Florida State Wetland Program Summary

Photo Title: Florida's Everglades; *Photo Credit: Florida DEP*

Section A. Quick View

Description of State's Wetlands

Palustrine forested wetlands cover 5.5 million acres, nearly one-half the acreage of all Florida wetlands. These wetlands, which are widely distributed throughout the State, fringe rivers and lakes, line small drainages and sloughs, form in small depressions and ponds, and cover wet flatwoods. Lacustrine and riverine wetlands constitute a relatively small part of Florida's wetlands. Florida's Everglades offer wet sawgrass prairies, mangrove swamps and Florida Bay and Gulf Coast estuaries . In addition to designation as a national park, the Everglades are also recognized as a World Heritage Site, International Biosphere Reserve, a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, and a specially protected areas under the Cartagena Treaty.

State Definition of Wetlands

Florida Wetlands are defined as: "Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and a duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils. Soils present in wetlands generally are classified as hydric or alluvial, or possess characteristics that are associated with reducing soil conditions." To further clarify and standardize the intent of the definition, a methodology for identifying and delineating wetlands is provided in Rule 62-340 F.A.C. http://www.flrules.org/gateway/readFile.asp?sid=0&cno=62-340&caid=366289&type=4&file=62-340.doc

Historic Wetland Loss/Gain

Original Wetland Acreage	Remaining Wetland Acreage	Acreage Lost	% Lost
20,325,013	11,038,300	9,286,713	46%

Source: US Fish and Wildlife Study (Dahl, 1989)

Primary State Wetlands Webpage

Submerged Lands and Environmental Resources Coordination (SLERC) Website
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/Water/wetlands/

State Wetland Program Plan

The State of Florida Wetland Program Plan 2013-2016
http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/upload/fl-wpp-2013.pdf

Not Net Loss/Net Gain Goal

Florida does not have a goal of no net loss or gain of wetland acreage. However, the regulatory rules are written in a manner that achieves a programmatic goal through implementation, and a project permitting goal of no net loss in wetland or other surface water functions. The State's Environmental resource Permit (ERP) standard requires that activities not adversely impact the value of functions provided to fish and wildlife and listed species by wetlands and other surface waters.

State Budget and Staffing for Wetland Work

State Name	Core element #1: Regulation	Core Element #2: Monitoring and Assessment	Core Element #3: Wetland Water Quality Standards	Core Element #4: Voluntary Wetland Restoration
Agency	Florida DEP	Florida DEP	Florida DEP	Florida DEP
Source	Information not available	Information not available	Information not available	Information not available
Amount	Information not available	Information not available	Information not available	Information not available
FTE	200-300 FTE Total	(See regulation)	(See regulation)	(See regulation)

State Permitting Fees

State Permitting Fee	State Name
Yes/No	YES
Amount (range)	$0-$14,000
Agency	DEP, WMD or County

Innovative Features

- The comprehensive nature of the state program is broader than the federal program in that it also regulates alterations of uplands that may affect surface water flows, including addressing issues of flooding and stormwater treatment;
- The state program is in addition to, not in place of or superseded by the federal dredge and fill permit programs. There are no thresholds wherein some activities are reviewed by the state and

others by the federal government. In essence applicants must get all applicable permits and authorizations from both the state and the federal government before beginning work;
- Delegation of responsibilities between the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the water management districts (who have regional ad valorum taxing authority);
- The linkage of the state regulatory and proprietary programs discussed in the following section;
- A wetland delineation methodology ratified under state law that is binding on all state, regional, and local governments throughout Florida. This methodology is specific to Florida, and differs from the federal wetland delineation methodology;
- Environmental Resource Permits (ERP) permits are valid for the life of the system (includes all structures and works authorized for construction or land alteration). The ERP permit does not automatically expire after the construction phase (typically a five-year period), and continues to cover operation (use of) of the system;
- A program that regulates the trimming or alteration of mangroves; and

Models and Templates

- Florida's wetland mitigation assessment methodology – Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM)
- Florida's Joint Coastal Permit (JCP)

<u>Section B. Regulation</u>

How are Wetlands Regulated in the State?

