

water management with its stated goals. The primary additions to the system under the tenure of the FCD were the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs). It was also under the FCD that the EAA was officially defined.

During the tenure of the FCD, the EAA was completely canalized and diked. Three WCAs, designated WCA 1, WCA 2, and WCA 3, were developed and their use incorporated in the overall water management plan (Florida Department of Administration, 1976). These three areas are situated south and east of the EAA and encompass about 960,000 acres (1,500 square miles) (Figure 3). The plan called for conservation and storage of surplus water in the WCAs. Water in the WCAs would then be used for supply recharge to the LEC and the ENP, as well as a source of water to prevent salt water intrusion in the well fields along the LEC. Regulation of WCA 1, WCA 2, and WCA 3 began in 1961, 1962, and 1963, respectively.

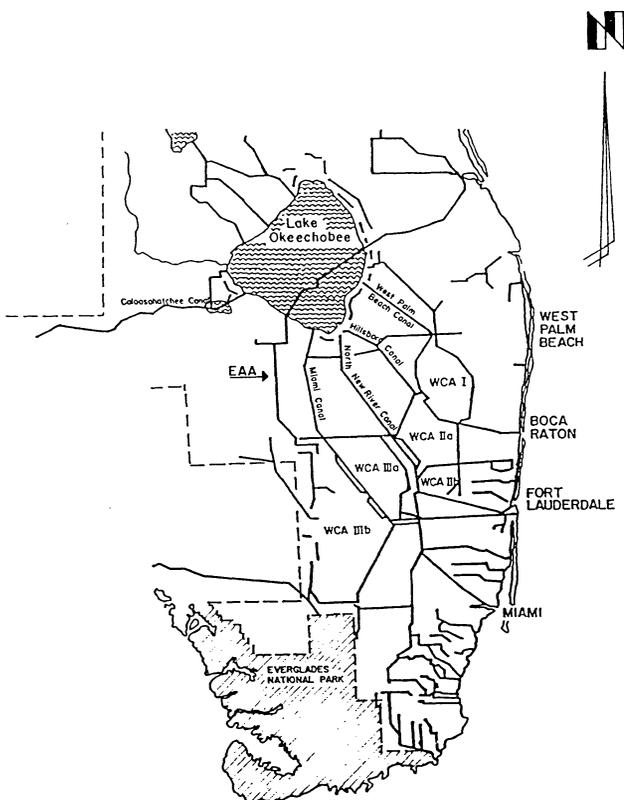


Figure 3
Location of the three water conservation areas.

Water Conservation Area 1 was leased by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for 50 years under the condition that they would manage the wildlife within. The Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission agreed to manage wildlife within WCAs 2 and 3. With an emphasis placed on wildlife preservation to accompany the use of the

WCAs for water management, it was necessary to prevent both over-draining and over-flooding of the WCAs. Obviously, the environmental considerations greatly constrained the use of the WCAs for water management. Rather than serving as buffer zones for the management of the EAA water system, the WCAs became entities which required their own specific environmental and stage management criteria.

In addition to the formation of the WCAs to aid in flood control, the water storage capacity of Lake Okeechobee was increased. Runoff or drainage from the EAA was to be routed to the Lake according to the process described today as backpumping.

In 1971, the Governor's Conference on Water Management in South Florida assembled leading experts on resource management to examine the south Florida situation (Florida Department of Administration, 1976). The conference affirmed and emphasized the importance of both conserving water and protecting its quality.

A project to study the issues of Lake Okeechobee eutrophication and water supply in south Florida began in 1973. The project title was "The Special Project to Prevent the Eutrophication of Lake Okeechobee". Major findings of the project were:

- 1) The conservation and wise use of water is the single most important priority in south Florida;
- 2) Rain should be retained as storage in wetlands and the shallow aquifer to protect the quality of the regional supply;
- 3) Wetlands should be reflooded and maintained at higher stages;
- 4) Publicly owned lands in the EAA should be flooded in the near future;
- 5) Improved farming and ranching techniques should be employed to assist in water conservation and its wise use;
- 6) The cessation of backpumping to Lake Okeechobee would greatly reduce the present eutrophic stress on the Lake;
- 7) The recycling of drainage water within the EAA would be an effective way to increase the water supply in south Florida.

The Conference emphasized that one of the two primary goals governing inputs to the Lake should be to ensure that only high quality water is back-pumped.

Creation of the South Florida Water Management District

In 1972, the Florida Legislature passed the Florida Water Resources Act, stating that it is to the benefit of the public that water and water related resources be conserved and protected (Tilley, Lynne, and Boggess, 1985). The Act listed a diverse and comprehensive set of goals. Among those goals were: 1) To provide for water and related land management; 2) To promote the conservation, development, and proper use of both sur-