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### The Journey to Restore America's Everglades

A partnership of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Florida Water Management District and many other federal, state, local and tribal partners.



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Jacksonville District

U.S. Army Corps of  
Engineers  
Jacksonville District  
701 San Marco Blvd.  
Jacksonville, Fla.  
32207-8175  
1-800-291-9405 or 904-  
232-2568  
[www.saj.usace.army.mil](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil)

## Corps and partners break ground on second Picayune project

More than 130 people gathered on a beautiful morning to celebrate the start of the second major federal construction contract for the **Picayune Strand Restoration Project**. The groundbreaking took place at the project site in Collier County. On Friday, Feb. 18, work started on the \$79 million **Faka Union Canal Pump Station**, the second of three construction contracts for this Everglades restoration project.

Ken Salazar, secretary of the Department of the Interior, gave the keynote address. "Our partnership with the state of Florida, the Army Corps and many stakeholders to restore the 55,000-acre Picayune Strand is vital to this fragile ecosystem, and the work at Picayune Strand has significant benefits for the economy and quality of life in Florida," Salazar said. "From bridging the Tamiami Trail to the Site-1 Impoundment project, our investments in Everglades restoration are investments in Florida's future in ensuring clean water for its citizens and for the environment. We are putting people back to work and restoring the River of Grass."

Other speakers included Terrence "Rock" Salt, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for civil works; and Eric Buermann, chair of the South Florida Water Management District. The Army Junior ROTC unit from Palmetto Ridge High School in Collier County presented the colors and Jaclyn Raulerson, Miss Florida 2010, sang the National Anthem.

When complete, the Picayune Strand Restoration Project will restore natural water flows over an 85-square-mile area. The project will improve the area's hydrology, allow for the return of more balanced plant communities, increase aquifer recharge, and send fresh water in a more natural manner to the coastal estuaries. The project also restores important Florida panther habitat.

For more information, click [here](#).



*Ken Salazar, the Department of the Interior secretary (second from left), joins other supporters to break ground Feb. 18.*

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## Everglades conference highlights partnerships

The value of innovative partnerships was one of many themes highlighted at the 26th annual **Everglades Coalition Conference** from Jan. 6 to 9 in Weston, Fla. More than 250 Everglades supporters and agency leaders and staff from across the state of Florida and nation gathered for four days of presentations, speakers, information sharing and a field trip.

Various experts present many topics each year at this important event. However, this year's focus was on innovative partnerships, with some novel entities forging future alliances to protect the Everglades for mutual benefit.

**Secretary of the Department of the Interior Ken Salazar** announced a proposed new **Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge** south of Orlando. The Interior says the refuge will be comprised of 50,000 acres purchased by the federal government and another 100,000 acres protected by conservation easements with ranchers, some of whom have owned the land for decades. Ranchers may continue to use their property, but this prevents development. The sprawling wildlife refuge and conservation area is planned for Polk, Osceola, Indian River, Okeechobee and Highlands counties. The Interior plans to release final details later this year.

"The partnerships being formed would protect and improve water quality north of Lake Okeechobee, restore wetlands, and connect existing conservation lands and important wildlife corridors to support the greater Everglades restoration effort," Salazar said.

**U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson** supports the concept. "This is an important first step aimed at preserving and protecting thousands of acres vital to the Everglades," he said. "Projects like this will ensure future generations will be able to benefit from and enjoy the River of Grass."

**Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam** gave a keynote address. "Restoring the northern Everglades is a tremendous opportunity for partnership between the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and organizations here today," Putnam said. "The purchase of property from willing landowners will enable Floridians to continue important agricultural production while protecting Florida's valuable wildlife for generations to come." The proposed refuge will protect habitat for 88 federal and state species.

Attendees made many other timely announcements and presented ideas at the conference, including:

- Salazar said building a 5.5 mile Tamiami Trail bridge is one of his top priorities as secretary; he wants to explore future opportunities for U.S. Sugar land acquisition, recognizing that more above-ground water storage is needed; and, he wants to review new science that indicates the Everglades was wetter than previously thought.
- **Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy** said the Obama administration and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are committed to the Everglades. She pledged to improve the Corps planning process; revamp the Project Implementation Report (PIR) process to 18 months; more quickly move water south to Everglades National Park, which includes speeding up the removal of levees and canals that block flow; and, revise estimates of the amount of water needed to restore the ecosystem.
- **Col. Alfred Pantano, Corps of Engineers' Jacksonville District commander**, participated in a panel discussion about building resilience into the ecosystem. He said the Corps must deliver projects on time, improve its civil works process and the Corps and partners must agree on project sequencing.

For more about the 26th Everglades Coalition Conference, click [here](#).