Florida currently has a comprehensive wetland program that encompasses the four core elements of regulation, voluntary restoration and protection, monitoring and assessment, and water quality standards. Florida's wetland regulatory program is based on independent state authority and applies in addition to (not as a substitute for or superseded by) the federal §404 program. Regulation includes any activities in, on, over or under surface waters, construction of stormwater systems, and surface water management systems. These are governed by a single set of state rules and connected with a state-owned submerged lands program, which is analogous to the Section §404 program. The state has its own set of legislative rules. Florida's program regulates most land alterations (including land clearing, development, stormwater, dredging and filling, mining, beach nourishment and re-nourishment, and other activities that affect water quality and quantity (draining and flooding) of uplands, wetlands, and other surface waters, including isolated wetlands.

Activities and uses of its state-owned submerged lands require additional, applicable proprietary authorizations, but these authorizations are issued or denied concurrently with the decision to issue or deny an individually-processed regulatory permit. Florida also has separate authority to regulate trimming and alteration of mangroves. As such, the scope of Florida's program extends beyond that of merely a "wetland" program or one limited only to regulation of dredging, filling, and discharges within wetlands or surface waters. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FLDEP) implements the state's wetland protection programs in partnership with the five regional Water Management Districts (WMDs), as well as with various delegated local government programs.

An environmental resource permit "ERP" program regulates virtually all alterations to the landscape, including all tidal and freshwater wetlands and other surface waters (including isolated wetlands) and uplands. Florida's statewide regulatory Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) program is authorized under part IV of Chapter 373, F.S. It operates independently of the federal dredge and fill programs under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/docs/erp/overview.pdf). This document is being updated to reflect regulations that have changed since 2011.

Issuance of the ERP also constitutes a water quality certification or waiver thereto under section 401 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1341. It also integrates the responsibilities for providing a coastal zone consistency concurrence directly as part of the decision to issue or deny an ERP; which also is provided to the USACE. The ERP program is implemented by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), five regional water management districts (WMDs), and delegated local governments (Broward County and Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Department); the divisions of responsibilities of the agencies are described in Operating and Delegation Agreements incorporated by reference in Chapter 62-113 of the Florida of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). The State processes more than 10,000 agency actions each year statewide for Environmental Resource Permits.

ERP program jurisdiction is broader than the §404 program because it regulates alterations of uplands that may affect surface water flows (including issues of flooding and stormwater treatment) and alterations to "isolated" wetlands that lie beyond federal jurisdiction. The Corps may not act on applications that require a §404 permit unless an ERP or wetland resource permit has been issued or the project is exempt.

The FLDEP and the WMDs use a step-by-step methodology to review ERPs. A proposed project must demonstrate: avoidance and minimization of any potential adverse impacts; verification of compliance with surface and groundwater quality standards; consideration of direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts to water resources, and, for activities located in wetlands and other surface waters, confirmation that the project is not contrary to the public interest according to a prescribed multiple factor balancing test (or confirmation that proposed activities located in an Outstanding Florida Water are clearly in the public interest).

In addition to obtaining an ERP, activities that are located on state-owned (including "sovereignty") submerged lands also require a ***proprietary authorization (PA)*** from the state. The authorization addresses issues such as riparian rights, impacts to submerged land resources, and preemption of other uses of the water by the public. The state's rules regarding sovereignty submerged lands outline the authorization required for construction and uses of state-owned submerged lands, as well as special criteria that apply to construction and uses of state aquatic preserves. The PA program is implemented jointly by the FLDEP and four of the state's five WMDs, which are authorized to act as staff of the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. For activities located on state-owned submerged lands, the proprietary review is linked to the ERP review. In these areas, applicants must qualify for both authorizations, if applicable, in order to receive either authorization.

Additionally, the state has a **Beach and Shore Preservation Act**, which contains requirements related to wetland protection and coordinated review of coastal construction activities. In some cases, there may be a need to obtain this permit instead of an ERP. FLDEP's Division of Water Resource Management conducts concurrent processing of applications for coastal construction permits, ERPs, and state-owned

submerged lands authorizations. These permits and authorizations are consolidated into a joint coastal permit (JCP). A JCP is required for activities that meet all of the following criteria: (1) are located on Florida's natural sandy beaches facing the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, the Straits of Florida or associated inlets; (2) extend seaward of the mean high water line; (3) extend into sovereign submerged lands; and (4) are likely to affect the distribution of sand along the beach.

