

FACTS & INFORMATION



NOVEMBER 2019

The Kissimmee River Restoration project was authorized by Congress in 1992. The federal sponsor is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is the non-federal sponsor. When restoration is completed in 2020, more than 40 square miles of river-floodplain ecosystem will be restored, including almost 12,398 acres of wetlands and 40 miles of historic river channel.

BACKGROUND

The Kissimmee River once meandered for 103 miles through central Florida. Its floodplain, reaching up to two miles wide, was inundated for long periods by heavy seasonal rains. Wetland plants, wading birds, and fish thrived there.

Prolonged flooding caused severe impacts to humans, so Florida officials asked Congress for assistance. Congress tasked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and between 1962 and 1971, the Corps cut and dredged the Kissimmee River into a 30-foot deep straightaway called the C-38 canal. The project achieved flood reduction benefits, but it also harmed the river-floodplain ecosystem.

After extensive planning, construction for environmental restoration began in 1999. The project is now more than halfway complete.

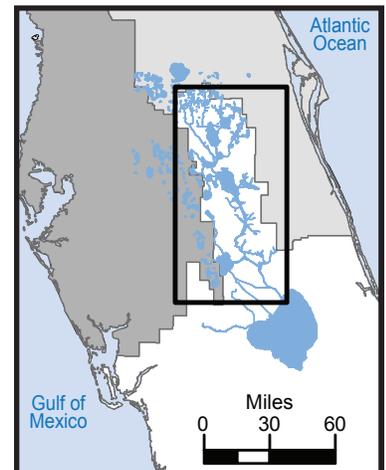
In the lower Kissimmee River Basin, Phase 1 construction was completed in 2001 and Phase 4 was completed in 2010, restoring continuous water flows to approximately 19 miles of the Kissimmee River. Phases 2 and 3 are now underway, including backfilling the C-38 canal and restoring flow to nine miles of the river.

Approximately 99 percent of lands needed to complete Kissimmee River Restoration have been acquired — a total of 102,061 acres.

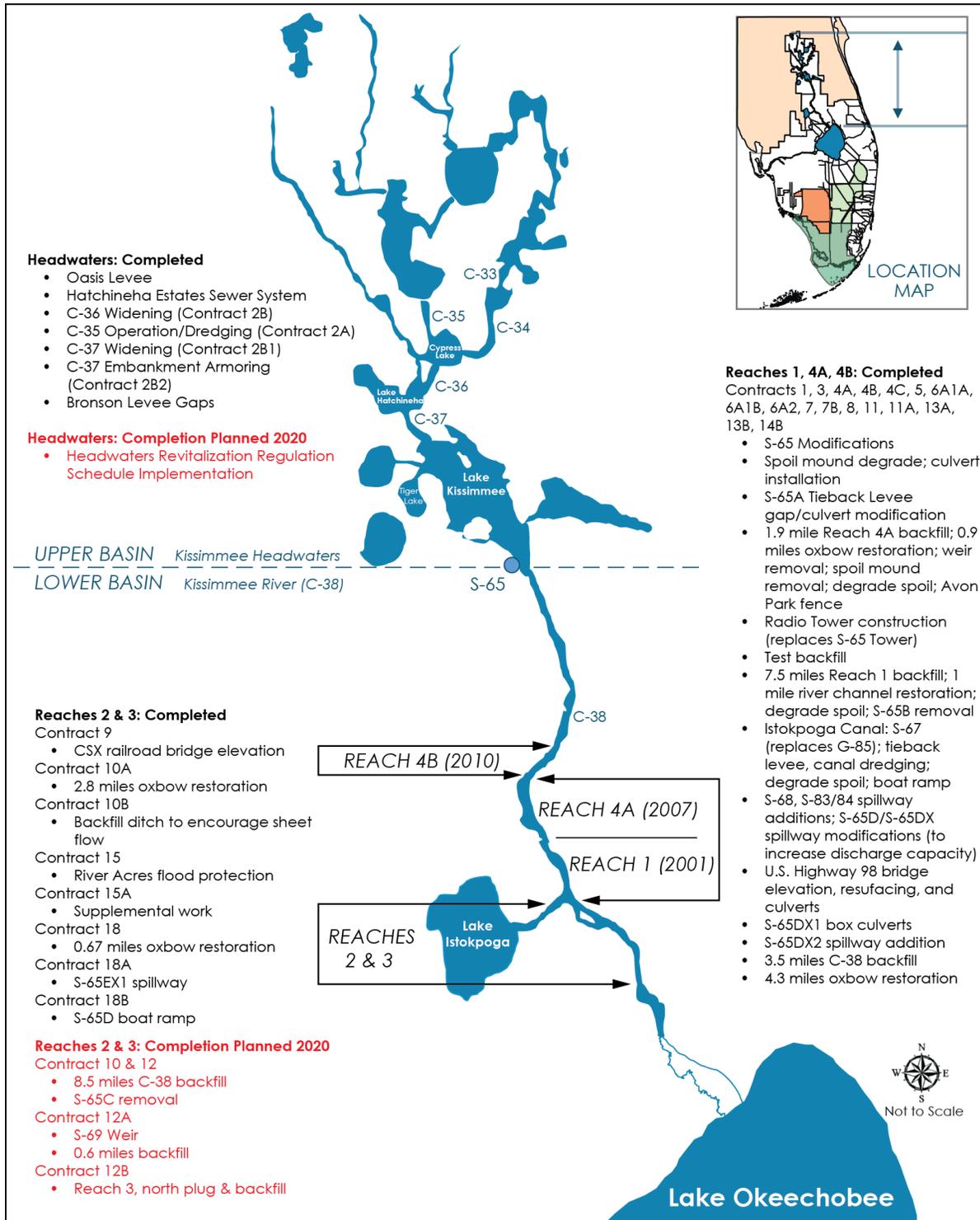
ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

The river and its floodplain have improved in remarkable ways, at times surpassing the anticipated environmental response. (Improvements are compared with conditions existing prior to restoration.) Comprehensive monitoring for the past five years has documented these results:

- Wetland plants are thriving in the floodplain, including pickerelweed, arrowhead, Carolina willow, and buttonbush.
- Undesirable floating and mat-forming plants have been replaced by emergent plants native to the historic river.
- Organic deposits on the river bottom decreased by 71 percent, reestablishing sand bars and providing new habitat for shorebirds and invertebrates, including native clams.
- Dissolved oxygen, critical for the long-term survival of fish and other aquatic organisms, has increased up to six-fold.
- Largemouth bass and sunfishes now comprise 63 percent of the fish community; prior to restoration, they represented only 38 percent.
- Long-legged wading bird populations, including white ibis, great egret, snowy egret and little blue heron, have increased significantly; in some years, the increase was greater than double the expectation.
- Ducks have returned to the river, including American widgeon, northern pintail, northern shoveler, ring-necked duck, and black-bellied whistling duck.
- Eight shorebird species, absent before restoration, have returned to the river and floodplain, including breeding black-necked stilts.



Kissimmee River | Restoration Project



FOR MORE INFORMATION



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