

**e-Resource** is a monthly electronic communiqué designed to keep you apprised of the community and legislative activities undertaken by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and provide up-to-date information on important water issues.



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## 2007 Legislative Session Set to Begin

The 2007 legislative session will begin on Tuesday, March 6. Property tax reform has leaped to the forefront with the Governor, House and Senate all proposing versions of reform packages. Top environmental priorities identified by the House and Senate include alternative energy, the Everglades, Florida Forever, budgetary oversight of the water management districts and land acquisition and management. To date, water management districts have made presentations to House and Senate committees on budget issues as well as land acquisition and management.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District has filed 11 community budget issue requests for water supply and resource development projects in our region, totaling just over \$37 million. A few of these projects include:

• **The Central West Coast Surface Water Enhancement Initiative — \$10,000,000** – These projects ensure reliable supplies of high-quality water in a way that both protects and preserves the environment. The initiative utilizes a comprehensive approach that will maximize the use of surface water for public supply, which in turn will limit pressure on the development of ground

water in the Southern Water Use Caution Area. In addition to the drinking water components of the projects, some projects include various levels of surface water restoration, restoration of freshwater wetland communities and improvement in water quality.

• **Tampa Bay Restoration Projects — \$2,000,000** – The objectives of Tampa Bay restoration projects are a return to a functioning native system with improved water quality and habitat. There are more than 7 completed and 45 ongoing projects that will meet the long-term objectives of water quality improvement, habitat restoration and a reduction in pollutant loads.



*Aerial view of the Fred and Ida Schultz Preserve, a SWIM Tampa Bay Restoration project.*

• **Upper Peace River Watershed Restoration Initiative — \$10,000,000** – The objectives of this initiative include restoration of surface water storage and flows, aquifer recharge and improvement to water quality and ecosystems that have been lost, degraded or significantly altered in the Peace River watershed.

• **Withlacoochee River Watershed Initiative — \$500,000** – The Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for the Withlacoochee River and Green Swamp involves assembling the information and watershed model for the Green Swamp, Withlacoochee River, Little Withlacoochee River, the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes, Lake Rousseau and the Western Terminus of the Cross Florida Greenway. The objectives are to understand the dynamics of the river and evaluate alternatives to better manage the water resources along the Withlacoochee River.

These projects are done with the support of many members of our local legislative delegations and in conjunction with many local and private partners. All projects support the District's ongoing mission of restoring natural systems, providing and protecting vital water supplies and improving flood protection and water quality.

## Water Conservation Summit

The Southwest, St. Johns River and Suwannee River water management districts will jointly sponsor a Water Conservation Summit. The one-day program will focus on reclaimed water and conservation opportunities that can help extend water supplies and reduce groundwater pumping.

The summit will be held March 23 at the Ocala Hilton and will cover issues pertinent to elected officials, local government

staff, water managers and other stakeholders of Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Levy, Marion and Sumter counties.

Speakers will share their expertise and experience and discuss lessons learned from conservation and reclaimed water programs that have been successfully implemented. For more information or to register, please contact Susan Kessel, District Community Affairs Representative, at 1-800-423-1476, ext. 4760.



## Colt Creek State Park Dedication

On January 20, 2007, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) and Polk County joined Senator Paula Dockery in welcoming more than 200 guests to the dedication of Colt Creek State Park, Florida's 160<sup>th</sup> state park.

"This state park will serve as a permanent reminder that the phrase 'Florida Forever' is more than just words, it's a commitment to future generations," said District Governing Board Member Neil Combee.

Guests at the grand opening participated in ranger-led tours of area waterways, wildlife habitat and natural resources. Year-round visitors are able to hike, ride horses and have access to a covered pavilion, picnic tables and grills, an information kiosk and a parking area.

The 5,118-acre property was purchased by DEP, the District and Polk County in May 2006 for \$53.7 million. The property is habitat to abundant native wildlife including the sand skink, blue-tailed mole skink, gopher tortoise and bald eagle.

The park is located in the Green Swamp and named after one of the swamp's tributaries. The Green Swamp spans 560,000 acres and is a major source of water for the counties served by the District. Currently, 118,000 acres of the Green Swamp are under District ownership.



*Executive Director Dave Moore presents Senator Paula Dockery a plaque at the Colt Creek dedication.*

## Clean Renewable Water Supply Bonds

Aging water infrastructure and the diminishing availability of federal funding for water-related projects have prompted the U.S. Desalination Coalition, now the New Water Supply Coalition, to make clean renewable water supply bonds a top legislative priority this year. Conceptual legislation would create a program within the Department of the Treasury to issue clean renewable water supply bonds. These tax credit bonds would finance such projects as desalination, water recycling, and ground and surface water remediation facilities. This alternative funding method would be available to any public agency currently eligible to sell tax-exempt municipal bonds, as long as the bonds

are used to finance alternative water supply projects.

The principal difference between municipal bonds and tax credit bonds is that interest income received by holders of municipal bonds is often exempt from federal income tax, while tax credit bond holders are given a tax credit in lieu of the issuer paying interest. Subsequently, the holder is able to deduct the tax credit from their total income tax liability, which creates an incentive for private investors to loan capital funds.

Tax credit bonds have been issued in the past to finance inner city school construction and most recently to

finance renewable energy projects and for reconstruction in the Gulf states after the 2005 hurricanes.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is a member of the New Water Supply Coalition.

**Southwest Florida**  
Water Management District

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