Annual Assessment of The Everglades

2025 Edition
Chapter 7

Acknowledgements

EDR wishes to thank staff members of the following organizations for their dedicated work and substantial assistance with providing the data and information for this report:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Food and Resource Economics Department, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida

South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

South Florida Water Management District

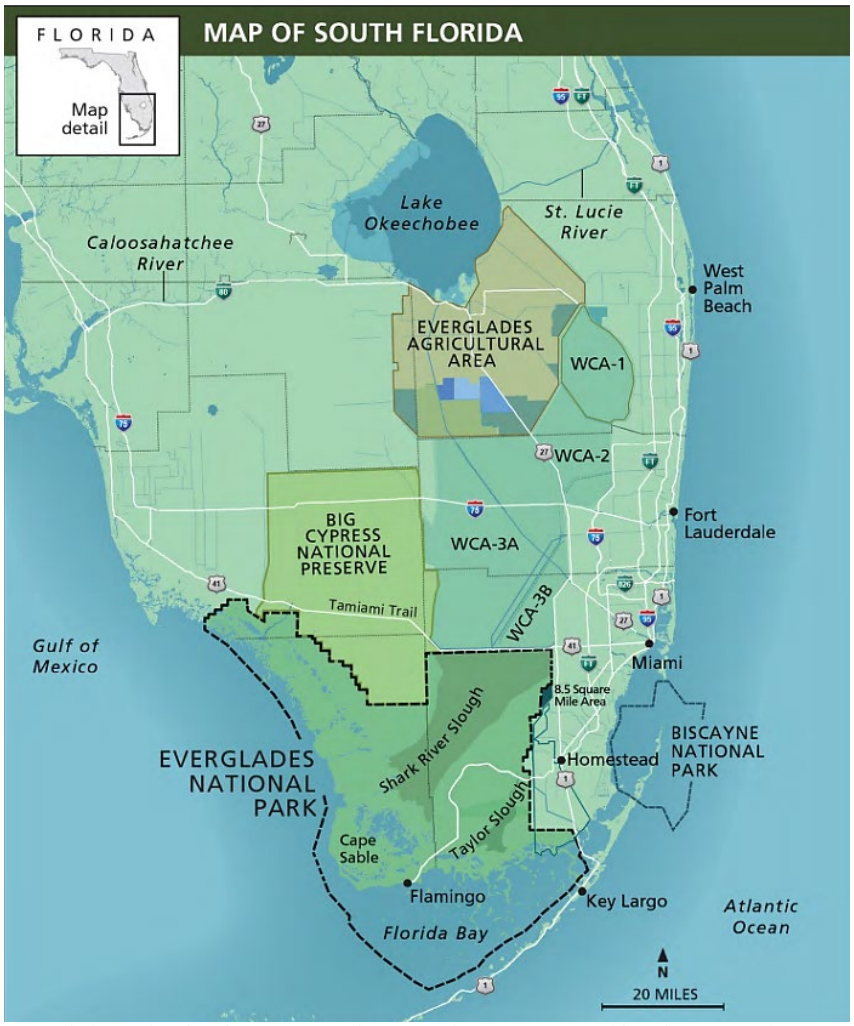
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. DOI Office of Everglades Restoration Initiatives (OERI)

Table of Contents

Chapter 7...The Everglades

The Florida Everglades, famously referred to as the "River of Grass," is a mosaic of sawgrass marshes, freshwater ponds, sloughs, prairies, and forested uplands that supports a diverse plant and wildlife community. The Greater Everglades ecosystem originally encompassed about 9,000,000 acres or 14,000 square miles from central Florida to the Florida Keys.[1] Historically, sheets of freshwater flowed naturally from the Kissimmee chain of lakes to Lake Okeechobee, where its flood waters traveled slowly southward through a variety of low-lying habitat types before finally reaching the Gulf of Mexico, Florida Bay, and Biscayne Bay.



Source: Everglades National Park: 2024 State of Conservation-Report to World Heritage Committee (UNESCO)

[1] Different calculations and descriptions exist. The information here relies on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in its Overview of the Review Study (the "Restudy") released October 1998 describing conditions in the mid-1800s. *See* Overview: Central and southern Florida project comprehensive review study, October 1998 - Project Management Reports - USACE Digital Library (oclc.org). At variance with this, the Corps released a Congressional Fact Sheet in May 2025 for the Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) Project that referred to 18,000 square miles. *See* https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/Congressional-Fact-Sheets-2025/C-SF-Project-C/. Also refer to the Ninth Biennial Review published in 2022 which described the Everglades as encompassing "about 3 million acres of slow-moving water." *See* National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades: The Ninth Biennial Review - 2022. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/26706. (Documents last accessed February 2026.)

Because of efforts to drain the marshland for flood control, agriculture, and development, the Everglades today is about half the size it was a century ago.[2] According to the National Park Service | U.S. Department of the Interior's 2024 Report to the World Heritage Committee, "The C&SF Project reduced the natural north-south flow of water in the ecosystem and created an east-west flow to support agricultural and urban development."[3] A graphic from the 2024 RECOVER System Status Report illustrates both this point (A and B) and the intended restoration flow (C).[4]

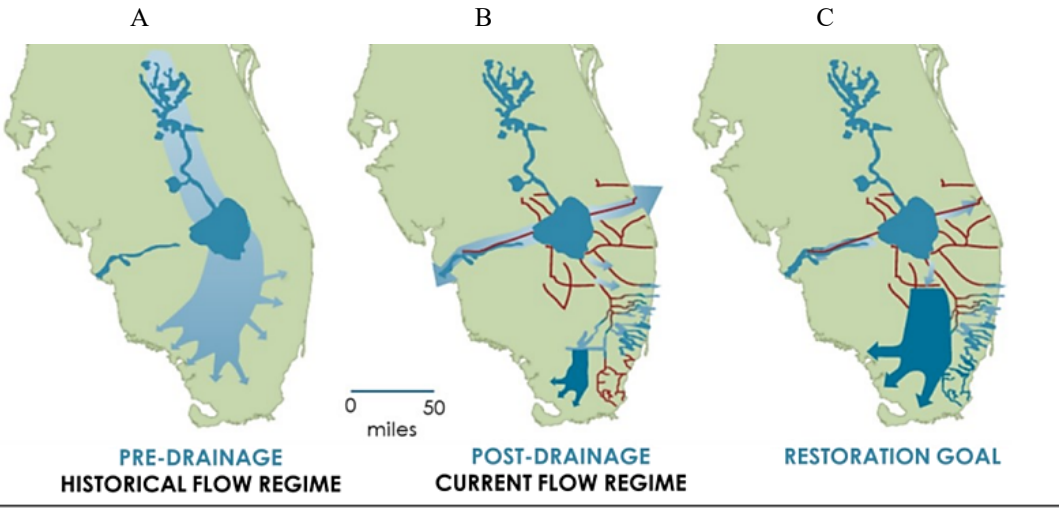


Figure 1. Historically, water flowed south from Lake Okeechobee into the Greater Everglades and terminated at the southern end of the state along the Southwest Coast, Florida Bay, and Biscayne Bay. Drainage of the Everglades through a system of canals (red lines) converted wetlands into areas suitable for development. Regulatory releases from Lake Okeechobee are sent east and west into the Northern Estuaries to tide. Reestablishing a more natural freshwater flow through restoration will improve hydrologic conditions throughout south Florida.

Source: 2024 RECOVER System Status Report

Yet, what remains of the Everglades is still considered one of the most unique ecosystems in the world.[5] It provides numerous benefits to South Florida (including water supply, flood control, and recreational opportunities), while serving as a unique habitat for diverse species of wildlife and plant life.[6] The Everglades also provides natural water storage for the environment during drier seasons, serves as an important water recharge area for South Florida, and plays a potentially significant role in the state's climate change response, if managed appropriately.

