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P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Julie Greenberg
South Florida Water Management District
(561) 682-2115 Cell: (561) 718-4232

Sonya Goines
U.S Army Corps of Engineers
(904) 232-1004 Cell: (904) 607-1472

Progress on Kissimmee River Restoration Continues *Next back-filling phase now under way*

Building on the success of the first phase of Kissimmee River Restoration, construction crews have returned to the Kissimmee Valley to restore another four miles of the Kissimmee River to its historic, meandering, habitat-rich route. The second phase of Kissimmee River Restoration construction will fill in more than 1.5 miles of the C-38 canal, the channelized Kissimmee River, recarving and restoring four more miles of the historic river route. The next phase of construction is now under way and scheduled to be completed in 2007.

The multi-phase Kissimmee River Restoration, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District, will ultimately reconnect more than 43 miles of meandering river channel and restore 40 square miles of floodplain wetlands.

“In terms of sheer geographic size and the number of species that this project benefits, Kissimmee River Restoration is among the largest ecosystem restoration projects in the world,” said Dennis Duke, Chief of the Corps’ Everglades Division. “As a forerunner to the massive Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, this effort continues to set new standards for measuring restoration success.”

The first of four phases of the Kissimmee River Restoration project was completed in 2001. The first phase filled in 7.5 miles of the flood control canal and restored flow to about 15 miles of historic river channel and associated floodplain. Ten species of shorebirds, which had previously disappeared with the channelization, have since returned to the restored area, including nesting black-necked stilts. During the 2003 wet season, wading bird populations in these restored areas were approximately three and a half times higher than populations in those same areas prior to restoration.

The Kissimmee River was originally channelized to prevent catastrophic flooding in the region. Implemented between 1962 and 1971, this channelization also drained two-thirds of the historical floodplain and caused unintended environmental impacts: drastic declines in wintering waterfowl, wading bird and game fish populations as well as loss of ecosystem functions.

In an effort to reverse environmental harm, Kissimmee River Restoration was authorized by the U.S. Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1992. All construction phases are scheduled to be complete by 2012 and restoration evaluation will continue until 2017, to ensure

restoration success through adaptive management practices. Visit www.sfwmd.gov, www.saj.usace.army.mil, and www.evergladesplan.org to learn more.

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