

FACTS & INFORMATION



AUGUST 2020

The Loxahatchee River Watershed is part of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Historically, the study area comprised an expansive network of uplands & wetlands of diverse habitat. Its rain-driven hydrology maintained natural communities throughout the watershed and provided unobstructed freshwater flows to the Loxahatchee River and to the Everglades. The Loxahatchee River is a blend of freshwater and estuarine environments. It was originally connected to the Everglades via the Loxahatchee Slough, where freshwater was freely exchanged with the Everglades based on water levels in the river and slough. Over time, natural areas across the watershed were converted to agricultural and urban uses, and roadway, canals, and levees infrastructure, and urbanization created barriers to freshwater flows, disconnecting the river and slough from the Everglades.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project aims to restore and sustain the overall quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of fresh waters to the federally designated “National Wild and Scenic” Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Objective 1: Restore wet & dry season flows of water to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and the river floodplain.
- Objective 2: Restore oysters, seagrass, and other estuarine communities in the Loxahatchee River Estuary.
- Objective 3: Increase natural area extent of wetlands.
- Objective 4: Restore connections between J.W. Corbett Water Management Area, Pal-Mar/Cypress Creek basin, Loxahatchee Slough, Grassy Waters Preserve, and the Loxahatchee River to improve hydrology, sheetflow, hydroperiods, natural storage, and vegetation communities.
- Objective 5: Restore native plant & animal species abundance & diversity in the Loxahatchee River watershed natural areas, river, and estuary.

PROJECT STATUS

After going on hold in 2011, project planning efforts were restarted in January 2016. USACE approved the tentatively selected plan on 31 July 2018. On 22 March 2019, the USACE made the draft PIR available in the Federal Register for 45-day public review. The FPIR/EIS was posted to the Federal Register on 05 February 2020 for public and state/agency review; the Chief’s Report was signed on 08 April 2020. The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project is awaiting authorization in Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2020. Pending authorization, engineering design is set to begin in 2022. .

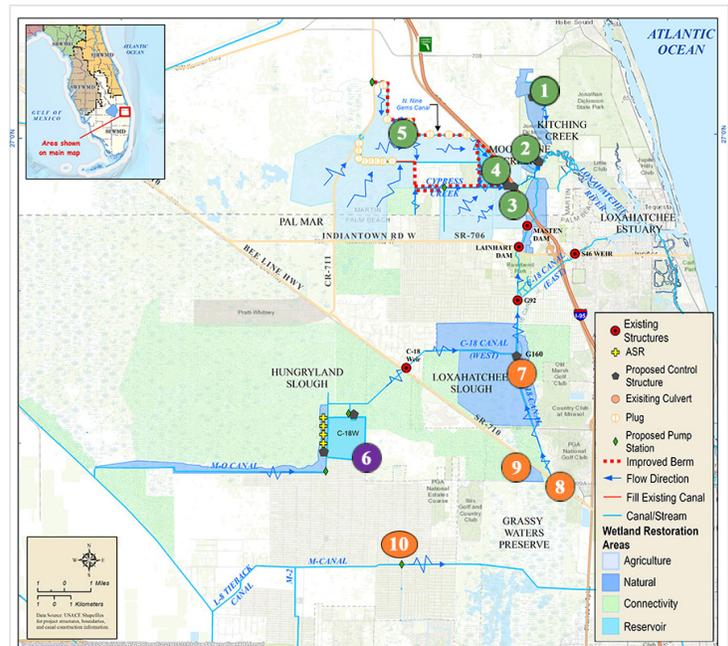
RECOMMENDED PLAN

The Recommended Plan will deliver 98% of the wet season restoration flow target and 91% of the dry season restoration flow target for the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. This will reverse the trend of increasing salinity levels and help conserve the remaining riverine cypress habitat.

The Recommended Plan will improve wetland hydrology in the Pal-Mar natural area complex and restore 17,000 acres of various types of agricultural land that are part of the historical Greater Everglades. An additional 9,500 acres of natural areas will be improved in the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, Loxahatchee Slough, and Kitching Creek. The restoration actions also improve connectivity for over 78,000 acres of natural areas and restored wetlands that benefit many species of flora and fauna, both endangered and important recreational species, such as deer and ducks. While the overall project purpose is ecosystem restoration, the wetland restoration components will provide multiple recreation and economic opportunities for the local areas in the form of hunting, fishing, boating, and other outdoor recreation

FEATURES

1. Kitching Creek (Hydration): spreader canal; weir/plug (Jenkins Ditch).
2. Moonshine Creek (MC) & Gulfstream East (GE) (Restoration): connect Hobe-St. Lucie Conservancy District (HSLCD) ditch to MC; clear MC vegetation; weir in Hobe Grove Ditch; regrade adjacent area to historic topography.
3. Cypress Creek Canal (CCC) (Reduce Over-drainage): replace CCC weir to raise control elevation; raise berm at Ranch Colony; automate twin 84" culverts; pump and spreader swale; regrade Cypress Creek southern forks.
4. Gulfstream West (Restoration & Reduce Over-drainage): partial backfill & relocate southern end of HSLCD canal; small pump; construct flow through marsh to attenuate flow.
5. Pal-Mar East (Restoration & Connectivity) plug ditches; remove pipes; improve northern berm; construct western berm; improve eastern berm; pumps at Thomas Farm; redirect drainage to groundwater flow-through marsh via north Nine Gems canal.
6. C-18W Reservoir (9,500 ac-ft & 4 ASR Wells): aboveground reservoir; inflow pump; discharge structure; seepage control; M-O Canal Connector and pump.
7. G-160 Structure (Reduce Over-drainage): improve hydroperiod in Loxahatchee Slough.
8. G-161 Structure (Connectivity): Grassy Waters Preserve (GWP) water to Loxahatchee Slough.
9. GWP Triangle (Connectivity): grade and reconnect.
10. M-1 Pump Station (Conveyance): deliver Lower M-1 Basin water to M-Canal, GWP, and G-161.



FOR MORE INFORMATION



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<http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Ecosystem-Restoration/Loxahatchee-River-Watershed-Restoration-Project>