As a topic of study, the Everglades continues to be treated separately in this Edition since the quantity and quality of its waters are so intrinsically linked and cannot be classified as exclusively

[2] *See* the Congressional Research Service report entitled *Everglades Restoration: Federal Funding and Implementation Progress* (R42007) [October 6, 2017 Update] at https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R42007/R42007.24.pdf, as well as the Congressional Research Service In Focus document entitled *Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration* (IF11336) [January 14, 2025 Update]. Also *see* National Park Service | U.S. Department of the Interior's Report to the World Heritage Committee entitled *Everglades National Park—2024 State of Conservation.* (Documents last accessed February 2026.)
[3] *Id.*
[4] *See* http://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll7/id/27321.
[5] § 373.4592(1)(a), Fla. Stat.
[6] § 373.4592(1), Fla. Stat.

one or the other. From recharging the aquifer to enhancing water quality, the Everglades ecosystem "requires flooded or saturated soil conditions" to both maintain its wetland conditions and function at its full potential throughout the year.[7] Today this natural state continues to be severely interrupted, but efforts are underway "to send more freshwater south into the river of grass."

In December 2024, RECOVER released a system status report that is the first monitoring document to capture progress from a material number of implemented and completed projects—at the time of its release, some 30% of authorized projects were either constructed and/or operational.[8] Even so, in its system-wide overview, the report indicates:

> *The expected level of performance, based on the 2020 IGIT modeling, was little or no change for hydrologic, ecological, or water supply and flood protection indicators because only a few CERP projects will have been or near operational by 2026. Therefore, the continued decline or lack of improvement observed for most of the hydrologic and ecological indicators in 2024 was expected. RECOVER recommends that CERP Projects be expedited to prevent further decline throughout the system. In the meantime, water managers should utilize allowable flexibility in operations to maximize benefits and minimize further declines. Identification of flexibilities may require "outside of the box" thinking.*

As to specific findings, the system-wide assessment reported on four of the five interconnected regions, finding:[9]

> *While CERP construction and implementation is underway, modeling for most indicators expected little to no change in status by 2026. Most RECOVER regions and ecological indicators remain "Fair" or "Poor" in status. Water supply and flood protection indicators ranked "Good" due to ample rainfall and non-CERP water management operations in the Reporting Period...not a result of any implemented CERP projects.*

	Lake Okeechobee	Northern Estuaries	Greater Everglades	Southern Coastal Systems	Water Supply and Flood Protection
RECOVER Status (Current Status)	POOR	POOR	FAIR	POOR	GOOD
Consistent with expectations for 2026 IGIT?	Mixed	No	Yes	Mixed	Yes

Source: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan / RECOVER's 2024 System Status Report

[7] Davis, S. *Water and the Everglades - Why is it important?* Science Insider, Summer 2023, Volume 8. *See* https://www.evergladesfoundation.org/post/water-and-the-everglades-why-is-it-important. Also *see* from August 20, 2018: https://www.sciencenews.org/article/florida-everglades-freshwater-saltwater-sea-level-rise. (Articles last accessed February 2026.)

[8] RECOVER (REstoration COordination & VERification) is a multi-agency team of scientists, modelers, planners and resource specialists who conduct scientific and technical evaluations and assessments for improving CERP's ability to restore, preserve and protect the south Florida ecosystem while providing for the region's other water-related needs. For the referenced report, *see* http://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll7/id/27321. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[9] *Id.* "The extant Everglades system is organized into five interconnected regions: the Northern Estuaries (Caloosahatchee River Estuary, Loxahatchee River Estuary, and St. Lucie River Estuary and southern Indian River Lagoon), Lake Okeechobee, the Greater Everglades, the Southern Coastal Systems (Biscayne Bay, Florida Bay, and Southwest Coast), and Southwest Florida (Big Cypress Basin and Southwest Coast)." The Southwest Florida RECOVER region has yet to establish goals.

Other major reports have been either just released or are expected soon. The National Academies' Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress released its Tenth Biennial Review[10] on October 1, 2024, and the 2026 South Florida Environmental Report[11] was released on March 1, 2026. Forthcoming reports include the still anticipated 2024 South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Biennial Report (originally expected sometime between October and December 2024) and the slightly delayed CERP 2025 Five-Year Report to Congress (originally expected December 2025). The release of the 2026 Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) is also pending; currently, the last official release is the 2024 Update which looks back to expenditure information through FFY 2023.

Aside from the provision of a general update, this chapter outlines the key Everglades restoration plans and identifies historic expenditures related to those initiatives. Further, this Edition continues to build upon the previously used methodology for forecasting the expenditures necessary to complete the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Future editions will improve upon this forecast and provide additional expenditure forecasts governing discrete elements of Everglades restoration, including the state's water quality restoration initiatives.

7.1 Historical and Legal Context

To restore and protect the greater Everglades ecosystem, the Florida Legislature established the State of Florida's responsibilities in a series of laws collected under chapter 373, Florida Statutes. In addition to authorizing the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to serve as the local sponsor (effectively, the lead entity) for the state's restoration efforts, the Legislature directed the roles and responsibilities of both the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and SFWMD for plans or programs authorized under Florida law including the Everglades Forever Act,[12] the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Act,[13] and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Regulation Act.[14] An important—but not exclusive—focus of these laws is operationalizing the state-federal partnership for implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).[15] The major restoration programs that require state or regional funding are discussed in the sections below.

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to implement phases of the Central and Southern Florida Project for Flood Control (C&SF Project) under the Flood Control Act of 1948[16] and the Flood Control Act of 1954,[17] with subsequent modifications authorized by later

[10] *See* https://nap.nationalacademies.org/initiative/committee-on-independent-scientific-review-of-everglades-restoration-progress.
[11] *See* https://sfer-docs.sfwmd.gov/2026_sfer_final/2026_SFER_full_report.pdf.
[12] § 373.4592, Fla. Stat.
[13] § 373.4595, Fla. Stat.
[14] § 373.1502, Fla. Stat.
[15] §§ 373.470, 373.1502, Fla. Stat.
[16] Pub. L. 80-858, § 201, 62 Stat. 1176 (1948).
[17] Pub. L. 83-780, § 203, 68 Stat. 1248, 1257 (1954).

acts of Congress. With construction beginning in 1950 and running through the 1970s, the C&SF Project drained portions of the Everglades initially to provide flood control; however, the project soon morphed to include the provision of a dependable water supply system for the rapidly growing population. The resulting 1,000 miles of canals, 720 miles of levees, and more than 150 water control structures that collectively made up the massive South Florida water management system significantly altered the Everglades ecosystem. It was these unintended adverse effects on the environment that prompted Congress to require the Corps to conduct a reexamination of the C&SF Project. The directive was to develop a comprehensive plan for the restoration, preservation and protection of the South Florida ecosystem, with the objective of protecting the water quality in, and the reduction of the loss of fresh water from, the Everglades.[18]

With the passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000), Congress formally designated CERP as the primary framework for all modifications and operational changes to the C&SF Project. The purpose of WRDA 2000 was to provide a coordinated plan for restoring the water resources of central and southern Florida, including the Everglades, while meeting other water-related needs such as water supply and flood protection.[19] According to a recent report from the Congressional Research Service, "Originally, CERP was to include over 50 projects to be completed over 30 years at a cost of $8.2 billion (FY2000 dollars, equivalent to $13.8 billion in FY2023 dollars)."[20]

Notably, the original authorization by Congress included an "Assurance of Project Benefits" and "Agreement" that stated specifically:

> *The Plan shall be implemented to ensure the protection of water quality in, the reduction of the loss of fresh water from, the improvement of the environment of the South Florida Ecosystem and to achieve and maintain the benefits to the natural system and human environment described in the Plan, and required pursuant to this section, for as long as the project is authorized...[W]ater made available by each project in the Plan shall not be permitted for a consumptive use or otherwise made unavailable by the State until such time as sufficient reservations of water for the restoration of the natural system are made under State law in accordance with the project implementation report for that project and consistent with the Plan.*[21]

