

Chapter 1: Introduction to Volume I

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Prepared by the South Florida Water Management District in cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the *2016 South Florida Environmental Report* (SFER) unifies dozens of individual mandated reports and plans into a single document, pursuant to Chapter 2005-36, Laws of Florida, and Section 373.036(7), Florida Statutes (F.S.). Other agency reporting requirements, including those mandated in federal- and state-issued permits, are also incorporated to enhance efficiencies of this consolidation. While providing effective communication, the annual SFER updates key results and findings as well as fiscal information for the reporting period. Overall, this information supports restoration, management, and protection activities associated with the Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades, and South Florida's coastal ecosystems. The 2016 SFER comprises three volumes in the main report:

- *Volume I, The South Florida Environment*, provides status updates and data summaries for various research and monitoring efforts in the South Florida region during Water Year 2015 (WY2015) (May 1, 2014–April 30, 2015). This volume also includes required financial reporting on Fiscal Year 2014-2015 (October 1, 2014–September 30, 2015) for the Everglades Forever Act (EFA), Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), and Lake Okeechobee.
- *Volume II, District Annual Plans and Reports*, covers the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 update for eight annual plans and reports required under various mandates for Florida's water management districts. These include the Annual Work Plan Report (Fiscal and Performance Accountability Report), Priority Water Bodies List and Schedule, Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan, Five-Year Water Resource Development Work Program, Alternative Water Supply Annual Report, Florida Forever Work Plan Annual Update, Land Stewardship Annual Report, and Mitigation Donation Annual Report.
- *Volume III, Annual Permit Reports*, expands consolidated reporting and maximizes the process for submitting annual permit reports to state and federal agencies. This volume fulfills 2015 permit-related reporting associated with the Clean Water Act, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Regulation Act, EFA, Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP), and Environmental Resource Permitting projects and emergency orders.

THE SOUTH FLORIDA ENVIRONMENT

South Florida is characterized by its unique, diverse ecosystems from the Kissimmee Region in the north through the Florida Keys in the south (**Figure 1-1**). To enhance agency reporting on the many programs and projects throughout South Florida, the area is categorized into two primary subregions—the Northern and Southern Everglades. These subregions are delineated across regional watershed boundaries, with the Northern Everglades covering the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee, and St. Lucie watersheds, and the Southern Everglades encompassing the watersheds south of Lake Okeechobee through the Florida Keys. The main features in the Northern Everglades include Kissimmee area lakes and rivers, Lake Okeechobee, and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries. Key features in the Southern Everglades include the water conservation areas, Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park/Florida Bay, and coastal bays and estuaries south of Lake Okeechobee.

