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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Construction on four more miles of the historic Kissimmee River begins soon

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Continuing the success of the Kissimmee River Restoration project, construction is scheduled to begin in August to restore four more miles of the Kissimmee to its historic, natural meandering state. On July 18, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded a contract for the next phase of the project to WRS Infrastructure and Environment, Inc. of Tampa.

This is the second of two phases on Reach 4 of the river. The first phase, completed in October 2007, restored four miles of the river by filling in adjacent stretches of the C-38 canal—the channelized portion of the Kissimmee River. This second phase includes backfilling four miles of channel directly north of Phase I, beginning at the southernmost corner of Avon Park Bombing Range and the boundary of the Kissimmee Prairie State Preserve. Minor dredging of the historic river oxbows will allow river water to flow again along its historic path. A total of 22 miles of the C-38 will be backfilled. Ten miles have been backfilled to date.

Between 1962 and 1971, the Kissimmee River was channelized and two-thirds of the historical floodplain was drained to prevent seasonal flooding. This channelization caused unintended changes, including disruption of ecosystem functions and composition and drastic losses in populations of wintering waterfowl, wading birds and game fish. Since the first phase of the restoration was completed in 2001, ten species of shorebirds that had disappeared after channelization, including the black-necked stilt, have returned to the restored area.

“We’re very pleased with nature’s response to our work on the Kissimmee River. We are witness to the power of nature to heal itself. All we had to do was give it the nudge it needed to get started,” said Col. Grosskruger, commander of the Corps’ Jacksonville District. “With the Kissimmee, we’re getting close to the finish line. A few more contracts over the next couple of years will get it done.”

The project, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District, will restore an estimated 40 square miles of river-floodplain ecosystem, including almost 20,000 acres of wetlands and 46 miles of the historic river channel.

For more information, visit the website at www.saj.usace.army.mil or contact Nanciann Regalado, 904-334-8954.