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# NEWS RELEASE

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT TO BREAK GROUND ON THE UPPER ST. JOHNS RIVER BASIN, THREE FORKS MARSH CONSERVATION AREA**

PALM BAY, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) will hold a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of construction on the final component of the Upper St. Johns River Basin (USJRB) project for the Three Forks Marsh Conservation Area.

The event will be held Monday, Oct. 15 at 11:30 a.m. at the Thomas O. Lawton Recreation area, in Palm Bay, Fla. Congressman Dave Weldon (R-15<sup>th</sup> Congressional District), responsible for maintaining continued funding for this project, will be on hand to kick off the event.

The Upper St. Johns River Basin extends from the headwaters of the St. Johns River in Indian River and Okeechobee Counties north to Seminole County. The basin includes parts of eight counties and seven congressional districts. Originally the basin contained over 400,000 acres of floodplain marsh, but by the early 1970s almost two-thirds of the marsh's spatial extent had been drained for agricultural and flood control purposes. The USJRB was included as part of the original Central and Southern Florida



Flood Control Project which was authorized in the Flood Control Act of 1948 and specifically in the 1954 Flood Control Act. Early construction began in 1966.

In 1977 the local sponsorship transferred from the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District to the St. Johns River Water Management District. This significant change has led to one of the largest environmental restoration projects in the world.

The authorized project is unique in many ways. It not only maintains the primary flood damage reduction objectives, but also provides significant environmental benefits. This is the largest semi-structural flood damage reduction/environmental restoration project in the nation and is a model of modern floodplain management – balancing the water resource needs of the St. Johns River's natural headwater ecosystem with the human quality of life needs of flood damage reduction, water supply, natural resources management and outdoor recreation.

For more information, please contact Barry Vorse, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at 904-232-2236, or Mr. Ed Garland, St. Johns River Water Management District at 321-676-6612.