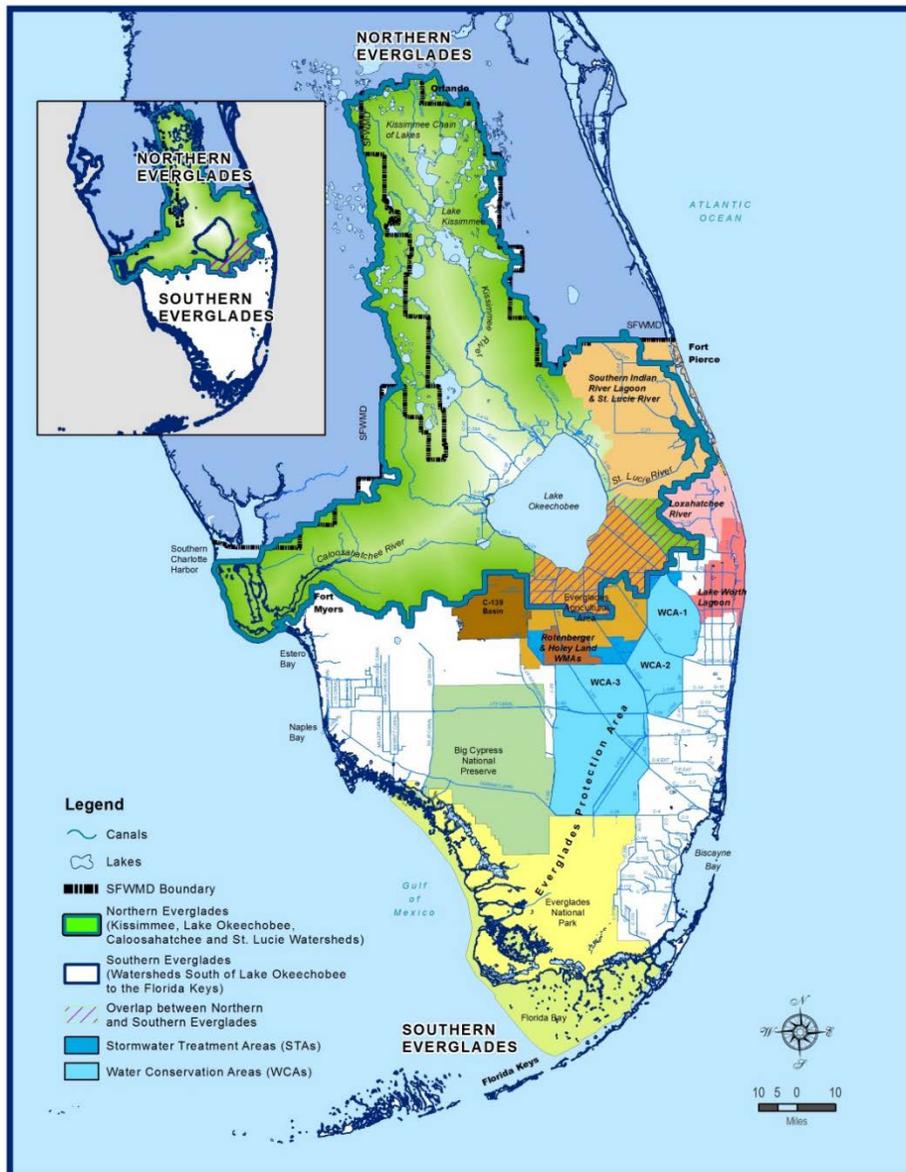


Figure 1-1. Major geographic features of the South Florida environment within the South Florida Water Management District's boundaries.

VOLUME I CONTENT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Building on previous years of consolidated reporting, this year's SFER is focused on further streamlining while still fulfilling the District's reporting needs and legislative mandates. Specifically in Volume I, there is a strong focus on presenting annual data and status updates relating to required reporting requirements that are aligned with agency programs/projects and strategic initiatives in the South Florida region. The volume highlights major results and findings for the WY2015 and Fiscal Year 2014-2015 reporting periods, while more routine and background information covered in earlier consolidated reports is cross-referenced, as appropriate. This year's Volume I contains 13 chapters along with 30 appendices of supporting data and more detailed information that comply with specific mandates. An overview of the Volume I key content and associated statutory reporting requirements is presented on **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1. Cross-reference for Volume I content and reporting requirements in the 2016 SFER.

Coverage in Volume I	Key Report Elements/Titles	Reporting Requirements
Chapter 1 Appendices 1-1 – 1-6	SFER Peer Review Reporting; CERP Annual Report – 470 Report; EFA Annual Financial Report; NEEPP Annual Report	§373.036(7), F.S. §373.470, F.S. §373.4592(3), F.S. §373.4592(14), F.S. §373.4595(6), F.S.
Chapter 2 Appendices 2-1 – 2-6	South Florida Hydrology and Water Management	§373.4592(13), F.S. §373.4595(6), F.S.
Chapter 3A; Appendices 3A-1 – 3A-6 Chapter 3B; Appendix 3B-1	Water Quality in the Everglades Protection Area; Mercury and Sulfur Environmental Assessment	§373.4592(4)(d)5, F.S. §373.4592(13), F.S.
Chapter 4 Appendices 4-1 – 4-3	Nutrient Source Control Programs (Northern Everglades, ECP including EAA and C-139, and Non-ECP Basins)	§373.4592(13), F.S. §373.4595(6), F.S.
Chapters 5A, 5B, 5C Appendices 5B-1 – 5B-7	Restoration Strategies/Science Plan Update; Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas; Long-Term Plan for Achieving Water Quality Goals	§373.4592(4)(d)5, F.S. §373.4592(13), F.S.
Chapter 6 Appendix 6-1	Everglades Research and Evaluation	§373.4592(4)(d)5, F.S. §373.4592(13), F.S.
Chapter 7	Status of Nonindigenous Species	§373.4592(13), F.S. §373.4595(6), F.S.
Chapter 8	Lake Okeechobee Protection Program Annual Update/NEEPP	§373.4595(6), F.S.
Chapter 9	Kissimmee River Restoration and Basin Initiatives	none; strategic priority only
Chapter 10	St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan Annual Update/NEEPP	§373.4595(6), F.S.

CERP – Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
EAA – Everglades Agricultural Area
ECP – Everglades Construction Projects
EFA – Everglades Forever Act

F.S. – Florida Statutes
NEEPP – Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program
Non-ECP – Non-Everglades Construction Projects