

The COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN (CERP) & THE LRWRP

The overarching objective of CERP is the restoration, preservation, and protection of the south Florida ecosystem. It covers 16 counties over an 18,000-square-mile area and centers on an update of the Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) Project. CERP focuses on capturing fresh water that now flows unused to the ocean and the gulf and redirect it to areas that need it most.

As part of CERP, the purpose of the LRWRP is to restore flows to the Loxahatchee River and watershed, while not impacting current levels of water supply and flood risk management.



The LRWRP study will address the following problems:

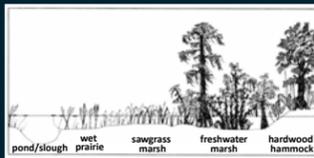
- Altered timing and distribution of flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River where low flows have led to increased salinity and the loss of freshwater cypress flood plain
- Increased wet season flows to the Southwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River and the Loxahatchee Estuary impacting water quality, seagrasses, and oysters in the estuary
- Degraded structure and function of natural areas due to altered hydrology
- Loss of natural area spatial extent
- Barriers to flow and loss of connectivity between natural areas in upstream basins, the river, and the estuary
- Reduced native floral and faunal populations and diversity throughout the system
- Degraded water quality in natural areas



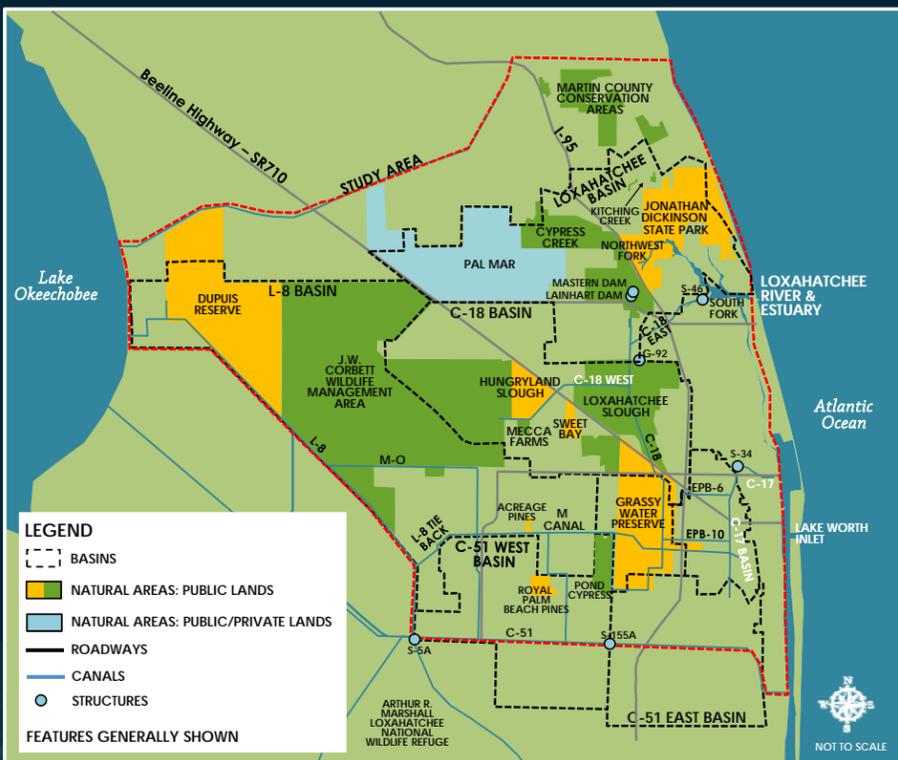
Endangered species in study area (left to right): Manatee; Wood stork nest; Four-petal paw paw

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT (LRWRP) OVERVIEW

THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT (LRWRP) focuses on restoring and sustaining the overall quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of freshwaters to the federally designated "National Wild and Scenic" Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River for current and future generations. This project also seeks to restore, sustain, and reconnect the area's wetlands and basins that form the historic headwaters for the river.



Pictured at the bottom of this column are cypress trees that represent the last remaining riverine cypress in Southeast Florida. Cypress communities have been lost to increasing salinity due to both low flows and sea-level rise. Cypress trees are tall and have multiple layers to their understory that support a more diverse group of species than the mangroves that are replacing them.



STUDY AREA WITH BASINS AND NATURAL AREAS

Images, left to right: National Wild & Scenic Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River; Cypress trees in the Northwest Fork of the river; recreation along the Loxahatchee River

LRWRP OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the project are to capture excess water and beneficially redistribute it to areas in need to restore habitat, rather than losing the water to tide. More specifically, the project's objectives are to:

- Restore hydrologic and spatial connectivity from upstream basins to the Loxahatchee River and its tributaries during dry conditions
- Restore connections between natural areas such as the Corbett Wildlife Management Area, Loxahatchee Slough, Grassy Waters Preserve and the Loxahatchee River to improve hydrology, sheetflow, hydroperiods, natural storage, and vegetation communities
- Increase dynamic storage to meet restoration flows for the Wild and Scenic Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River and floodplain in regard to salinity impacts
- Restore publically-owned wetlands to increase the extent of natural areas, while providing for natural water storage
- Capture and store excess runoff to reduce wet season high flows to the Loxahatchee River Estuary through the South Fork of the river at coastal control structure S-46
- Restore wetland hydrology to improve native plant and animal species abundance and diversity in the Loxahatchee River watershed natural areas, river, and estuary
- Reduce the risk of water quality degradation associated with increasing basin flow deliveries to the Loxahatchee River
- Increase recreational opportunities in restored natural areas



Jonathan Dickinson State Park



Loxahatchee Slough



Hungryland Slough



J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER watershed restoration project



For ongoing project information and public forums, please visit: www.evergladesplan.org OR www.bit.ly/LRWRP_CERP

