



Figure 2
Location and extent of the Everglades Region.

many, that the EAA is a net supplier of water to the Lake. Bear in mind that these figures are outdated since the IAP drastically changed South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) criteria for backpumping. Nonetheless, the figures do point out that in an average year, the EAA receives more water from rainfall than it needs to sustain agriculture. The problem lies within the fact that a large majority of that rain occurs in a concentrated 5-month period. The EAA is considered to be an efficient user of water since the basin is surrounded by water storage areas, does not leak, and is devoted almost entirely to agriculture (SFWMD, 1985a).

The natural flow of water through the EAA is from north to south, caused by an almost imperceptible land slope. To the north of the EAA is Lake Okeechobee, the second largest freshwater lake (second to Lake Michigan) wholly in the United States (Federico et al., 1981). The Lake serves as the primary source of water for the EAA and the urban communities of Okeechobee, Moore Haven, Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade, and Pahokee. It serves as a secondary source for the Lower East Coast (LEC) including Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade Counties, as well as Monroe County, the ENP, and the Fort Myers area (SFWMD, 1985a). Lake Okeechobee is considered to be the most efficient water storage area in south Florida in terms of minimizing losses to seepage

and evaporation. The Lake has a capacity of 3,221,000 acre-feet (more than 1 trillion gallons) when operated according to the present regulation schedule (SFWMD, 1985a). The long term strategy for Lake management is to protect it environmentally, as well as to ensure that there will be adequate water for all south Florida interests.

To the south and east of the EAA lie the three Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) (Figure 3). These three areas encompass about 960,000 acres and were to be used, when created, for water conservation, water storage, and salt water intrusion control. Additionally, they were to be managed in such a way as to ensure the protection of wildlife within their boundaries (Florida Department of Administration, 1976).

Development of the EAA

Acquisition of the Land

The history of the drainage system and development of south Florida must begin with Ponce de Leon's quest for the fountain of youth (Smith, 1980). It was his search that first brought western man into the Everglades. The Spanish, for the most part, neglected the swampy interior except for some exploratory travel. During Spain's 300 year rule of the area, south Florida remained wet. In 1821, Spain deeded the land to the United States for 5 million dollars. Florida gained statehood in 1845. At that time, Buckingham Smith was appointed to make the first inspection of the lower Florida peninsula. He reported, in 1848, that the Everglades could be reclaimed by digging canals and deepening streams to the coasts. He also indicated that it was his belief that if the land were drained, a new agricultural industry would thrive. Hence, the drainage of the Everglades began.

On September 28, 1850, the Federal Government of the United States passed the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act which gave the State of Florida approximately 20 million acres of land (Jones, 1948; Knecht, 1986). Included in this parcel of land were approximately 4.8 million acres which became known as the Everglades Region (Figure 2), including the 2.8 million acre parcel which is known today as the Everglades (Jones, 1948). Of the original Everglades, approximately 700,000 acres are included within the present day EAA. In January of 1851, the Florida Legislature passed an Act to secure the lands.

Lake Okeechobee

One of the primary features of the parcel of land was Lake Okeechobee. The Lake was originally named Lake Mayaimi (Bloodworth, 1959) from the Caloosa Indian word for big water. The Lake's