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*Adam Putnam is the first Florida agriculture commissioner to address the Everglades Coalition Conference.*

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### **Update: Kissimmee Chain of Lakes operational schedule meetings set for later this calendar year**

Meetings to provide stakeholders updates on the status of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes operational schedule modifications are tentatively set for later this calendar year. This newsletter originally reported the meetings for earlier in 2011 in the January-February issue.

The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes operational schedule is part of the larger **Kissimmee River Restoration Project**. Once complete, the project will restore 43 continuous miles of twisting and turning river, 40 square miles of restored river and floodplain habitats, and 27,000 acres of rehydrated wetlands. The project is well under way now, and the Corps anticipates construction completion in 2014.

As part of the restoration project, water managers will modify the operational schedule for the Kissimmee chain of lakes. The public outreach plan tentatively calls for one status meeting in the upper basin and one in the lower basin.

For more information, keep an eye on upcoming newsletters or contact Corps Project Manager Tiphonie Jinks at 904-232-1548 or [tiphonie.c.jinks@usace.army.mil](mailto:tiphonie.c.jinks@usace.army.mil) or South Florida Water Management District Project Manager Christine Carlson at 561-682-6143 or [ccarlso@sfwmd.gov](mailto:ccarlso@sfwmd.gov).

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### **Fourth independent review of CERP begins**

The fourth congressionally mandated independent review of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) has begun, with the initial meeting held Feb. 21-23 in Miami. The **Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress** will meet approximately eight times in the next two years. The committee anticipates releasing its findings in late 2012.

Three prior reviews have taken place, with the findings published in 2006, 2008 and 2010. The findings often result in changes and improvements to CERP. Many committee members are from universities and other prestigious organizations with specialized expertise in fields related to CERP.

For information, visit the National Academies web page for the review of CERP, by clicking [here](#).

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*The second review  
was released  
in 2008.*

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## **CERP bookmarks and tray liners to be distributed for Earth Day**

The Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District will place tray liners and bookmarks in key locations in south Florida in recognition of **Earth Day**. The bookmarks and tray liners – or place mats – both raise awareness about the plan to restore the Everglades, and direct people to the official website to learn how to get involved in its restoration.

Earth Day is observed in April every year with many events worldwide to raise awareness about the steps people can take to protect and restore our fragile planet. It began in 1970 and today as many as 1 billion people mark Earth Day each year. The anniversary of the first Earth Day is April 22.

The Corps of Engineers often develops products highlighting Everglades restoration and its protection for distribution to the African American community during special holiday periods. This year, the Corps developed a comic bookmark and tray liner, both of which feature a fun-loving family, the Waters, which recently moved to urban south Florida and is learning about the Everglades along with their everyday experiences.

The tray liners will be distributed to restaurants and the bookmarks to libraries in historically black communities in **Palm Beach, Broward** and **Miami-Dade** counties.

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**About the wafers family**

# Livin' with the Wafers

The Wafers family is a fictional family that moves to urban south Florida and faces everyday challenges. Along the way, they learn valuable lessons about its ecosystem and the plan to restore America's Everglades. The following members of the family include:

Everett   Marvin   Lina   Mike   Sarah   Fred   Mia

**Activity: Word Search**

KEEP EVERGLADES PICTURE PLUSH FLUHA SUHAMI WATER

Instructions: Join the Wafers family on a search for the best and greatest elements and benefits of the plan to restore the Everglades.

P	I	C	A	Y	U	N	E	D	E
L	W	E	B	C	D	E	F	V	L
A	A	R	H	I	J	K	E	S	A
N	T	P	S	T	O	R	E	T	S
L	E	M	N	P	G	A	N	R	S
I	R	O	P	L	R	R	S	I	A
T	A	T	A	T	I	B	A	H	C
Y	D	D	B	C	T	D	C	A	A
E	E	F	G	H	A	I	J	B	M
S	S	M	N	O	W	P	O	I	U
T	A	M	I	A	M	I	E	T	P

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, or "CERP," includes many important projects needed to restore and protect the Everglades. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the South Florida Water Management District, Everglades National Park and many other state working landowners make the dream of a restored Everglades system. The most important CERP projects will do a major water that runs off the land and into the ocean and gulf. Most of the water will be used to restore the greater Everglades ecosystem. The remaining water can be used to help South Florida cities and towns with their need for fresh water.

**About the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a federal agency that specializes in the planning, engineering, construction and management of large infrastructure projects. Its jurisdiction covers Florida and the Caribbean. Missions include flood damage reduction, water resource management, navigation, deep water and estuarine, environmental restoration, emergency response and disaster, levee, and reduction construction.

The Activity Word Search answer key can be found at [www.evergladesplan.org](http://www.evergladesplan.org)

**America's Everglades**  
About Everglades Restoration

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