

Chapter 8C: Land Acquisition in Support of Projects in the Everglades Region

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Acquiring the land necessary for water resource management is a critical component of restoring the Everglades. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD or District) continues to be successful in aggressively acquiring lands in support of various projects and programs throughout the region. The District's acquisition progress is guided by a strategy that promotes the timely and cost-effective purchase of land. This acquisition strategy prioritizes the purchase of land based on authorized project construction schedules, willing sellers, land threatened by development potential, and land in areas of rapidly escalating property values. From May 1, 2001 through April 30, 2002 (Water Year 2002 [WY02]), the District successfully executed this strategy to acquire 21,254 acres of land to be used for reservoirs and stormwater treatment areas and to improve the region's flood control system, drainage and water supply. Land acquisitions during WY02 are summarized and described by project or geographic region in the table below.

Lands totaling 2,144 acres were acquired for the East Coast Buffer, Water Preserve Areas (WPAs) to serve as a buffer between natural and urban areas, collecting and storing excess water that would otherwise be discharged to tide.

The District, in partnership with Miami-Dade County, continued to acquire lands in the region, coordinating acquisition activities and leveraging funding sources of both agencies. Lands have been targeted for purchase in the Model Lands and Biscayne Coastal Wetlands projects. Model Lands property will be used to maintain the saltwater barrier line, preventing further saltwater intrusion into the south Miami-Dade region. Biscayne Coastal Wetlands property will provide the opportunity for better distribution of fresh water to Biscayne Bay. During WY02 more than 738 acres were acquired in these two areas.

The majority of the lands acquired in WY02 will go toward addressing requirements of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Slightly more than 18,767 acres, or 88 percent of the lands acquired in WY02, are suitable for use by CERP projects. Lands acquired for the Biscayne Coastal Wetlands and Model Lands projects fall within the conceptual project boundary of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands-CERP Project. Acres acquired for the East Coast Buffer, Water Preserve Areas will be used to move forward with implementing the Broward County Water Preserve Areas (WPAs) Project.

By executing its acquisition strategy in WY02, the District is poised to complete the acquisitions necessary for several upcoming construction projects, including the C-11 Impoundment, the C-9 Impoundment, and the WCA-3A/3B Levee Seepage Management area. Approximately 75 percent of the land required for these elements of the Broward County WPA

Project have been acquired. In addition, several major acquisitions were accomplished that significantly enhance the land holdings within established CERP projects. The 4,785-acre acquisition of Grassy Island Ranch provides land within the Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Project area suitable for the creation of treatment marshes and onsite wetlands restoration. The acquisition of 13,186 acres of Allapattah Ranch within the Indian River Lagoon-South Project was accomplished. This land will provide for alternative storage, rehydration, habitat restoration and water quality improvement uses in the northern Palm Beach County and Martin County areas.

The 18,767 acres acquired in WY02 increased the total lands available for use by CERP projects to 122,918 acres, representing 45 percent of the estimated land needed for CERP projects. For additional information on these and other CERP projects, refer to Chapter 7A: Update on CERP Implementation, in the *2003 Everglades Consolidated Report*.

The remaining acres acquired in WY02 were acquired for use by Save Our Rivers and/or Critical Restoration projects. The District closed on the purchase of a 2.5-acre parcel in the 8.5 Square Mile Area, which was contracted for acquisition in the previous water year. Other acquisitions in WY02 included the purchase of 1,100 acres of land in the Water Conservation Areas.

The District's acquisition successes of WY02 were possible only with the support of, and through coordination with, local, state and federal governments, state and federal agencies, and the general public.

Table 8C-1. Land acquisitions for Water Year 2002

Closings May 1, 2001 through April 30, 2002		
GEOGRAPHIC REGION OR PROJECT	Purpose or Comment	Land Area (Acres)
East Coast Buffer, Water Preserve Areas	Marshes, reservoirs and groundwater recharge areas that abut East Coast Protective Levee	2,144
Model Lands	Recharge area for maintenance of saltwater intrusion	701*
Biscayne Coastal Wetlands	Mixture of red, black and white mangroves adjacent to other protected land, providing opportunity for better distribution of freshwater	37
8.5 Square Mile Area	East Everglades in low-lying area of Miami-Dade County	2.5

Allapattah Ranch	Improved pasture and degraded wetlands identified for use as alternative storage, rehydration, habitat restoration, and water quality improvements	13,186
Taylor Creek, Nubbin Slough	Improved pasture with oak/cabbage palm hammocks; providing opportunity for treatment marshes and on-site wetlands restoration	4,785
Water Conservation Areas	Part of the original Central & Southern Florida Flood Control Project	1,100
Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)	Acres (percent) of land acquired during WY02 suitable for use by CERP projects	18,767* (88%)
Non-CERP Acquisitions	Acres (percent) of land acquired during WY02 for Critical Restoration (CRP) and Save Our River (SOR) projects	2,487 (12%)
Total Acquired WY02		21,254*

*Miami-Dade County acquired the 701 acres in the Model Lands Project, for an adjusted total acquired WY02 acreage of 21,955 acres, with 19,468 acres being suitable for use by CERP.