



Statement on SFWMD FY2013 Proposed Budget and Millage Rates

On behalf of Audubon Florida, I wish to express our commitment to help the South Florida Water Management District grow its budget in FY 2013 and beyond. Last year the deep 30% cuts to the SFWMD budget made it more difficult for the SFWMD to pursue their statutory duties to protect water supply, develop alternative water supplies, manage lands for the public benefit and restoration. Adequate funding will prevent further difficulties in meeting the goals of the agency's missions.

Programs that were cut last year that should be part of a growing budget include:

Water Supply

Protecting and developing adequate water supplies is listed specifically in S.B. 1986 as a core mission of the SFWMD but the lack of funding is stark. The decrease in the 2013 proposed funding level and the 2011 funding is around 67%, from \$38 million in 2011 to \$12.2 million in 2013. With adequate funding, the SFWMD would be able to pursue its water conservation programs and enable the research and development of alternative water supplies, a necessity as our region's water resource demands grow.

Science and Modeling

Funding for the RECOVER program as well as modeling and scientific support must be restored to supply the data and information necessary to make informed decisions and adapt as new information is analyzed. Modeling and scientific support for the 2013 is about 50% less than 2011, from \$21 million to a proposed \$11.8 million this year.

Land Management

The SFWMD has a statutory duty to manage and maintain lands to ensure a balance of public access, recreation purposes, and the protection of the land's natural state and condition. (Fla. Stat. §373.1391). It is crucial for the SFWMD to provide access to their lands and sustain the value of their lands through appropriate measures. There was a reduction of over \$4 million in land stewardship activities compared with 2011 levels, from \$29.5 million to \$25 million. Invasive species management notably has suffered from the funding cuts. Adequately funding these programs will allow for the continued stewardship of these vital lands.

Restoration Projects

With adequate funds, the benefits of Everglades restoration could be realized more rapidly.

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