



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, partners, stakeholders celebrate another milestone in restoring America's Everglades

First component of Indian River Lagoon-South Project breaks ground Oct. 28

Jacksonville, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District will host a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of another project to restore America's Everglades. The Indian River Lagoon-South C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area groundbreaking ceremony will be held Friday, Oct. 28 at 2 p.m. near 20654 SW Citrus Boulevard, Indiantown.

"The greater Everglades is an American treasure, an extraordinary ecosystem unlike any other in the world," said Jo-ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the state of Florida and Martin County are proud to stand together to break ground on this first component of the Indian River Lagoon-South project."

"The Department of the Interior celebrates the start of this monumental project to restore and protect the Indian River Lagoon, one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in America," said Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior. "This restoration project represents our strong and continuing joint commitment with Florida and its local governments to restore and protect the many natural resources, national parks and wildlife refuges of the south Florida region while also securing and enhancing flood protection, water supply, and the economy for the millions of South Florida residents."

"This day has been a long time coming and is an important milestone in Everglades restoration," said U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson. "After many delays and hurdles, we're finally moving dirt to help bring the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon back to health."

"The Indian River Lagoon project is a key component of overall Everglades restoration," U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) said. "Constructing the C-44 reservoir means a cleaner lagoon, healthier fish and wildlife, and reduced toxic algal blooms. The project is critical to maintaining Martin County's marine and tourism industries, preserving property values, and boosting our local economy."

"This groundbreaking is an important step toward getting the water right in the Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie Estuary," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. "We're here today due to the hard work and collaboration of our partners at the federal, local and state level, and I thank these partners for their continued support and commitment to protecting this ecosystem."

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The Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie Estuary are two of the country's most productive and most threatened estuaries. Home to more than 4,300 species of plants and animals, the lagoon and estuary have suffered from altered water flow patterns and degraded water quality. The Indian River Lagoon-South project will restore the delicate balance of fresh and salt water in the lagoon and estuary, treat polluted water and revitalize degraded habitats.

The C-44 project includes the construction of a 3,400-acre above ground reservoir and a pump station with a capacity to pump 1,100 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water and a 6,300-acres stormwater treatment area. The completed project will capture local runoff from the C-44 basin and reduce the average annual total nutrient load and improve salinity for the St. Lucie Estuary and southern Indian River Lagoon.

"A tremendous amount of time, effort and steadfast commitment by the South Florida Water Management District and our restoration partners, especially Martin County, have preceded today's celebration. When completed, this project will help improve and protect the health of the St. Lucie River and Estuary, which, in turn, will mean a healthier economy for us all," said Kevin Powers, Vice-Chair of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board. The SFWMD is the non-federal project sponsor.

"The C-44 project will serve to greatly reduce polluted runoff into the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon while bringing significant economic benefits to our community," said Edward V. Ciampi, Chairman of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners. "The project will also provide 12,000 acres of habitat creation and recreational opportunities. The Martin County Board of Commissioners has steadfastly supported this project and is proud to have partnered with the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a substantial funding partner. This unique partnership reflects the importance of the Everglades and our waterways to the people of Martin County."

"We are certainly celebrating the hard work of many, and the successes along the way, to make this day a reality," said Orlando Ramos-Gines, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers senior project manager for the Indian River Lagoon-South project.

The Indian River Lagoon-South project was the first major component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) to come up for authorization since the approval of Water and Resources Development Act of 2000.

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