Florida's Coastal Zone Protection Act contains requirements related to coastal zone management, including wetland protection, requiring consistency and coordinated review of all pertinent coastal construction activities. This program is like the Section §404 program and is tied to ERP permits. It grants 401 certification, and for activities in coastal counties, issuance of the state ERP also constitutes a consistency concurrence or waiver thereto that the activities are in compliance with the state's federally-approved coastal zone management program.

Finally, to **protect the state's unique mangrove resources**, the Florida legislature has enacted a program that enables the FLDEP and delegated local governments to regulate the trimming or alteration of mangroves (FLA. STAT. ANN. §§ 403.9321 to .9333), if not regulated under an ERP.

Wetland Delineation

Delineation Guidance	Yes	No	Detail
Use State's Own Method	X		Florida Unified Wetland Delineation Methodology (Chapter 62-340, F.A.C.)
Use Corps' 87 Manual and Regional Supplement		X	*Note: The Florida Unified Wetland Delineation delineations are often close or identical to those using the 1987 manual.*
Other (Please describe)		X	

Description: Florida has adopted a unified wetlands delineation methodology that is binding to all state, regional, and local governments throughout the state. This methodology is specific to Florida and recognizes the unique vegetation, hydrology, and soil features that exist in the state. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has the responsibility to perform Formal Wetland Delineations, provide training in wetland delineation and classification, provide technical assistance to other programs of the Department, and ensure the consistent statewide use of the Florida Unified Wetland Delineation Methodology (Chapter 62-340, F.A.C.).

Although the Florida methodology differs from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ("Corps") 1987 *Wetland Delineation Manual*, state and federal wetland delineation lines are often very close or identical. Florida's methodology does apply to wetlands where there is no federal jurisdiction. The State of Florida does not have a concept of isolated wetlands as "non-regulatable". There are so many Section 10 waters in the state, that it does not make sense to just use the Corps 1987 manual.

Evaluation Methodology

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, has the responsibility to provide training in wetland classification, provide technical assistance to other programs of the Department, and ensure the consistent statewide use of the Florida Unified Wetland Delineation Methodology (Chapter 62-340, F.A.C.). The Florida Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) provides a standardized procedure for assessing the ecological functions provided by wetlands and other surface waters, the

amount that those functions are reduced by a proposed impact, and the amount of mitigation necessary to offset that loss. This standardized methodology is also used to determine the degree of improvement in ecological value of proposed mitigation bank activities. The UMAM evaluates functions through consideration of an ecological community's current condition, hydrologic connection, uniqueness, location, fish and wildlife utilization, time lag, and mitigation risk. Mining activities require some additional evaluation for reclamation work.

Exempted Activities

Certain activities have been exempted by statute and rule from the need for regulatory permits under state law or by agency rule. Anything that does not specifically qualify for an exemption or noticed general permit generally requires an ERP permit. To be exempt by rule, the activities have been previously determined by the agencies to be capable of causing no more than minimal individual and cumulative adverse impacts to wetlands and other surface waters. Examples of exempt activities include: construction, repair, and replacement of certain private docking facilities below certain size thresholds; maintenance dredging of existing navigational channels and canals; construction and alteration of boat ramps within certain size limits; construction, repair, and replacement of seawalls and rip rap in artificial waters; repair and replacement of structures; and construction of certain agricultural activities. In addition, the state has issued a number of general permits for activities that are slightly larger than those that qualify for the above exemptions and that otherwise have been determined to have the potential for no more than minimal individual direct and secondary impacts.

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

Sections 373.406 and 403.927, F.S., exempt certain agricultural activities from the need for Environmental Resource. Certified aquaculture activities that apply appropriate best management practices adopted under section 597.004 are exempt from the need for permits under part IV of chapter 373, F.S.

