



Picture Courtesy of Everglades National Park

## C-111 Spreader Canal Project

### *A Key Step To Restoring Florida Bay*

**Background:** The C-111 canal, located in south Miami-Dade County, provides flood protection and drainage for agricultural and urban areas. It was constructed on the remnants of a canal originally built to transport heavy rocket equipment by barge. The canal falls within the South Dade Wetlands, which forms a contiguous ecological corridor between Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, and Florida Bay. The canal unnaturally draws water out of Taylor Slough in Everglades National Park diminishing fresh water flows to Florida Bay and resulting in ecological harm to the estuary, habitat, fish, and wading birds.

**Project:** The C-111 Spreader Canal Project, a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), will provide restoration benefits for Florida Bay. The main purpose of the spreader canal project is to keep the water flowing through Taylor Slough in Everglades National Park and into Florida Bay. This will ultimately be accomplished by backfilling the lower C-111 canal. A newly constructed east-west “spreader” canal will replace this feature and redistribute water more naturally, re-creating sheetflow.

**Status:** : The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have split this project into two phases and have adopted a plan for the first phase of the project. The SFWMD has completed construction of the first phase and is currently awaiting approval by Congress in a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Bill, which will qualify it for federal funding. Phase One involves the construction of a retention pond that will store water on the edge of the park, creation of a hydrologic barrier to keep water in the park, and operational changes to canal stages to raise water levels at structure S-18C. These measures will reduce the amount of water drained through the C-111 canal, and will keep that water in Everglades National Park where it will flow through Taylor Slough and into Florida Bay.

In Phase Two, the lower C-111 canal that causes the most damage to Florida Bay and the “Southern Glades” will be completely removed. A new spreader canal will be built to recreate sheetflow and hydrate the model lands in southern Miami-Dade County, restore Everglades habitat, benefit wildlife, and restore natural salinity patterns through these wetlands to the coast.



**Moving Ahead:** We believe the SFWMD and the Corps must expediently address the following concerns for this project to ultimately provide the intended restoration benefits to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

- Backfill the lower C-111 canal. A prolonged delay would result in continuing damage to Florida Bay, which is already in dire ecological condition.
- The C-111 spreader canal must follow a northern alignment to restore the greatest extent of wetlands possible within south Miami-Dade County. The location of the spreader canal is a critical aspect of the project and will determine the extent of the southern Everglades that will be restored.

- Water quality standards must be met. Runoff from urban and agricultural areas contains contaminants including pesticides and herbicides and should be treated to protect water quality in the southern Everglades and Florida Bay.
- Raise water levels at S-18C. This must be done to ensure that freshwater stays in the park and is not drained into the C-111 canal once the retention ponds are operational.
- The state and county must continue to purchase lands within these areas to protect the resources of Biscayne and Florida Bay and the groundwater for water supply to the Florida Keys. Maximizing restoration of these wetlands best protects the investments of taxpayer dollars.
- Congress must pass a WRDA Bill that authorizes this project so that the federal government can start to meet their 50% cost share obligations with the state.

*(C-111 Phase 1 map by SFWMD and Corps)*