The CERP has since become the largest hydrologic restoration initiative ever undertaken in the United States.[22] It represents a comprehensive, long-term partnership between the federal government and the State of Florida with a primary focus on the restoration of the water quality,

---

[18] Water Resources Development Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-303, § 601, 110 Stat. 3767, 3768. Congress initially required the restudy in 1992 but became more specific in the 1996 law. Section 528 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 also defined the "South Florida ecosystem" as the "area consisting of the lands and waters within the boundary of the South Florida Water Management District, including the Everglades, the Florida Keys, and the contiguous near-shore coastal waters of South Florida."
[19] Public Law 106-541, 114 Stat. 2680, 2681.
[20] Congressional Research Service In Focus document entitled Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration (IF11336) [January 14, 2025 Update]. *See* https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11336.
[21] Pub. L. 106-541, § 601, 114 Stat. 2680, 2681.
[22] According to SFWMD, it is "...the most ambitious and largest environmental restoration program in the world." *See* https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/SFWMD_SB2516_Report.pdf.

quantity, timing, and distribution within the Everglades ecosystem.[23] The Florida Legislature authorized SFWMD to act as the local sponsor for CERP projects within the district, subject to certain oversight by DEP.[24]

While the CERP itself has been approved by Congress as a modification to the C&SF Project, the projects identified therein are only conditionally approved. Those projects that cannot be approved under the Corps' programmatic authority require specific congressional authorization before they can become eligible for federal appropriation.[25] After CERP's initial approval, Congress authorized additional projects in 2007 and 2014, referring to them as "Generation 1 Projects" and "Generation 2 Projects", respectively. Moreover, there is a set of previously authorized projects that pre-date CERP, which were assumed to reach completion during the CERP planning period. These projects are referred to as "Foundation Projects" as they were expected to become the foundation underlying CERP's implementation.[26]

Considerable progress has been made toward CERP implementation since 2014. It has been driven in part by the commitment of long-term state funding for Everglades restoration, a push by the state to expedite the implementation of certain restoration activities, and more consistent federal approval of water resource projects within CERP. Regarding the latter issue, Congress approved the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) in 2016, a suite of restoration projects targeting the central Everglades, which is estimated to cost a total of $2.09 billion.[27] A part of CERP, the CEPP is designed to send more water south from Lake Okeechobee.[28] Likewise, in October 2018, the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) reservoir was federally authorized as a change to the water storage components of CEPP.[29] This $3.31 billion project will provide additional water storage south of Lake Okeechobee and is intended to reduce high-volume discharges from the lake into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and restore the hydrological connection to the Everglades.[30] Overall, these project components of CEPP are sometimes collectively referred to as the Generation 3 projects.

In addition, WRDA 2020 authorized the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (CERP) for construction as part of Generation 4—and WRDA 2024 authorized the Western

---

[23] While variations exist, the use and sequencing of the words "quality, quantity, timing, and distribution" in the text match U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project Fact Sheet, May 2023, at: https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/Congressional-Fact-Sheets-2023/C-SF-Project-C/. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[24] § 373.1501, Fla. Stat. For federal purposes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is the lead federal agency responsible for undertaking implementation of CERP; SFWMD is the lead non-federal partner.

[25] Pub. L. 106-541, § 601, 114 Stat. 2680, 2683-2684.

[26] South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, 2022 Biennial Report, at 2 and 8, available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d5179e7e42ca1000117872f/t/63a493a62905c4171d028c83/1671730088082/December+2022+Final+Biennial+Report.pdf. (Last accessed February 2026.) This is a biennial report released every two years. The most recent report was released in 2022; the 2024 report has been delayed.

[27] Pub. L. No: 115-270 (2018). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD entered a CEPP South Project Partnership Agreement in July 2020. The projected cost of $2.09 billion reflects the present-day value in 2019.

[28] U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Central Everglades Planning Project Facts & Information document, January 2023, available at https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll11/id/6004. (Last accessed February 2026.) The project is designed to send an additional annual average of approximately 370,000 acre-feet of new water south to the Everglades.

[29] America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, Pub. L. No: 115-270 (2018). Note that in 2017, prior to federal authorization, section 373.4598, Florida Statutes, was enacted by the Florida Legislature to establish an expedited schedule for the design and construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) reservoir project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD entered a CEPP EAA Project Partnership Agreement in April 2021.

[30] *See* 373.4598, Fla. Stat. The projected cost of $3.31 billion reflects the present-day value in 2019.

Everglades Restoration Project and the Lake Okeechobee Component A Storage Reservoir as Generation 5 projects. In between the two authorizations, the Corps allocated an additional $1.098 billion in FFY 2022 from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for specific Everglades projects.[31]

Several projects included in CERP are comprised of multiple components due to their complexity and size. In total, CERP now consists of more than 50 projects with 68 individual components[32] to be completed over a 50-year period at a cost of $26.9 billion (FFY 2023 dollars).[33] The federal government is responsible for 50 percent of the overall cost of implementing CERP, although any land acquisition, easements, rights-of-way, and relocations necessary for CERP projects are the responsibility of the State (the amount of which is credited towards the State's share).[34] The Congressional Research Service has provided the most recent update of the inception-to-date expenditure figures: "Through FY2024, the federal government has spent $3.2 billion and the State of Florida has spent $2.8 billion (nominal dollars) on CERP construction projects, according to cost-share transparency reporting."[35] This yields an overall total of $6.0 billion.

Today, Florida is still making targeted investments ahead of the full federal approval process. Some of these steps come with risks. For example, the Ninth Biennial Review - 2022 indicated that, "Full implementation of key Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects are predicated on water being discharged into the Everglades Protection Area meeting established STA discharge limits for phosphorus; thus, the state's efforts to remediate the quality of Everglades inflows is foundational to CERP implementation." As it undertakes construction on CEPP North, the State of Florida continues to work through its restoration strategies and aligned infrastructure improvements to meet the stringent water quality-based effluent limit (WQBEL) for phosphorus in the Everglades Protection Area.[36] According to a recent Congressional Research Service report:

---

[31] *See* Public Law 117-58 (2021) and https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utils/getfile/collection/p16021coll6/id/2249 at 2. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[32] 2015 - 2020 Central and Southern Florida Project, Report to Congress, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, at 6, available at: https://issuu.com/usace_saj/docs/final_2020_report_to_congress_on_cerp_progress_hig. (Last accessed February 2026.) This is a periodic report released every five years. The latest report was released in 2020; the next report has been delayed. Other documents use a different number of projects depending on their purpose and release date. Of the 69 projects currently listed in the 2024 Update to the Integrated Delivery Schedule, 22 are listed as Complete or Phase 1 Implemented, with another 3 shown as de-authorized. The 69th project is Melaleuca Eradication. A draft 2026 update was released January 23, 2026; while expenditures had yet to be updated, 25 projects were shown as completed. Use the following link to access the 2026 draft: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d5179e7e42ca1000117872f/t/69723d1522485a7422587a19/1769094421958/DRAFT_IDS_2026.pdf. (Accessed February 2026.)

[33] 2015 - 2020 Central and Southern Florida Project, Report to Congress, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, at 75, at: https://issuu.com/usace_saj/docs/final_2020_report_to_congress_on_cerp_progress_hig. (Last accessed February 2026.) According to this document, the cost estimate increase of $6.78 billion since the prior report in 2015 (to a revised total of $23.2 billion in FFY 2020) is due to price level (inflation) adjustment from October 2014 to October 2019, changes in project scope and schedule, and new project authorizations, including CEPP and EAA. The same report indicated cumulative expenditures from federal and state partners through September 30, 2019, of $3.23 billion: $1.41 billion (44%) creditable to USACE, and $1.82 billion (56%) creditable to the State.