Penalties and Enforcement

Florida's Environmental Litigation Reform Act has procedures for minor violations and creates minimums that are easier for staff to enforce. FLDEP, the WMDs, and delegated local governments are authorized to take administrative and civil actions, but criminal provisions may only be enforced by the Office of the State Attorney. The division of responsibility for enforcement between FLDEP, the WMDs, and the delegated local governments is based on the division of permitting responsibilities under the ERP program. Available enforcement actions include: civil damage and penalties for injury to air, waters or property, including plants, animals, and aquatic life, and administrative fines. FLDEP maintains a Compliance and Enforcement Manual to provide guidance to staff. Only FLDEP may recover damages and civil penalties for violations involving state-owned submerged lands.

Injunctive relief is also available to redress wetlands violations. Criminal provisions prescribe fines and imprisonment for willful or reckless violations of wetlands requirements and violations of sovereign submerged lands requirements. In practice, the majority of violations are resolved using administrative or civil procedures; criminal actions are used only in the most serious cases that cannot otherwise be resolved.

Permit Tracking

The FLDEP and each WMD have their own tracking systems to record the permit processes, assessment findings, enforcement actions, and compensatory mitigation. Most data are reported statewide. The DEP's permit tracking system is called Permit Application. Florida has the *Water Portal*, a website that links data to check on areas. The site geographically and spatially shows permitted activities and is searchable.

State General Permit (statewide vs. regional coverage)

Permit Coverage	Yes	No	Detail (Type of Permit)
Regional General Permit	X		WMD has programmatic permits; several regional permits that affect specific geographic areas
Statewide General Permit	X		The Corps has issued a State Programmatic General Permit (SPGP) to FLDEP that authorizes the agency to issue federal wetland permits (§404/§10) for certain activities. Permits processed by a FLDEP "designee" are included in the SPGP.

Description: The issuance of a (SPGP) from the Corps to the DEP provides that certain activities (such as docks, seawalls, dredging, and activities that qualify for state exemptions or general permits) that qualify under the state regulatory program also will receive the associated federal dredge and fill permit

Assumption of 404 Powers

Assumption Status	Yes	No	Detail
Assumed		X	
Working Toward Assumption		X	
Explored Assumption	X		While Florida has actively worked on assumption recently, it is not currently working towards assumption.

Joint permitting

Florida has a joint permit application form, wherein applicants for a federal dredge and fill permit apply directly to either the DEP or the applicable water management district using the same form that is used for the state ERP. The DEP and the water management districts then forward the application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for concurrent federal permit processing (which can only be issued after issuance of the applicable state permit that grants or waives water quality certification).

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

Updated information to be added by FLDEP.

Buffer Protections

While Florida does not have one statewide rule to protect buffers, buffers are protected as secondary impacts under Environmental Resource Permits. The state does not provide any "one-size-fits-all" recommendations for buffer protection.

Mitigation Policy

Florida's mitigation provisions are designed to further the state's goal of "no net loss" of wetland and other surface water functions. Florida's Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) rules (Chapter 62-345, F.A.C.) establish methods to determine the amount of mitigation needed to offset adverse impacts to wetlands and other surface waters and to award and deduct mitigation bank credits. On-site mitigation is preferred, but mitigation also may occur off-site if it provides greater long-term viability or ecological value. If an applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse impacts within the same drainage basin as the impacts, and if the mitigation fully offsets those impacts, the regulated activity will be considered to have no unacceptable cumulative impacts upon wetlands and other surface waters.

Florida also has an established mitigation program specific to the Florida Department of Transportation (FLDOT). FLDOT annually provides an inventory of anticipated wetland impacts to the regional WMDs, which then develop mitigation plans in coordination with other state and federal regulatory agencies. The mitigation plan may include the purchasing of mitigation bank credits or developing specific mitigation proposals.

Mitigation Database

Florida DEP is working on developing a mitigation database to track site work similar to the federal RIBITS database, on a state-level.
Http://www.dep.fl.us/water/wetlands/mitigation/mitigation_banking.htm

Section C. Monitoring and Assessment

Agency Responsible for Wetland Monitoring and Assessment

Florida does not have a wetland monitoring and assessment program; however, wetlands are a part of a general purpose state water quality monitoring program. At this time, the State of Florida emphasizes regulating wetlands rather than monitoring them. The state's general purpose water quality monitoring program (not wetland-specific) has big infrastructure and does monitor status and trends. This work is not integrated with Florida's Wetland regulatory program. Some monitoring data are collected in the permit review process and from restoration programs that may require water quality monitoring data.

