LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED PROJECT | LOW

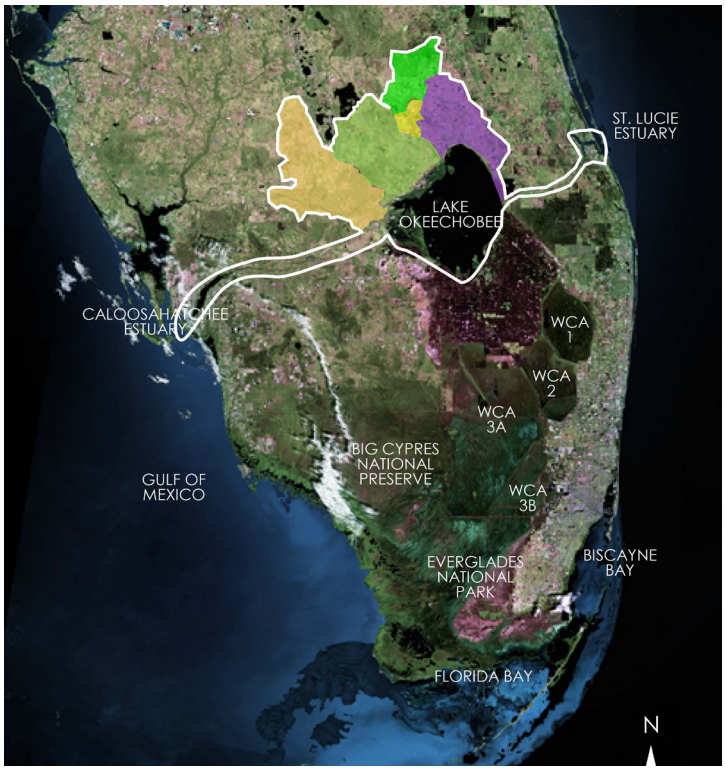
FACTS & INFORMATION

JANUARY 2017

The Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) Project is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and is cost-shared between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The study area covers approximately 950,000 acres, primarily located north of Lake Okeechobee extending to Lake Istokpoga. The larger study area, which includes areas affected by the project features, includes Lake Okeechobee and the northern estuaries.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is an Everglades restoration planning effort that aims to increase water storage capacity in the watershed. This will improve water levels in Lake Okeechobee; improve the quantity and timing of discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries; restore degraded habitat for fish and wildlife throughout the study area; and increase the spatial extent and functionality of wetlands.



PROJECT STATUS

Planning efforts for the project were put on hold in 2009 and have now been restarted. Currently, the project is being re-scoped under **USACE's New Planning Paradigm** and existing plan formulation data and analysis will be used in the development of a final plan, known as a Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement, to prepare for congressional authorization.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) Project is developing alternatives that will capture, store, and redistribute water entering the northern part of Lake Okeechobee to:

- Improve lake stage levels
- Improve discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries
- Restore/create wetland habitats
- Re-establish connections among natural areas that have become spatially and/or hydrologically fragmented

If implemented, these actions will:

- Help restore more natural water deliveries
- Promote improved health and functionality of wetland and upland areas
- Increase the quantity and quality of habitat available for native wildlife and vegetation.

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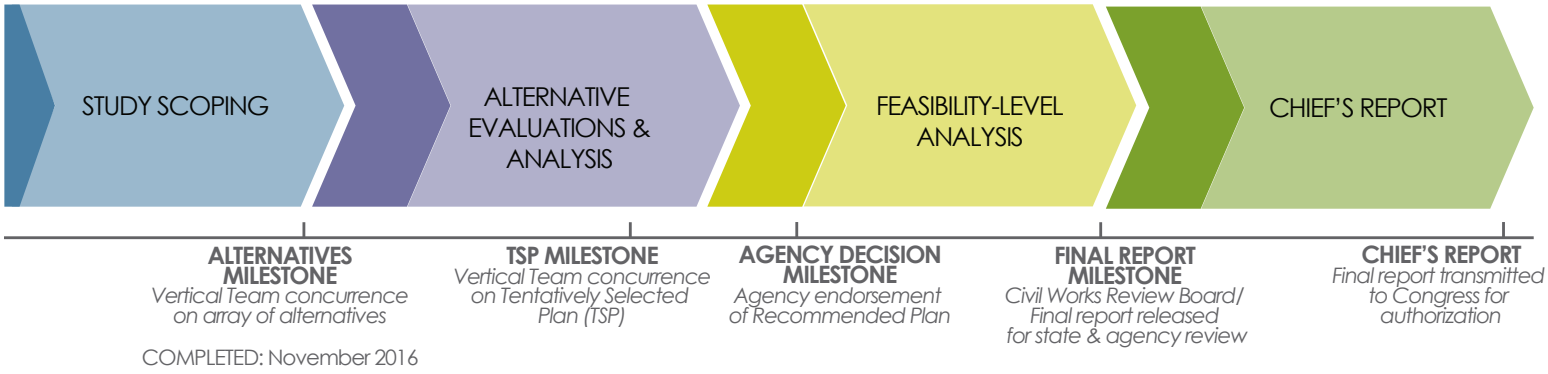
The CERP components identified to be studied as part of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project are the: Taylor Creek/ Nubbin Slough Storage and Treatment, Lake okeechobee Watershed Water Quality Treatment Facilities, North of Lake Storage Reservoir, and Lake Okeechobee Acquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR). These components are highly interdependent features of the recommended plan that are being formulated, optimized and implemented in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

STUDY SCHEDULE



PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM MEETINGS

The USACE and SFWMD are facilitating Project Delivery Team (PDT) meetings for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project. PDT meetings enable federal, state and local agencies and tribal governments to provide their input into the project. Members of the public may attend PDT meetings and provide public comment at the end of the meeting. Additionally, public workshops sponsored by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force's Working Group are being held on an as needed basis.

- **Project Delivery Team Meeting Information**: http://bit.ly/LakeOWatershed
- **Working Group-Sponsored Public Workshop Information:** http://evergladesrestoration.gov/content/lowp.html

USACE'S NEW PLANNING PARADIGM

The USACE's new planning paradigm involves defining the appropriate levels of detail for investigations so that recommendations for authorization can be captured, succinctly documented and completed in timely manner. Generally, studies will adhere to the 3x3x3 rule:

- Not more than $3 million
- Completed in less than three years
- Concurrent reviews/enhanced vertical team communications, involving the three levels of USACE (District, Division and Headquarters)

The revised process ensures studies are completed in less time without jeopardizing the quality of engineering, environmental and economic analyses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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