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Saving Florida Bay

Florida Bay is an estuary protected in large part by Everglades National Park. It has been plagued by problems from development upstream and starved for clean water. Now, years of work to save the bay could fall short if we don't act to demand a better water management plan.

At the southernmost point of the Florida Peninsula sits Florida Bay, an 850-square-mile estuary that supports the valuable fishing and tourism industries of the Florida Keys. Part of the Greater Everglades ecosystem, the Bay has suffered for decades from development patterns that have placed increasing demands on the region's water. These conflicts have deprived the Bay of the natural flow of fresh water that sustained the ecosystem for centuries, leading to widespread seagrass die-offs and declining fish populations.

In the 1980s, after a catastrophic die-off of seagrass and fish, a grassroots movement formed to protect the Everglades. Thanks to the work of these concerned citizens years ago, Congress authorized a major investment in infrastructure to help bring more water to Florida Bay. This improvement plan, known as the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park Project (or "ModWaters" for short), led to the construction of canals, levees and pumps that would send more water flow south to the Everglades and Florida Bay region.

Now, after decades of work and nearly \$1 billion of taxpayer money spent, the infrastructure is finally built.

ModWaters is among the first restoration projects that has been completed and should be cause for celebration. But new plans by state and federal agencies about *how* to use this new infrastructure could shortchange the very purpose for which it was built.

The **Combined Operational Plan (COP)** will determine how federal and state agencies will manage the region's water through infrastructure projects, including ModWaters, C-111 South Dade, and the C-111 Spreader Canal Project, and consequently, how much water reaches Florida Bay. NPCA and fellow Florida Bay advocates know that the operational plan must maximize the system's new capacity to send fresh water to the places that need it most. Unfortunately, some of the alternatives proposed by the government fail to do so, instead sacrificing increased freshwater flow to the Everglades to provide drier field conditions to privately owned agricultural lands.

Maximizing the amount of fresh water flowing into Florida Bay must be the top priority for ModWaters and other projects that were specially created — at great effort and expense — to restore Everglades National Park. NPCA is working to ensure the COP delivers life-saving new water to the waters of the Florida Keys.

850

square miles of the Florida Bay estuary is within Everglades National Park

70%

of historic "River of Grass" water flow to the Everglades has been lost over time

"The Everglades is a test. If we pass, we may get to keep the planet."

Marjorie Stoneman Douglas



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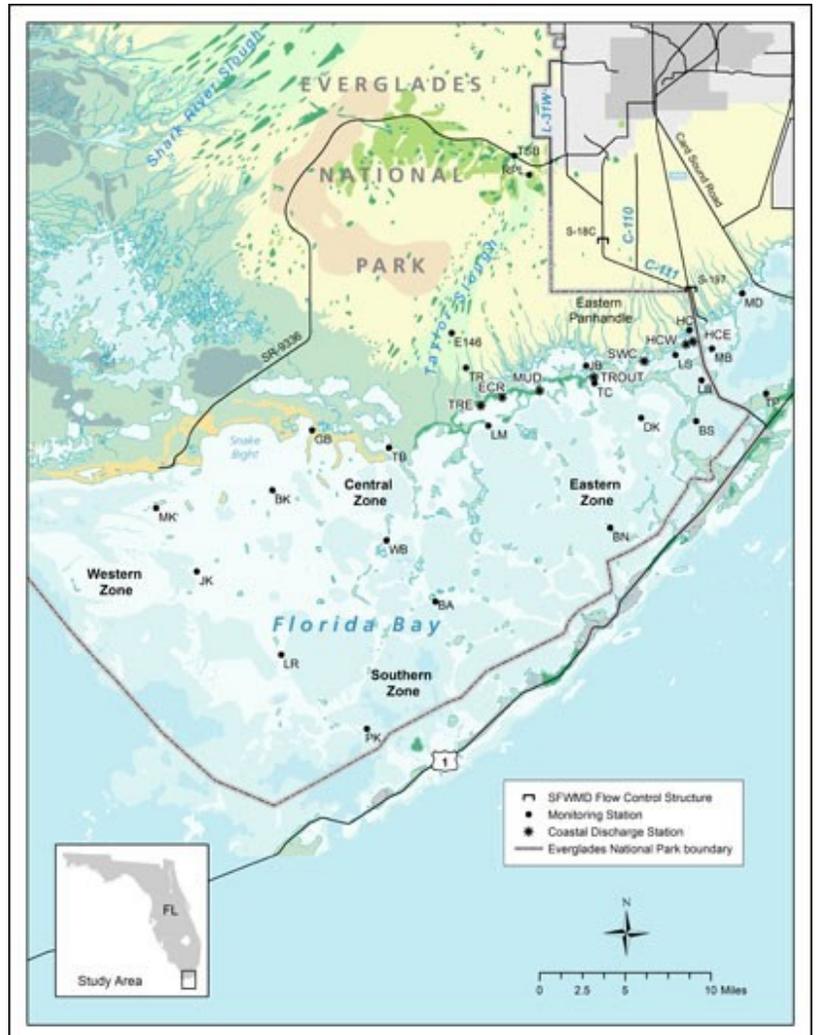
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SAVING FLORIDA BAY

NPCA and its partners will continue to fight for a bold plan to save Florida Bay. Will you join us?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a public workshop on the Combined Operational Plan (COP) that will guide the use of restoration infrastructure on Wednesday 12/12/18 beginning at 9:30am at the Founder's Park Community Center in Islamorada, 87000 Overseas Highway. Please consider joining us there and speaking on these critical talking points:

- American taxpayers have spent nearly a billion dollars over the past 30 years on restoration projects to save Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Now the infrastructure is finally built! The government must turn it on and deliver the benefits promised. We've waited long enough – we need restoration benefits now.
- We've spent \$1 billion on these projects – we want \$1 billion worth of restoration!
- We demand that the government evaluate a bold plan to save Florida Bay – before it's too late.
- In this entire project planning process, this is the first meeting that has been held in Monroe County to allow the people who live and work on Florida Bay to have their voices heard. **Thank you** for finally ensuring we are included in this project. We appreciate you being here in the Keys.
- When the agencies met in Homestead last August, there was concern from Florida Bay advocates that none of the project alternatives on the table will save Florida Bay. Since then, and with that feedback, the agencies have worked on a new option ("Alternative O") that delivers more water, in the right location, to Florida Bay. Thank you for prioritizing the needs of our community, of the Everglades, and of the Bay in this new alternative.
- **Alt. O is the only choice for Florida Bay!**
- By prioritizing maximum new, clean water flow in the areas that need it most, Alternative O has the potential to deliver significant new water to the Keys – water we desperately need!
- There is still more work to be done as the final two project alternatives are refined, but we are encouraged to see this new Alternative O and appreciate the agencies including the voice of the Keys in this important restoration process.



To learn more, contact:

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