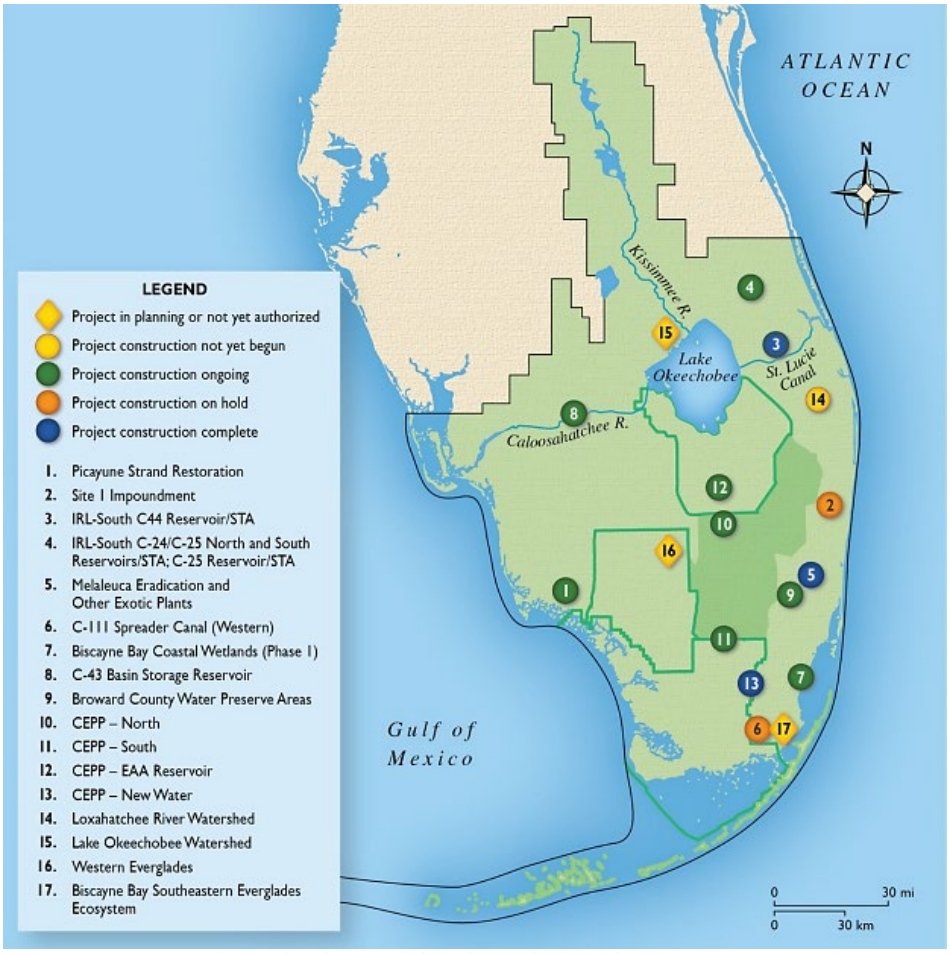
[34] Pub. L. 106-541, § 601, 114 Stat. 2680, 2684.

[35] *See* the *In Focus: Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration* updated January 14, 2025, at https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11336. (Accessed February 2026.) This is higher than the amounts reported in the 2024 Update to the Integrated Delivery Schedule which indicated $2.64 billion from federal sources and $2.82 billion from non-federal sources for a total of $5.46 billion; however, that document was actually referencing completed FFY 2023.

[36] *See* https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/RS_Update_2023_07_FINAL.pdf. (Last accessed February 2026.) Because meeting water quality requirements is a state responsibility, restoration strategies and aligned infrastructure improvements are fully funded by the State of Florida and are external to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. For

The State of Florida anticipates the plan's projects to be constructed and operational by the end of 2025. Assessment of effluent limit attainment for these efforts is required to begin in 2026. The timing of attainment may affect implementation progress for CEPP North and the EAA Reservoir, as USACE has specified that no federal investment in CEPP North infrastructure can occur until the effluent limit is met. The State of Florida currently is proceeding with CEPP North construction prior to an attainment determination. USACE intends to limit EAA Reservoir operations to store, and ultimately release, only the amount of water that can be treated to satisfy all applicable water quality standards.[37]

The Ninth Biennial Review - 2022 sums up its assessment by saying "However, the challenge of meeting the WQBEL starting in WY 2027 is substantial." Until this step is accomplished or another resolution is found, the CERP will not be fully implemented.



Source: Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades; The Tenth Biennial Review – 2024
NOTE: The Caloosahatchee (C-43) Reservoir, shown here as construction ongoing, officially opened July 15, 2025. Likewise, the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project was completed December 9, 2025, and the Picayune Strand Restoration Project was completed January 28, 2026.

additional information, *see* Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades: The Ninth Biennial Review – 2022, which can be downloaded at https://nap.nationalacademies.org/download/26706.

[37] *See* https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11336. (Accessed February 2026.)

Everglades Forever Act

The first seeds of the looming WQBEL target date facing the state germinated over 30 years ago. Beginning well before its direct involvement in CERP and its subsequent federal authorizations, Florida began to carve out its own path for the protection of the Everglades.[38] These early efforts were ultimately energized by the federal court's approval of a landmark consent decree in 1992. The consent decree effectively incorporated the settlement agreement between the federal government, the State of Florida, and the SFWMD, which resolved claims brought by the federal government concerning discharges of water with excess phosphorus levels into the Everglades National Park and the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in violation of the state's own water quality standards. Key elements required the state parties to construct and operate large freshwater treatment wetlands known as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) to reduce total phosphorus concentrations in surface water runoff before the water is discharged into the Everglades Protection Area. Moreover, the consent decree obligated the state to implement a regulatory best management practices (BMP) program in the Everglades Agricultural Area to reduce total phosphorus loads.

Bogged down in a bitter legal and administrative fight over the phosphorus concentration limits and other provisions of the settlement agreement, the Florida Legislature enacted the Everglades Forever Act (EFA) in 1994.[39] The EFA established the state's long-term commitment to restoring and protecting the remaining Everglades ecosystem by improving water quality and water quantity through the implementation of the Everglades Construction Project, source control measures, and a research and monitoring program.[40] The Everglades Construction Project contained 17 projects, with six STAs comprising the primary components. The EFA also required DEP and SFWMD to conduct research before proposing a numerical Class III phosphorus standard in the Everglades Protection Area, with adoption of a rule by December 31, 2003. Otherwise, a default numerical Class III phosphorus standard of 10 parts per billion (ppb) would become effective.[41] A separate deadline of December 31, 2006, was established for DEP and SFWMD to "take all necessary steps to ensure that water delivered to the Everglades Protection Area achieves state water quality standards, including phosphorus criterion, in all parts of the Everglades Protection Area."[42]

In March 2003, Burns & McDonnell, consultants to SFWMD, found that the Everglades Construction Project had exceeded expectations, but that additional work was necessary to reach the goal of 10 ppb—proffering in lieu of the 2003-2006 period, a proposed planning horizon of 2003-2016. Later that year, the Florida Legislature amended the EFA to incorporate SFWMD's Long-Term Plan for Achieving Water Quality Goals (Long-Term Plan) finding that the plan sets forth the best available phosphorus reduction technology through BMPs and STAs and that it was a good-faith effort to maintain consistency with the settlement agreement.[43,44] The Long-Term Plan consists of a combination of source controls, STAs, Advanced Treatment Technologies, and

[38] The Save Our Everglades initiative was first announced in August 1983 by then Governor Bob Graham.
[39] § 373.4592(1)(d), Fla. Stat. This was the successor to the 1991 Everglades Protection Act.
[40] Ch. 94-115, §§ 1-2, Laws of Fla. (codified as amended in § 373.4595, Fla. Stat.).
[41] *See* page 4 of the Senate Staff Analysis and Economic Impact Statement for CS/SB 626 in 2003 for history. Document on file with EDR.
[42] *See* page 5 of the Senate Staff Analysis and Economic Impact Statement for CS/SB 626 in 2003 for history. Document on file with EDR.
[43] § 373.4592, Fla. Stat.
[44] Florida Administrative Code Rule 62-302.540 establishes the applicable water quality standards for phosphorus within the Everglades Protection Area.

regulatory programs—all of which were required to be integrated and consistent with CERP so that unnecessary and duplicative costs were avoided.

