

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Jennifer Reynolds, Ecosystem Restoration

DATE: October 8, 2026

SUBJECT: 2026 Priority Water Body List and Schedule

Agenda Item Background:

Each year, the water management districts are statutorily required to submit a list and schedule to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection prioritizing water bodies for developing or reevaluating minimum flows and minimum water levels (MFLs) and water reservations. MFLs define the point at which further withdrawals would cause significant harm to the water resources or the ecology of the area. Water reservations protect the water needed for fish and wildlife or public health and safety from being allocated to consumptive uses. The District also uses a third water resource protection tool: restricted allocation areas (RAAs), which are defined geographic areas where use of specific water supply sources (e.g. lakes, rivers, canals, aquifers, etc.) is restricted due to concerns regarding water availability or other water resource concerns.

The proposed 2026 Priority Water Body List and Schedule includes MFL reevaluations of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, Florida Bay, and Biscayne Aquifer to adapt to changing hydrological conditions including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and sea level rise over a 20-year planning horizon. The proposed list also includes establishment of a Water Reservation and/or RAA for the Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP) and a RAA for the Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir (LOCAR) to ensure water made available by these CERP projects is protected for restoration and not available for consumptive use. Finally, the proposed list includes an update/amendment to the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands water reservation to protect redistributed marsh/creek flows as canal-gauge metrics no longer represent actual ecological deliveries.

Additional Item Background:

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

The technical processes to reevaluate MFLs are part of the District's core mission and strategic priorities to protect natural systems. The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000) and Section 373.470(3)(c), Florida Statutes, require the South Florida Water Management District to protect the water made available for the natural system resulting from a CERP project. As the legislatively delegated authority for the State's water protections, the District utilizes its regulatory framework to protect increased water availability. The District has a variety of regulatory mechanisms at its disposal, including its current consumptive use permitting criteria and the ability to adopt new water reservations or restricted allocation areas when appropriate.

Funding Source:

Staff resources, funded with Ad Valorem sources, are used to develop scientifically defensible documentation that supports establishment of water resource protection for waterbodies.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 2026-1007](#)

[2026 Priority Waterbody List and Schedule](#)