Mapping/Inventory

Maps are just starting to be produced using the state methodology, there is no current statewide status and trends report of wetland gains or losses, based on Florida's wetland delineation methodology. However, historic data is available and Florida is currently working on state mapping initiatives for land use and land cover. These maps will not be used for regulatory purposes. Through a specialized GIS called ERAtools (Environmental Resource Analysis tools), DEP staff has access to NWI maps and numerous other data sources, including jurisdictional boundaries, land use, fish and wildlife resources, inter-agency permitted activities, water resources, and statewide aerial photographs. The state just received a Wetland Program Development Grant to look at wetland integrity mapping based on the Florida Method.

Florida is currently working to develop a multi-metric Florida Wetlands Integrity Dataset (FWID) that approximates the locations, extents, and condition of wetlands and other surface waters (WOSW) throughout Florida. This effort will take a three-phased approach that moves from application of remote sensing data to a professional judgment based ecosystem model (Phase 1), to model calibration using field assessed reference sites (Phase 2), and then concluding with model refinement and scenario evaluation (Phase 3). However, FLDEP has a rigorous Biological Assessment Program for rivers and stream. For these water bodies, the state uses two biomonitoring tools: the Stream Condition Index (SCI) and BioReconnaissance (BioRecon).

State Wetland Mapping Public Portal

A number of map sources provide information on the statewide distribution of wetlands. Much of this information is also made available to state, regional, and local agency staff and the general public through geographic information systems (GIS). Florida DEP's *Map Direct Lite* is an easy to use mapping tool that applicants can use to provide some of the information required in the permit applications. Some of the items that you can get using Map Direct Lite include USGS Topo maps, NRCS/SSURGO soils maps, Aerial photographs, FEMA flood zones, locations of Aquatic Preserves or Outstanding Florida Waters, and much more.
http://ca.dep.state.fl.us/mapdirect/?focus=waterdatacentral&testdrive=true

Wetland Classification and Assessment

While Florida does not use a wetland classification system and generally the "status" of wetlands, and the functions they provide are determined on a project-by-project basis through the permit application review process, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory provides a robust assessment method that includes wetlands. Florida's Land Use Classification System provides landscape cover categories and type with breakdown by both decimal and tier.

Statewide Wetland Monitoring Plan

Florida DEP outlines monitoring plans for 2013-2016 in its *State of Florida Wetland Program Plan*
http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/upload/fl-wpp-2013.pdf

Overall Wetland Gain and Loss Tracking System

The DEP and the water management districts track the acreage of wetlands permitted to be dredged, filled, and mitigated through their permit application tracking systems.

Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Characteristics

Many of Florida's monitoring efforts are general to all waterbodies; there is uncertainty about how much of this monitoring and assessment work is done on wetlands. Consequently, the following tables represent the level, type and frequency of monitoring and assessment for all waterbodies, not specifically wetlands.

Level	None	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Florida		X	X	X

Type	None	IBI	Conditional	Functional
Florida		X (Water Quality Integrity Program)	Unknown	Unknown

Frequency	None	Project Specific	Ongoing
Florida		X (Only as part of mitigation success criteria)	X (As part of water quality integrity program)

Description: Florida's Integrated Water Resource Monitoring Network (IWRM) monitors and assesses chemical, physical and biological ground and surface water quality through a multi-tiered monitoring network. The Status and Trend Monitoring Programs assess water quality on a statewide and regional (tier I) scale. Basin- and stream-specific (tier II) monitoring for the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program addresses impaired waters in individual basins and stream segments in order to develop and implement TMDLs for impaired waters that do not meet water quality standards. Site-specific (tier III) monitoring includes intensive surveys for TMDLs, monitoring to establish or revise water quality standards, monitoring to evaluate site-specific alternative criteria, and fifth-year inspections for wastewater facilities under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program (NPDES).

