeside Ranch plays a crucial role in the restoration of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed by drastically improving the quality of water flowing into the lake from one of the biggest sources of incoming phosphorus.

Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area

- The project will build 2,700 acres of wetlands in two phases. Phase I is already operational and Phase II will be built soon.
- The wetlands will use plants such as cattails to remove phosphorus from stormwater runoff naturally.
- The wetlands will treat runoff from the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough basins to the north before that stormwater runoff enters Lake Okeechobee.
- The Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough have the highest phosphorus levels of any incoming watershed into the lake, with average total phosphorus levels of more than 400 parts per billion (ppb).
- Phosphorus levels leaving Lakeside Ranch after treatment have been measured as low as 20 ppb and averaged 85 ppb this past year
- When completed, the wetland complex will remove nearly 21 tons of phosphorus each year from the waters feeding the lake. This will help Florida to better meet water quality standards for the lake and improve the quality of water downstream in the Everglades.

Phase I

- Completed in 2012, Phase I wetlands have removed nearly 82 percent of the phosphorus in the water treated flowing into the lake, removing more than 25 tons of phosphorus to date.
- Phase I encompasses roughly 1,200 acres, including 920 acres of effective treatment cells that can hold more than 3,600 acre-feet of water for treatment.
- From May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015, Phase I treated nearly 31,000 acre feet of water and removed more than 15 tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise gone into the lake.

Phase II

- Construction of the 1,500-acre phase with 788 acres of treatment area will begin soon. This phase will be able to hold 1,840 acre-feet of water for treatment. The projected completion date is 2017.
- Phase II will include a feature allowing the District to recirculate water already in the lake back through the treatment cell to treat it a second time.
- Phase II will include recreational areas and information kiosks for the public.

(more)



The Lakeside Ranch Stormwater Treatment Area in western Martin County. The northern treatment area is now operational and the southern treatment area is under construction.