



On the Ground Impacts of Senate Bill 2142 for Everglades Restoration and Water Quality Improvements

As a result of the passage of SB 2142 during the 2011 Florida Legislative Session, water management districts have substantially less resources to contribute to Everglades restoration and protecting our water resources.

In developing its 2012 budget, the South Florida Water Management District was able to retain its commitment to Everglades restoration and water quality, doing its best to cut costs by trimming overhead, and Audubon is supportive of this effort. While this dedication to continue Everglades restoration in the short term is important, specific impacts may be felt this year and the long term picture is uncertain.

With adequate funds, the projects and programs listed below, among others, could have advanced in 2012.

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Projects

Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project- Construction of the Cutler Flowway portion of this project was scheduled to begin next year after a few minor issues were resolved. The construction, scheduled to cost \$20 million, is not moving forward and there is no funding in the FY 12 budget.

Water Quality Treatment

The A-1 Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) would improve water quality flowing to the Everglades. While in the 2010-2011 Capital Improvements Plan Budget, \$3.5 million was allocated to its design, no funds are allocated to this project in FY 12. The total projected cost for 2011-2014 (as stated in the FY 11 budget) is \$70 million.

Dispersed Water Management

This innovative water storage program that partners with private landowners to store and clean water before it enters Lake Okeechobee has received \$14.5 million in the FY 12 budget. While this is a step in the right direction, a robust program that would contribute to the near-term goal of storing at least 200,000 ac/ft of water in the Northern Everglades to benefit Lake Okeechobee would conservatively need \$100 million over the next 5 years.

Planning for Key Restoration Projects

Continuing planning for future projects is essential to making sure that restoration does not come to a halt when projects underway are complete. Of the 60+ projects that are part of CERP, only five are under construction. It is unclear how with fewer resources, the South Florida Water Management District will continue planning for the next projects without delay, including those that focus on the heart of the Everglades and ecological benefits.

Monitoring and Assessment for Restoration Projects

When construction of restoration projects are complete, monitoring is essential to ensure that the projects are being operated to achieve results. The FY 12 budget reduction of about \$22.5 million (37%) for research, modeling, environmental monitoring and assessment activities will seriously compromise this ability.