Participation in National Wetland Condition Assessment

NWCA Study Type	**Yes**	**No**
National Study	X	
State Intensification Study		X

Section D. Wetland Water Quality Standards

Wetland and Water Quality Standards

Type	None	Use Existing WQ Standards	In Process	Adopted	Future Direction
Wetland-specific Designated Uses		**X**			
Narrative criteria in the standards to protect designated wetland uses		**X**			
Numeric criteria in the standards based on wetland type and location to protect the designated uses		**X**			
Anti-degradation policy includes wetlands		**X**			

Description: The goals and objectives of state water policy, including the wetland program, are outlined in Florida's *Water Plan.* The state continues to put its efforts into regulating wetlands rather than monitoring. Although the state does not currently have wetland-specific water quality standards, compliance with the state's surface water quality standards is an integral part of Florida's wetlands protection program and all ERP and wetland resource permit applications must demonstrate such compliance. The state reports that these standards provide strong protections for wetlands. The state is currently working to investigate developing wetland-specific water quality standards for pH, turbidity, and other parameters appropriate to Florida wetlands.

Under Florida's water quality regulatory scheme, all surface waters in Florida fall into one of five classifications based upon their present and future most beneficial use. Narrative and numeric water quality criteria are designed to support those designated uses, and an antidegradation policy applies to wetlands based on designated use classifications. In general, an activity cannot cause or contribute to violations of state water quality standards. Additional, more stringent, water quality standards apply to those waters designated as Outstanding Florida Waters (OFWs). In general, an activity in or directly discharging into an OFW cannot degrade the ambient water quality within the OFW. In order to qualify for an ERP, a regulated activity must also comply with the state's groundwater standards. In addition, special standards have been adopted for discharge of treated stormwater and wastewater into wetlands.

Section E. Voluntary Wetland Restoration

Types of Wetland Restoration Work Funded by the State:

Type of Work	YES	NO	Description
Fund Wetland Restoration (may include easement agreements)	X		
Private Land Restoration		X	
Public Land Restoration	X		Only public lands and water bodies qualify for funding under state-funded restoration programs.
Technical Assistance	X		
Tax Incentives		X	The state does not provide any tax incentives for owning or conserving wetlands. However, many local governments do provide for a lowered tax rate for properties in a wetland or conservation zoning classification. Additionally, The Everglades Forever Act (373.4592, F.S.) provides for granting credits to taxes established on farmers in support of the Everglades Restoration if the farmer implements best management practices for reducing phosphorus discharges.
Other	X		Historically, Florida has one of the largest and most aggressive land acquisition programs in the country, with an excess of $300 million spent annually to purchase environmentally sensitive lands. However the amount available has not been at this level for more than 5 years.

***Description**:* The State of Florida does not have one statewide voluntary wetland restoration program. However, the state does have restoration projects (some of them very large) underway in multiple regions of the state, each with its own individual legislation, targeted plan, goals, sponsors, and partners:

- Two major, multi-year, multi-billion dollar wetland restoration efforts in the state (but not coordinated BY the state) include those on the Kissimmee River and in the Florida Everglades. Authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1992, the Kissimmee River restoration is jointly led by the South Florida WMD and the Corps. The effort involves the restoration of an estimated 40 square miles of rivers and floodplains and includes land acquisition, advanced science and engineering, and monitoring. Federal and state legislation have also been established to restore Florida's Everglades and Florida Bay. Guided by the 2000 Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Corps, South Florida WMD, and numerous other federal, state, local, and tribal partners, many projects have been completed to date, leading to significant milestones in the restoration effort. Additional legislation targets restoration of Lake Okeechobee, the Geneva Freshwater Lens, Lake Apopka, Lake Panasoffkee, and the Harris Chain of Lakes.
- The Florida Forever program (http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/ffplan.htm) is the state's major land conservation and acquisition program. Historically, the program devoted $300 million annually to land acquisition and management, but the amount has not been this high for more than five years. Nearly a quarter of those funds may be used for facilities development, ecological or hydrological

restoration, or other capital improvements. When *Florida Forever* funding is appropriated by the legislature it is distributed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to a number of state agencies and programs to purchase public lands in the form of parks, trails, forests, wildlife management areas and more. All of these lands are held in trust for the citizens of Florida.