In 2013, the EFA was amended again to include, as a modification to the Long-Term Plan, the State of Florida and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's consensus plan on new strategies for improving water quality in the Everglades.[45] Known as the Restoration Strategies Regional Water Quality Plan dated April 27, 2012 (Restoration Strategies), this technical plan includes the creation of 6,500 acres of new STAs and 116,000 acre-feet of additional water storage (including storage features such as flow equalization basins or FEBs) to work in conjunction with other water quality improvement efforts to achieve compliance with the state's numeric phosphorus criterion (as established in the WQBEL) for the Everglades Protection Area.[46]

The cost of implementing the Restoration Strategies was estimated to be $880 million over a 13-year period that began in 2012. All projects have now been completed.[47] According to SFWMD, total program expenditures through September 30, 2025, were approximately $729 million (unaudited).[48] To meet its share of the cost, the 2013 Legislature dedicated $32 million of annual documentary stamp tax receipts for 11 years (beginning Fiscal Year 2013-14 and ending Fiscal Year 2023-24) to the program, as well specific appropriations in FY 2024-25 ($64 million) and FY 2025-26 ($64 million). For additional information on the status and cost of these projects, see the 2026 South Florida Environmental Report (SFER), Chapter 5A (Volume I)—Restoration Strategies and Chapter 9 (Volume II)—Everglades Forever Act Annual Financial Report.[49]

To forecast these expenditures for future editions, the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) will begin working with legislative, DEP and SFWMD staff to determine next steps. While the formal strategies were completed prior to the end of the 2025 calendar year, portions of the consent orders, as well as the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and EFA permits for the operation of SFWMD's STAs, will remain in effect until discharges from each STA meet the WQBEL. This will ensure that the State's water quality standard for the Everglades is achieved. According to the 2026 South Florida Environmental Report (SFER), permit renewals for EFA and NPDES watershed permits were issued in September 2022 and are valid through September 2027. This requirement also interacts with overall CERP implementation as discussed above.

Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Act

In 2007, the Florida Legislature enacted the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP), which expanded the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act[50] by substantially amending the provisions related to the protection and restoration of the Lake Okeechobee watershed and

[45] Ch. 2013-59, § 1, Laws of Fla. (amending § 373.4592, Fla. Stat.)
[46] South Florida WMD, Restoration Strategies Regional Water Quality Plan. 2012. Available at: rs_waterquality_plan_042712_final.pdf (sfwmd.gov). (Last accessed February 2026.) For additional information, *see* also Armstrong, C., Piccone, T.T., & Dombrowski, J. (2023). The largest constructed treatment wetland project in the world: The story of the Everglades stormwater treatment areas. *Ecological Engineering*.
[47] Completion dates provided by SFWMD upon request; email on file.
[48] Total expenditures provided by SFWMD upon request; email on file.
[49] *See* https://sfer-docs.sfwmd.gov/2026_sfer_final/2026_SFER_full_report.pdf. (Accessed March 2026.)
[50] Ch. 2000-130. Laws of Fla. (amending § 373.4595, Fla. Stat.).

incorporating the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries.[51] As part of NEEPP's passage, the Legislature found that it is imperative for the state, local governments, and agricultural and environmental communities to commit to restoring and protecting the surface water resources of the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed.[52] As excessive phosphorus and nitrogen are the primary pollutants contributing to the impairments, the Legislature also found that total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) established in accordance with section 403.067, F.S., provided both an appropriate basis and a means of identifying and addressing the pollutants contributing to the water quality problems. The total projected project cost for the three watersheds was estimated to be $2.7 billion.[53]

In 2016, the Florida Legislature amended NEEPP to designate the original Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) adopted for Lake Okeechobee (2014), the Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin (2012), and the St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin (2013), as the primary pollution control planning tools for these watersheds. The amendments clarified the roles and responsibilities of SFWMD, DEP, and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in expeditiously implementing the program and shifted primary responsibility for water quality protection measures through the associated BMAPs from SFWMD to DEP.[54]

The NEEPP requires these BMAPs to achieve the adopted total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) within 20 years of BMAP adoption with 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year milestones to measure progress. The department is also required to conduct a review of each of these BMAPs every five years to identify further load reductions that may be necessary to achieve compliance with the applicable TMDLs.

As a result of its second 5-year review of the Lake Okeechobee BMAP in December 2024, DEP indicated that an estimated 42 percent of the phosphorous reductions needed to meet the TMDL had been achieved with the implemented projects and strategies.[55] In addition, DEP indicated that the next BMAP update would include actions and projects from the wastewater facility plans and onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (OSTDS) remediation plans prepared by local governments. This update was to be completed no later than July 1, 2025, in accordance with the Clean Waterways Act, Chapter 2020-150, Laws of Florida, but—to date—no revision has been released. The 2024 STAR report lists $1,056.7 million in BMAP projects that are ongoing, planned or underway for Lake Okeechobee.

In addition to a TMDL for phosphorous, the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Basin has a TMDL for total nitrogen (TN). According to DEP, agricultural nonpoint sources are the primary contributor of TN and TP loading to this area. In June 2025, an update to the BMAP based on the

[51] Ch. 2007-253, § 3, Laws of Fla. (amending § 373.4595, Fla. Stat.).
[52] § 373.4595(1)(d), Fla. Stat.
[53] *See* https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2007/392/Analyses/20070392SGA_2007s0392.ga.pdf. (Last accessed February 2026.)
[54] Ch. 2016-1, § 15, Laws of Fla. (amending § 373.4595, Fla. Stat.). For more information on basin management action plans associated with NEEPP, see DEP, Basin Management Action Plans, available at: https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-restoration/content/basin-management-action-plans-bmaps. For the contemporaneous Senate Bill Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement for the 2016 revisions, see 2016 S0552 AP (flsenate.gov). (Both documents last accessed February 2026.)
[55] *See* https://publicfiles.dep.state.fl.us/DEAR/BMAP/LakeOkeechobee/2024_FiveYearReview/Final%20Document/Final-Signed-Lake%20Okeechobee%20Five-Year%20Review%202024.pdf. (Accessed February 2026.)

second 5-year review was released.[56] The update indicates that completed and ongoing projects were estimated to achieve 79 percent of the reduction needed to meet the TN TMDL in 2032 for the tidal area; however, the completed and ongoing projects in the East and West Caloosahatchee subwatersheds were estimated to achieve only 46% of the reductions needed to meet the estuary TN TMDL for these subwatersheds.[57] As a result, the latest report contains revised allocations and timelines: "This update sets a goal for achieving load reductions no later than 2032 for the responsible stakeholders in the tidal portion of the BMAP. The responsible stakeholders in the East and West Caloosahatchee subwatersheds have a goal of achieving load reductions no later than 2040..."[58] The 2024 STAR report lists $3,374.4 million in BMAP projects that are ongoing, planned or underway for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary Basin.

According to DEP, agricultural nonpoint sources are also the primary contributor of TN and TP loading to the St. Lucie River and Estuary. In June 2023, DEP reported in its second 5-Year Review of the BMAP for this area that completed projects are estimated to achieve 67 percent of the reduction needed to meet the TN TMDL and 50 percent of the reduction needed to meet the TP TMDL in 2028.[59] However, the department advised, "To achieve the TMDL in 15 years, stakeholders must identify and submit additional local projects, and the Coordinating Agencies (DEP, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services [FDACS], and South Florida Water Management District [SFWMD]) must identify additional regional projects as well as determine sources for the significant funding that will be necessary." The department recommended that the plan deadline be extended by another 5 years to sync the timing with Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary; however, an update to the BMAP based on the second 5-year review was released in June 2025 which retains the 2028 goal for achieving load reductions.[60] In that update, DEP reported that 65% of the reductions needed to meet the TN TMDL and 43% of the reductions needed to meet the TP TMDL could be met through projects that were either complete or ongoing. The 2024 STAR report lists $4,304.8 million in BMAP projects that are ongoing, planned or underway for the he St. Lucie River and Estuary.

