

SAVING MALLORY SWAMP

SRWMD's largest restoration project has far-reaching effects

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

In the 1950s, industrial landowners began to convert Mallory Swamp (Lafayette County) to pine plantations by draining water off the property through an extensive network of canals and ditches. About 30 years later, scientists determined that the increased discharge of water, caused by the hydrological alterations, possibly had an adverse impact to aquatic organisms in the Steinhatchee River estuary.

In 2001, a strike of lightning ignited the dry land and a wildfire swept through 60,000 acres of the swamp.

RECREATING WHAT NATURE INTENDED

Since 2003, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) has spent more than \$3.4 million on restoration efforts to Mallory Swamp – the District's largest single restoration project to date. About \$2.4 million was provided by the United States Natural Resource Conservation Service through the agency's Wetlands Reserve Program.

Land managers have installed 311 culverts, 58 ditch blocks and eight



LEFT: Land managers have installed 311 culverts among other structures to facilitate hydrological restoration at Mallory Swamp.

flashboard riser structures to recharge the aquifer, rehydrate wetlands, and restore natural drainage patterns.

Management activities, such as prescribed burning and reforestation are tools being used to restore natural plant communities to conditions that existed prior to the land use alterations.

RESULTS ARE FAR-REACHING

Most restoration activities are designed to improve a specific area. However, the Mallory Swamp project provides positive returns on the property and beyond. Land managers have seen improvements to water resources and natural communities at the swamp, and they expect to see benefits to regional water resources and the estuary.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Though most of the restoration efforts on the ground are nearing completion, management of Mallory Swamp will continue to be an ongoing project. The District will continue to monitor and collect groundwater and surface water data in the basin and monitor plant and animal species on the property. This data will be collected over a period of time to measure long-term trends that will help determine the program's success.

Come ATV-ride at Mallory

Looking for a place to ride your all-terrain vehicle (ATV)? Mallory Swamp provides the perfect spot with plenty of open space and the opportunity to ride alongside nature.

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) allows ATV riding on designated roads at the tract from now until Sept. 11.

Mallory Swamp provides 38 miles of ATV trails that will be open to the

public during daylight hours only.

The District strongly cautions all riders to practice safety and follow all regulations for the area.

A complete list of rules and an ATV trails map are available on the District's Mallory Swamp webpage, which is available at

www.mysuwanneeriver.com/recreation
> Best Recreational Opportunities.

New permitting program speeds up ERP process



Marshall

Landowners, developers and others in need of an environmental resource permit (ERP) from the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) now have an opportunity to obtain a

must meet certain criteria and rules and conditions of issuance as listed in Chapter 40B-4 and 40B-400, Florida Administrative Code.

There is a \$1,000 charge for APRs, which covers administrative costs. This is in addition to the actual permit fee.

Leroy Marshall, District professional engineer, said the program was implemented in response to applicants'

requests for an expedited permitting process.

"The APR program is designed to give premium service for certain projects," said Marshall.

Those requesting an APR, schedule a receiving period – a time frame of up to five days when the application and related documents will be submitted. The two-day review process begins after the five-day period.

Currently, the program is only offered to ERP applicants, but the District may look to expand the program in the future to provide APRs for other permits.

For more information about the program call Leroy Marshall at 386.362.1001.

permit much faster for certain projects.

The District is offering an accelerated permit review (APR) process, which reduces the time a permit is reviewed from 30 days to two business days.

Factoring in the time the application is received, an applicant may have a permit in hand within 3-7 business days. This is provided the permittee follows all guidelines required for the accelerated process.

Non-APR permits are issued within 60 days and longer if the application is incomplete. This process is still available to all applicants; applicants who wish to receive a permit on an accelerated basis can take advantage of the APR process.

ERP projects that qualify for an APR

"The APR program is designed to give premium service for certain projects."
- Leroy Marshall, District professional engineer

FAQs

ERPs fall within three categories:

- Homeowners
- Agriculture & Forestry
- Commercial & Industrial

Some development activities that require an ERP include:

- Development of ponds, boat ramps, and dams
- Construction of buildings, subdivisions, and roads
- Wetland or stream encroachment

The District also issues permits for:

- Water use other than residential or domestic
- Construction of water wells
- Development of property on or near certain rivers

To determine whether your project requires a permit, call the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

News briefs

Hydrologic Conditions

The District received a surplus of rainfall in March, with an average of 5.10 inches District-wide.

However, western counties received almost double the normal rainfall, while counties in the Santa Fe Basin had significantly low totals.

Most river and lake levels within the District dropped and groundwater levels in 40 percent of monitored areas dropped by about 2 inches.

The District continues to experience drought conditions and a Phase I Water Shortage Advisory remains in place.

Land Management

The District's Governing Board on April 12 accepted the updated District Land Management Plan.

The plan, which is revised every 10 years, outlines land management objectives and goals that serve as guidance to staff in order to adequately manage public conservation lands.

For more than a year, District staff has received comments from the governing board, local citizens, public land managers, and regional advocacy groups to update the plan.

PILT

The District will pay \$346,345 to 11 counties for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT).

The following counties are scheduled to receive payment later this year: Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor.

PILT funds provide property tax revenue to small counties from District acquisition of land.