

Everglades Restoration Projects in the 2014 Water Resources and Reform Development Act (WRRDA)



Introduction

The restoration of America's Everglades depends on the regular passage of water resources legislation that authorizes federal spending for new Everglades projects. Four projects were authorized in the 2014 Water Resources and Reform Development Act (WRRDA) that have diverse benefits for the Everglades.

C-111 Spreader Canal

The C-111 Spreader Canal project is essential for improving the health of the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay. Utilizing almost a century of Roseate Spoonbill nesting data, Audubon science staff have found that the C-111 Spreader Canal restoration project can have an immediate impact to benefit this iconic species and other wildlife. The C-111 is a massive canal that was once planned to transport rockets between Florida Bay, the Atlantic Ocean and the Everglades. This immense canal pulls water from all around it, draining wetlands and marshes. When completed, the Spreader Canal project will restore aquatic habitat in the historic sloughs of Everglades National Park and restore coastal salinity levels in Western Florida Bay.



Photo by Mac Stone

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands

The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) project will re-hydrate wetlands and restore the freshwater flow and proper salinity of Biscayne Bay. As the only CERP project dedicated to benefiting Biscayne Bay- a highly productive estuary that provides for commercial fisheries, and Biscayne National Park- these efforts will enhance nearshore wildlife habitat and help to reestablish productive nursery habitat for shrimp and shellfish, including oyster reef communities. This project is important not only for its ecological benefits, but is also necessary to protect South Florida's water supply. Through re-hydrating these important wetlands and re-establishing freshwater flow into Biscayne Bay, increasing threats from salt water intrusion can be reduced.





Caloosahatchee C-43 West Basin Reservoir

Management of Lake Okeechobee seriously impacts the health of the Everglades, including the Caloosahatchee estuary, and is one of restoration's biggest challenges. When water from Lake Okeechobee is scarce, the Caloosahatchee Estuary is in need of another source of freshwater that can balance the delicate salinity levels that create favorable conditions for 40% of Florida's rare, threatened or endangered species. The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir will capture and store basin stormwater, along with a portion of water discharged from Lake Okeechobee. This water can then be released to the estuary when more freshwater is needed. With assurance of longer term salinity balance, the estuary's oysters, sea grasses, and complex biota can recover and flourish, in turn protecting water quality and ultimately contributing to Gulf fisheries.



Broward County Water Preserve Areas

This project, originally proposed by Audubon in the mid-1990s, has an important wetlands buffer and two reservoirs that provide system-wide benefits to the Everglades. This is one of the few CERP projects that will expand the spatial extent of wetlands that are important for foraging wading birds and recharging water supplies.

It will also protect existing wetlands known for high intrinsic ecological functions. Increased water storage is achieved through the capture and storing of rainwater, which also helps prevent water from seeping out of the Everglades into urban areas in Broward County. Water treatment marshes help to reduce phosphorus and other harmful nutrients from entering the Everglades. This multi-faceted project also benefits Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade county citizens by recharging wellfields that supply drinking water.