- Most ecological and hydrological restoration funds are distributed through the regional WMDs.
- FLDEP maintains a wetland restoration database to aid local governments and community organizations by providing online tools and research materials needed for the implementation and management of restoration projects.
- The state also has a very active invasive plant management program that is critical to its wetland restoration programs.
- The state also has an established Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program to address the degradation and impairment of surface water bodies throughout the state. SWIM requires that each WMD identify and maintain a priority list of water bodies of regional or statewide significance and develop plans and programs for their improvement. In implementing SWIM, the WMDs work with all levels of government and the private sector, with each partner contributing funding or in-kind contributions, or both. SWIM has proven to be one of the state's most important public-private partnerships that preserves and restores Florida's wetlands, in large part because the program is designed to address a waterbody's needs as a system of connected resources on a priority basis.
- Basin Management Action Plans(BMAPs) are the next logical step after TMDLs. These basin plans may include wetland restoration.

Goals for Voluntary Wetland Restoration Projects

Goal	Yes*	No	Description
No Net Loss	X		
Reverse Loss/Net Gain	X		
Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS)	X		
Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs)	X		Florida's Wetland Program Plan included the goal to continue development and implementation of Basin Management Action Plans and other TMDL action plans
Habitat	X		
Coastal Protection	X		
Floodwater Protection	X		
Groundwater	X		
Other (please describe)	NO	X	

*Under various regulatory circumstances

Landowner Guides and Handbooks to Assist with Voluntary Wetland Restoration Efforts

Most of this guidance is provided at the local/municipal level (especially through Extension and pollution prevention programs).

Florida Homeowner's Guide to Wetlands
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/docs/erp/wetland_guide.pdf

Section F. Innovative and/or Highly Effective Education and Outreach

Florida regularly participates in regional and national meetings/conferences and discusses the regulatory system within the state. Rule workshops and public training sessions are held via webinar to encourage greater participation and involvement from the regulated community.

Section G. Climate Change and Wetlands

The Florida wetlands program does not work directly on climate change issues. Most climate change work in the state is now at the local level (examples include Broward County and Miami Bay planning groups). In the state, sea level rise is more commonly referred to as "nuisance flooding" by the current administration. Sea level rise and coastal resiliency are related at the conceptual level; with specific attention to groundwater impacts from saltwater intrusion. The state is also looking at stormwater issues. The Mangrove Protection Act provides some preservation of buffers that assist with these challenges. South Florida is more active in seeking to address climate change issues, but this is not a state initiative.

The State of Florida does not actively work on climate change issues and has no groups or committees working to address the issue specifically. The state has disbanded Governor Charlie Crist's Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change which had been formed in 2007 and directed to create a comprehensive Energy and Climate Change Action Plan (Executive Order 07-128). The final plan was submitted to the Governor on October 15, 2008 (https://www.broward.org/NaturalResources/ClimateChange/Documents/phase2report08.pdf).

Chapter 8 of the plan detailed adaptation strategies for improving Florida's resilience to the anticipated impacts of climate change. Chapter 8 also discussed the climate change impacts projected for Florida, including temperature changes, precipitation changes, sea-level rise, and extreme weather. The plan included goals related to research needs, comprehensive planning, ecosystems and biodiversity, water resources, the built environment and infrastructure, the economy, insurance, emergency preparedness, human health and social effects, government organization and coordination, funding, and education. The plan included a range of water resource management recommendations, as well an emphasis on reducing the rate at which agricultural lands and open green space were to be converted to developed uses, while protecting private property rights and responsibilities. This retained the above- and below ground carbon on these lands, as well as their carbon sequestration potential.

Section H. Integration

Entity/Program Area	Yes/No	Description of the Connection
NPDES/Stormwater	YES	Florida's ERP takes wetlands and stormwater into consideration
303(d)	NO	
305(b) reporting on wetlands	NO	
Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs)	YES	
Climate Change/ Resiliency	NO	
Land Use /Watershed planning	YES	Encouraged by the state at the local level
Flood/Hazard Mitigation	YES	Flood storage and other considerations are built into the ERP
Coastal Work	YES	
Wildlife Action Plan	YES	Wildlife management plans can be incorporated into the ERP
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	~	Some connection with land management plans; limited
Other (Specify)	NO	

State Wetland Program Development Continuum

Continuum Stage	**Core Element 1: Regulation**	**Core Element 2: Monitoring & Assessment**	**Core Element 3: Wetland Water Quality Standards**	**Core Element 4: Voluntary Restoration**
Mature Stage **High**	**X**			**X*** (multiple uncoordinated major efforts)
Initial Implementation Stage		**Unknown**		
Development Stage		(Well-developed Statewide Surface Water Monitoring Program)		
Early Stage **Low**			**X** (use existing WQS; well protected)	**X** (No formal statewide program)

* Florida has active state land and specific restoration projects, some of the largest in the country, including the Everglades Restoration Project.

