

## LOWER KISSIMMEE RIVER POOL E WETLAND RESTORATION FEASIBILITY STUDY Okeechobee and Highland Counties, Florida

### DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The S-65E is a priority basin within the northern Lake Okeechobee watershed and has been identified as a major contributor of total phosphorus (TP) load to the lake, largely due to agricultural runoff. In 1987, the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act set forth the requirement for a 40% reduction in phosphorus loading to Lake Okeechobee. In 2000, recognizing the limited progress in meeting the original SWIM goals, and the pending adoption of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) criteria, the Florida Legislature passed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program (Chapter 373.4595, Florida Statutes). A TMDL established by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) in 2001 requires annual lake phosphorus loading of 600 metric tons a year to be reduced to 140 metric tons by the year 2015. The phosphorus load rolling average from 1991 to 2000 was 497 metric tons a year.

Located within the lower Kissimmee River S-65E Basin of Okeechobee and Highlands counties, the Pool E Wetland Restoration Project is situated on a 1,254-acre District-owned parcel east of the C-38 Canal that encompasses portions of the old Kissimmee River channel, including a 235-acre dredge spoil area situated on former floodplain wetlands adjacent to the C-38. Implemented under the Lake Okeechobee Isolated Wetland Restoration Program, the Pool E Wetland Restoration Project would indirectly support meeting the in-lake TMDL goal by the year 2015 by routing surface water runoff high in phosphorus through restored wetlands on the property.

Scheda Ecological Associates, Inc. was contracted by the South Florida Water Management District to conduct a feasibility study to assess alternatives to restore wetlands to maximize phosphorus uptake and wildlife habitat on the District-owned property along the C-38 in Pool E, while not causing any adverse impacts off site. The feasibility study included preparation of documentation summarizing historical, existing and future land use; mapping and analysis; wetland, wildlife and protected species assessments; survey; hydraulic & hydrologic modeling, and cost analysis required for the formulation and evaluation of various design alternatives for final recommendation.