For more information on the progress of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, St. Lucie River and Estuary, and Lake Okeechobee BMAPs, see DEP's STAR Report.[61] In future editions of EDR's report, expenditures necessary to complete these particular BMAPs may be isolated from the statewide BMAP implementation analysis presented in Chapter 4. For now, these expenditure projections are included there.

---

[56] The second five-year review was released January 2023.

[57] *See* the review document at: https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Caloosahatchee%20BMAP%202022%205-Year%20Review_.pdf. (Accessed February 2026.) According to the 2024 South Florida Environmental Report (SFER), completed and ongoing projects in the tributaries are estimated to achieve only 27% of the reductions needed to meet the TP TMDL for the tributaries.

[58] *Id*.

[59] *See* the review document at: https://publicfiles.dep.state.fl.us/DEAR/DEARweb/BMAP/St.%20Lucie%20River%20and%20Estuary/St%20Lucie%20BMAP%202023%205-Year%20Review%20Final.pdf. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[60] *See* the review document at: https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/FINAL_2025_STLU_BMAP.pdf. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[61] Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2024 Statewide Annual Report on Total Maximum Daily Loads, Basin Management Action Plans, Minimum Flows or Minimum Water Levels, and Recovery or Prevention Strategies. This report addresses verified projects through December 31, 2024. *See* https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-restoration/content/statewide-annual-report. (Accessed February 2026.)

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Regulation Act

Passed in 2001, the purpose of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Regulation Act (CERPRA)[62] is to provide efficient and effective permitting of all project components. CERPRA permits are issued in lieu of all other permits issued under Chapters 373 and 403, with the exception of NPDES permits. Amended in 2003, the law now requires permit applications to provide reasonable assurances that: "State water quality standards, including water quality criteria and moderating provisions, will be met. Under no circumstances shall the project component cause or contribute to violation of state water quality standards."[63] At this time, no projected expenditures are included for this function.

Everglades Restoration Investment Act

In 2000, the Legislature passed the Everglades Restoration Investment Act, section 373.470, Florida Statutes, which provided the framework for the state to fund its share of the partnership, through cash or bonds, to finance or refinance the cost of acquisition and improvement of land and water areas necessary for implementing CERP.[64] Among other things, the legislation created the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund to serve as the primary repository for state, local, and federal project contributions in accordance with section 373.470(4), Florida Statutes. In 2007 and 2008, the Legislature expanded the use of the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund and bonds issued for Everglades restoration to include the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan and the River Watershed Protection Plans under the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, and the Keys Wastewater Plan.[65] At this time, there are no dedicated revenue sources for this fund.[66]

Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project

In 2021, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2516 to expedite the implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP). While it is a CERP eligible project, it has not yet been authorized by Congress for federal funding and cost-share. Despite that, the state legislation requires SFWMD to take all necessary steps to expedite LOWRP's project design, engineering and construction phases. To accelerate the funding, an annual distribution of $50 million from the state's documentary stamp tax receipts began in Fiscal Year 2021-22. After multiple drafts and an extended review phase, the final Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Science Plan Version 2 was published in December 2024. The current recommended plan consists of 55 (underground) watershed aquifer storage and recovery wells with annual average storage volume of approximately 153,000 acre-feet and two wetland restoration sites, Paradise Run (approximately 4,700 acres) and Kissimmee River Center (approximately 1,200 acres), to restore wetland areas. Still in an exploratory phase, SFWMD's 2026 SFER indicates that, "Test wells,

[62] Ch. 2001-172, § 2, Laws of Fla.
[63] Ch. 2003-394, § 19, Laws of Fla.
[64] Ch. 2000-129, § 5, Laws of Fla.
[65] The Keys Wastewater Plan is defined as "the plan prepared by the Monroe County Engineering Division dated November 2007 and submitted to the Florida House of Representatives on December 4, 2007." § 373.470(2)(e), Fla. Stat.
[66] Supplementary funding from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) is also used for certain Everglades projects.

pump tests, demonstration treatment facilities, and cycle testing are important next steps to evaluating the scope and scale of the ASR program." Further, "The LOWRP awaits further federal guidance as to the next steps for the wetlands' component of the project, while the State of Florida continues to advance and implement the ASR well program component."

7.2 Everglades Expenditures

The primary sources for Everglades restoration appropriations are the federal government, the State of Florida, and SFWMD. Many of the restoration projects are funded by shares of federal and state funding, with the state funding including SFWMD. As such, distinguishing between state and regional expenditures on Everglades restoration can be challenging. In this section, state and regional expenditures are largely reported together.

Federal Expenditures on Everglades Restoration

Federal funding for Everglades restoration is provided through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Under CERP, the federal government is required to fund half of the total cost of implementing CERP projects. According to 2024 Update to the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS), the federal government made 48.3 percent of the total credited CERP expenditures through FFY 2023. Once the expenditures yet to be credited were included, the federal share dropped to 40.9 percent. Table 7.2.1 shows categorized federal expenditures on CERP through September 30, 2024. EDR received this data from SFWMD.

[See Table on following page.]

Table 7.2.1 Annual Federal Expenditures on CERP (in $millions)

Federal	FFY 99-00	FFY 00-01	FFY 01-02	FFY 02-03	FFY 03-04	FFY 04-05	FFY 05-06	FFY 06-07
Real Estate	$-	$-	$-	$-	$38.08	$-	$-	$-
Design	$1.32	$10.61	$21.43	$30.69	$40.64	$49.59	$49.17	$57.00
Construction	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Studies	$-	$0.38	$1.58	$1.24	$1.38	$1.30	$1.83	$0.10
Total	**$1.32**	**$10.99**	**$23.00**	**$31.92**	**$80.11**	**$50.89**	**$51.01**	**$57.10**

	FFY 07-08	FFY 08-09	FFY 09-10	FFY 10-11	FFY 11-12	FFY 12-13	FFY 13-14	FFY 14-15
Real Estate	$-	$2.93	$0.06	$0.03	$0.03	$0.06	$0.01	$-
Design	$48.43	$48.46	$51.27	$46.60	$37.42	$34.41	$23.34	$19.57
Construction	$-	$-	$10.19	$47.15	$67.29	$68.28	$50.36	$43.24
Studies	$0.49	$1.08	$0.21	$0.29	$0.12	$0.01	$0.01	$-
Total	**$48.92**	**$52.48**	**$61.73**	**$94.07**	**$104.86**	**$102.75**	**$73.72**	**$62.81**

	FFY 15-16	FFY 16-17	FFY 17-18	FFY 18-19	FFY 19-20	FFY 20-21	FFY 21-22	FFY 22-23
Real Estate	$71.59	$-	$0.10	$0.02	$-	$0.03	$0.18	$0.01
Design	$17.98	$21.82	$21.85	$28.87	$36.10	$63.23	$67.89	$59.35
Construction	$32.21	$43.83	$52.12	$69.11	$75.32	$52.34	$58.09	$105.29
Studies	$-	$0.02	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Total	**$121.78**	**$65.67**	**$74.07**	**$98.00**	**$111.42**	**$115.60**	**$126.16**	**$164.65**

	FFY 23-24	Grand Total
Real Estate	$0.32	$113.30
Design	$65.48	$951.39
Construction	$145.99	$920.81
Studies	$-	$10.04
Total	$211.79	**$1,995.54**

While the federal government expended nearly $2.0 billion on CERP-related projects during this period, its total known obligation is much higher—approximately $3.24 billion. The difference would raise federal share to 46.2 percent, assuming state obligations are also met.[67]

[67] The source for these numbers is the South Florida Water Management District. Data was provided upon request. Numbers may not add due to rounding.