Section I. Contact Information

Timothy Rach (Regulatory)
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Submerged Land and Environmental Resources Coordination
2600 Blair Stone Road, MS#2500
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400
(850) 245-8015
Timothy.Rach@dep.state.fl.us

Andrew May (Regulatory)
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Submerged Land and Environmental Resources Coordination
2600 Blair Stone Road, MS#2500
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400
(850) 245-8480
Andrew.May@dep.state.fl.us

Julie Espy (Monitoring and Assessment)
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration
2600 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400
(850) 245-8448
Julie.espy@dep.state.fl.us

Section J. Useful State Websites

State Government Programs

1. Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Water Programs
   http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/default.htm
   The Department's Water Programs are responsible for protecting the quality of Florida's drinking water as well as its rivers, lakes, wetlands, springs and sandy beaches, and for reclaiming mined lands. The Programs provide the technical basis for setting the state's water quality standards; develop the rules and guidance for implementing these standards; and conduct permitting, compliance, and enforcement programs to establish these standards throughout the state. They also implement a comprehensive statewide watershed management program designed to identify and restore impaired water bodies. In addition, the Water Programs also provide $100-200 million yearly to build or improve domestic wastewater and drinking water facilities, to reclaim mined lands, and to implement stormwater and other nonpoint source management projects.
   a) Submerged Lands and Environmental Resources Coordination (SLERC)

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/

i. Florida Wetland Restoration Information Center
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/fwric/index.htm

- Restoration Policy & Programs
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands/fwric/policy.htm

b) The State of Florida Wetland Program Plan
http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/upload/fl-wpp-2013.pdf

c) Everglades Restoration Program
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/everglades/

d) Office of Water Policy
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/waterpolicy/index.htm
Functions include:

- Working in close coordination with the Florida's five regional water management districts (WMDs) and other agencies to resolve statewide water planning and management issues.
- Developing policies on water management issues.
- Working with WMDs to ensure that regional water supply plans and programs are consistent with provisions of the Florida Water Resources Act, the Florida Water Plan, and other applicable guidance.
    - Assisting in the fulfillment of DEP's water management responsibilities under Chapter 373, 403, and other statutes and rules, pertaining to water supply, flood protection, floodplain management, water quality, and protection of natural systems.

e) Stormwater
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/stormwater/index.htm

f) Surface Water Quality Standards
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wqssp/index.htm

g) Surface Water Improvement and Management Program (SWIM)
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/watersheds/swim.htm

h) Water Programs Permitting
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/permits.htm

i) Beaches and Coastal Systems
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/beaches/default.htm

j) Florida Springs
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/springs/

2. Florida Forest Service
    a. Wetland Restoration on State Forests
    http://www.floridaforestservice.com/forest_management/hydrology_wetlands.html
3. Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
http://www.myfwc.com/
    a. Freshwater Conservation Programs
    http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/freshwater/

i. Wetland Habitat Conservation
http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/freshwater/wetland-habitat/

ii. Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Subsection (AHRE)
http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/freshwater/ahre/

4. St. John's River Water Management District
http://floridaswater.com/
Through passage of the Water Resources Act (Chapter 373, Florida Statutes), the water management districts were created in 1972 for this purpose. In northeast and east-central Florida, that responsibility falls to the St. Johns River Water Management District.
5. South Florida Water Management District
http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/sfwmdmain/home%20page
6. Northwest Florida Water Management District
http://nwfwmdwetlands.com/
7. Southwest Florida Water Management District
https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/
8. Suwannee River Water Management District
http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/

Federal Government Programs

1. USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
Wetlands Reserve Program
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/fl/programs/easements/wetlands/