	Closed	Open	TOTAL
Real Estate	$113.30	$0.00	$113.30
Design	$951.39	$46.24	$997.63
Construction	$920.81	$1,194.84	$2,115.65
Studies	$10.04	$0.00	$10.04
	$1,995.54	**$1,241.07**	**$3,236.62**

In addition to CERP expenditures, the IDS provides running totals for certain non-CERP Everglades restoration activities. Table 7.2.2 shows the cumulative non-CERP federal expenditures on Everglades Restoration through September 30, 2023. These numbers are 4.2 percent higher than the last Edition, primarily due to increased expenditures on the Kissimmee River Restoration. EDR will continue to work with SFWMD staff to determine annual expenditures and progress where applicable.

Table 7.2.2 Non-CERP Federal Expenditures on Everglades Restoration (in $millions)

Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park	$395
Critical Projects	$89
Kissimmee River Restoration	$487
Herbert Hoover Dike	$1,559
Central and South Florida Project (Non-CERP)	$840
Total	**$3,370**

Source: Integrated Delivery Schedule 2024 Update. Values are cumulative totals as of September 30, 2023.

State and Regional Expenditures on Everglades Restoration

According to the 2024 Update to the IDS, the State of Florida (inclusive of the SFWMD) spent just over $2.82 billion on credited CERP-related projects from the start of the restoration effort through FFY 2023. Like the federal expenditure data discussed above, SFWMD provided more granular data on annual CERP expenditures (whether by itself or from the state) through September 30, 2024. Using this data, the state and regional governments have contributed nearly 53.8 percent of the total expenditures or over $3.77 billion during the full history of the program. Table 7.2.3 shows categorized state and regional expenditures on CERP through September 30, 2024. Please note that the state expenditures began one year prior to the federal expenditures.

[See Table on following page.]

Table 7.2.3 Annual State/SFWMD Expenditures on CERP (in $millions)

State / Regional	FFY 98-99	FFY 99-00	FFY 00-01	FFY 01-02	FFY 02-03	FFY 03-04	FFY 04-05	FFY 05-06
Real Estate	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$75.39	$-	$-
Design	$0.58	$1.88	$9.62	$17.83	$31.62	$41.67	$64.83	$105.43
Construction	$-	$-	$-	$-	$0.02	$0.82	$2.00	$0.62
Studies	$-	$-	$0.09	$0.94	$1.95	$1.91	$1.37	$1.35
Total	**$0.58**	**$1.88**	**$9.71**	**$18.77**	**$33.58**	**$119.79**	**$68.20**	**$107.40**

	FFY 06-07	FFY 07-08	FFY 08-09	FFY 09-10	FFY 10-11	FFY 11-12	FFY 12-13	FFY 13-14
Real Estate	$-	$-	$433.59	$-	$1.64	$1.06	$4.61	$0.55
Design	$66.29	$59.62	$33.43	$22.01	$16.90	$8.37	$10.31	$8.71
Construction	$12.84	$0.79	$0.11	$5.15	$7.37	$2.91	$4.36	$1.65
Studies	$3.19	$1.42	$0.31	$0.07	$0.04	$0.05	$0.04	$0.01
Total	**$82.32**	**$61.83**	**$467.44**	**$27.23**	**$25.95**	**$12.39**	**$19.32**	**$10.92**

	FFY 14-15	FFY 15-16	FFY 16-17	FFY 17-18	FFY 18-19	FFY 19-20	FFY 20-21	FFY 21-22
Real Estate	$0.41	$518.57	$-	$-	$-	$0.03	$-	$-
Design	$7.61	$9.49	$14.65	$23.93	$20.52	$27.13	$37.80	$44.49
Construction	$32.56	$42.19	$66.82	$44.69	$81.16	$145.29	$214.23	$276.58
Studies	$-	$-	-$0.02	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Total	**$40.58**	**$570.25**	**$81.45**	**$68.62**	**$101.68**	**$172.45**	**$252.03**	**$321.07**

	FFY 22-23	FFY 23-24	Grand Total*
Real Estate	$-	$-	$1035.86
Design	$39.72	$10.31	$1,058.33
Construction	$310.59	$411.48	$1,665.19
Studies	$-	$-	$12.71
Total	**$350.31**	**$421.79**	**$3,772.09**

*The Grand Total includes additional expenditures that have yet to be included in the table. This primarily affects the Design category.

In addition to CERP expenditures, the 2024 Update to the Integrated Delivery Schedule provides running totals of expenditures for certain non-CERP Everglades restoration activities. Previously, some of these outlays have been included in the reported expenditures for water quality restoration projects and initiatives in Chapter 2. Over the past two years, they have only been included in this chapter. Table 7.2.4 shows these non-CERP state and regional expenditures over time. Expenditures have increased 6.2 percent since the last Edition—primarily related to the Kissimmee River Restoration and the Restoration Strategies / Everglades Construction Project.

Table 7.2.4 Non-CERP State/SFWMD Expenditures on Everglades Restoration (in $millions)

Restoration Strategies & Everglades Construction Project	$2,612
Critical Projects	$88
Kissimmee River Restoration	$438
Herbert Hoover Dike	$100
Central and South Florida Project (Non-CERP)	$227
Total	**$3,465**

Source: Integrated Delivery Schedule 2024 Update. Values are cumulative totals as of September 30, 2023.

Table 7.2.5 provides a 12-year history of annual cash expenditures for various state projects or initiatives that together comprise a more expansive view of the State's direct investment in the Everglades. Many, but not all, of the expenditures that have gone through state accounts have been for projects that support CERP and the Restoration Strategies. Note that activity in the last four years has substantially increased.

Table 7.2.5 State Expenditures for Everglades Restoration (in $millions)

State Expenditures	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19
Evergaldes Restoration	$ 54.77	$ 35.25	$ 55.50	$ 89.70	$ 119.41	$ 153.98
FL Keys Wastewater	$ 39.16	$ 10.72	$ 26.20	$ 6.23	$ 6.01	$ 10.49
Lake Okeechobee / Indian River	$ -	$ 3.88	$ 27.37	$ 27.36	$ 10.46	$ 7.95
Lake Okeechobee / Agriculture	$ -	$ 4.72	$ 6.65	$ 5.72	$ 7.53	$ 19.07
Land Acquisition	$ -	$ -	$ 0.05	$ 6.52	$ 22.61	$ 14.52
NEEPP	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 4.83	$ 18.51	$ 20.26
C51 Reservoir	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Grand Total	**$ 93.92**	**$ 54.56**	**$ 115.77**	**$ 140.37**	**$ 184.53**	**$ 226.28**

State Expenditures	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25
Evergaldes Restoration	$ 185.32	$ 235.64	$ 348.42	$ 406.78	$ 471.65	$ 313.07
FL Keys Wastewater	$ 1.19	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Lake Okeechobee / Indian River	$ 5.60	$ 0.03	$ 1.25	$ 0.10	$ 2.01	$ 3.95
Lake Okeechobee / Agriculture	$ 7.48	$ 3.64	$ 5.07	$ 3.53	$ 2.42	$ 0.77
Land Acquisition	$ 3.80	$ 0.11	$ 0.09	$ 0.00	$ -	$ -
NEEPP	$ 28.77	$ 28.45	$ 26.01	$ 36.80	$ 102.62	$ 51.91
C51 Reservoir	$ -	$ 3.22	$ 22.58	$ 4.20	$ 25.48	$ 18.28
Grand Total	**$ 232.16**	**$ 271.10**	**$ 403.41**	**$ 451.41**	**$ 604.17**	**$ 387.98**

Note: Historical values in this table may be updated as additional data becomes available. Data in this table supersedes that reported in previous editions.

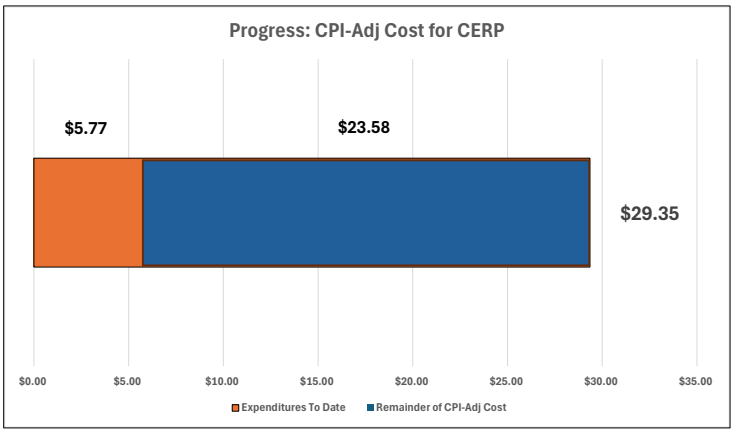
State funding sources for Everglades restoration projects have included General Revenue, trust fund balances, and bond proceeds. Prior law had authorized the issuance of bonds to finance or refinance the cost of Everglades restoration from Fiscal Year 2002-03 through Fiscal Year 2019-

20 in an amount not to exceed $100 million per fiscal year except under certain conditions.[68] This authorization is no longer effective. Prior to its expiration, the state had issued approximately $336.8 million of Everglades bonds. The most recent year in which bonding was authorized was Fiscal Year 2014-15, when the Legislature authorized bonds of up to $50.0 million for the purpose of constructing sewage collection, treatment, and disposal facilities located within the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern.[69] During FY 2025-26, the Florida State Board of Administration redeemed/defeased all outstanding Florida Forever and Everglades bonds as part of Florida's Debt Reduction Program. As such, no debt service will be paid by the State in the current fiscal year or any future year.

Expenditures Necessary to Comply with Laws and Regulations Governing CERP

When CERP was originally authorized in 2000, it was estimated that it would cost $8.2 billion and take 30 years to complete.[70] This cost was updated in 2019 to $23.2 billion.[71] A significant portion of the increase since 2014 (estimated at the time to be $16.4 billion) is related to the inclusion of two additional projects: the $2.09 billion ($2019) Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and the $3.31 billion ($2019) Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Storage Reservoir.

Adjusting the reported present value ($2019) for an additional six years of inflation results in a suggested implementation cost of $29.35 billion in September 2025. Summing the CERP expenditure totals from Tables 7.2.1 (federal) and 7.2.3 (State / SFWMD) results in a total of $5.77 billion spent through that same date, leaving another $23.58 billion (80.3 percent) to fund.



[68] § 215.619, Fla. Stat. Specifically, § 215.619(1)(a), Fla. Stat, authorized bonds to exceed $100 million per fiscal year if DEP requested additional amounts to achieve cost savings or accelerate the purchase of lands, or the Legislature authorized additional bonds to fund the Florida Keys and Key West Areas of Critical State Concern.
[69] Specific Appropriation 1626A, ch. 2014-51, Laws of Fla. (Fiscal Year 2014-15 General Appropriations Act).
[70] Everglades Restoration: Federal Funding and Implementation Progress. Congressional Research Service. Available at: Everglades Restoration: Federal Funding and Implementation Progress (congress.gov). This differs from the Overview of the Review Study (the "Restudy") released in October 1998 by the Corps which indicated a cost of $7.8 billion and 20 years to completion. *See*: Overview: Central and southern Florida project comprehensive review study, October 1998 - Project Management Reports - USACE Digital Library (oclc.org). (Both documents last accessed February 2026.)
[71] 2020 Central and Southern Florida Project, Report to Congress, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, at 75, available at: 2015 – 2020 Momentum: Report to Congress: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Central and Southern Florida Project (eenews.net). (Last accessed February 2026.)

The reported $5.77 billion does not include $1.24 billion in open federal obligations. If this amount is included, total expenditures would increase to $7.01 billion, leaving $22.34 billion (76.1 percent) to fund.

Over a 5-year period with complete data (FFY 2019 through FFY 2023), total expenditures have averaged nearly $362.7 million per year, suggesting that CERP would require an additional 65 years to reach full implementation at the current pace. This inordinate length of time would be detrimental to the success of the underlying restoration efforts, as well as impede any reversal of the ongoing ecosystem degradation.[72] According to the 2018 Seventh Biennial Review of Everglades Restoration by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine: "Funding for Everglades restoration remains an important constraint on achieving a rate of progress that would be consistent with the original vision for the CERP."

If the original 30-year goal were to be met by January 2031, total annual expenditures would need to increase to nearly $5.9 billion per year. If the more acknowledged alternative goal of 2050 were to be met,[73] annual expenditures would need to increase by a factor of 2.71 to $982.6 million per year. These costs would be shared approximately 50-50 between the federal government and the State of Florida, including the South Florida Water Management District. If Florida accelerates the pace of its spending to meet a 30- or 50-year goal, it is unlikely—based on history—that the federal government would accelerate its funding in tandem. However, if the state advances the full cost, it runs the risk that such funds will not be fully reimbursed.

7.3 Next Steps and Recommendations

As part of the 2025 Session, the Legislature appropriated $742.0 million to benefit Everglades restoration and its related projects.

EVERGLADES	AMOUNT
Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)	$550,000,000
Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan (NEEP)	$73,028,059
Everglades Restoration (recurring)	$64,000,000
Dispersed Storage	$5,000,000
Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Plan	$50,000,000
TOTAL	**$742,028,059**

Source: Audubon Florida.[74]

The pace at which this appropriated funding turns into actual expenditures will not be seen until the data is received for next year's report. Based on this new insight, future editions of this report

[72] Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades: The Eighth Biennial Review – 2020. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. National Academic Press. Available at: Everglades 2021 4-Pager-2.pdf (nationalacademies.org). (Last accessed February 2026.) Also see "Everglades: The catalyst to combat the world's water crisis," Colonel Alfred A. Pantano, Jr., Master's Thesis (2009), U.S. Army War College.

[73] *See* Congressional Research Service, Recent Developments in Everglades Restoration, August 30, 2022 (stating that CERP will take approximately 50 years [from 2000] to implement), available at: https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11336. (Last accessed February 2026.)

[74] https://media.audubon.org/2025-06/AF_SOTE_Spring2025_v8_WEB.pdf?_gl=1*jrlgbt*_gcl_au*MTk3OTQ1Njg3Ni4xNzcyMTI5ODY5*_ga*MTMyOTI4NTY3NS4xNzcyMTI5ODY5*_ga_X2XNL2MWTT*czE3NzMxNjc4NzUkbzMkZzEkdDE3NzMxNjg3NzMkajYwJGwwJGgw. (Accessed February 2026)

will continue to refine the forecast of expenditures necessary to complete CERP. Additionally, EDR will work with legislative, DEP and SFWMD staff to produce a forecast of the expenditures necessary to implement non-CERP Everglades restoration projects required by law. These previously included the state's water quality initiatives related to the Restoration Strategies but would now only address next steps if the WQBEL is not achieved. In tandem with this work, EDR will be monitoring the release of the many reports that have been delayed over the past two years.

Finally, EDR will continue working on a special project to evaluate the Florida labor market (both demand and supply) for the specialized occupations, skillsets and training needed for the work required by the various Everglades projects. This analysis is prompted by the January 16, 2024, meeting of the Joint Working Group (WG) and Science Coordination Group (SCG) where attendees discussed the looming challenge of finding contractors for the extremely large volume of high-dollar projects that are currently underway or starting within the next few years.

At this time, EDR has no formal recommendations for legislative consideration regarding Everglades restoration.