

6.0 Peace River Resource Management Plan Implementation

The DEP proposes to implement the following actions, some in conjunction with partner agencies, to address cumulative impacts in the Peace River basin. The actions are set forth according to the timeframe during which they will be undertaken.

This plan is, by design, dynamic and intended to be continuously improved as better information about basin hydrology and ecology becomes available. Several of the proposed actions are beyond the resources of any one agency and require collective action by various agencies and stakeholders in the basin. These agencies and stakeholders must effectively coordinate—and hold each other accountable—for implementing the recommendations and action steps below; monitoring their progress; and refining, adapting, and developing new actions as circumstances demand. Only through concerted effort can cumulative impacts in the Peace River basin be minimized or eliminated.

Ongoing Actions

- Evaluate reclaimed and released mining parcels to better determine their wetland function.
- Monitor progress of the *Shell Creek and Prairie Creek Watersheds Management Plan* to ensure the goals and objectives are achieved by 2014.
- Promote and expand Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Mobile Irrigation Laboratory Program.
- Support the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services efforts to reduce agricultural water use by 40 mgd by 2025 through the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems program.

Short-Term Actions – Complete within six months to one year

- Adopt Total Maximum Daily Load determinations in the Peace River basin: Banana Lake, Banana Lake Canal, Lake Bonny, Lake Hancock, Lake Lena, Lake Parker, Peace Creek Drainage Canal, Peace River above Bowlegs Creek, Saddle Creek below Lake Hancock, Wahnetta Farms Drain Canal, and Winter Haven Chain of Lakes (Southern).
- Develop an acquisition plan and funding strategy for the Peace River Basin through collaboration of local, state, and regional conservation land acquisition entities to assure a coordinated and equitable approach.
- Develop a proposal to ensure adequate funding of the Nonmandatory Reclamation Program to support reclamation targeted at specific water resource benefits.
- Develop a long-term needs analysis for funding from the Nonmandatory Lands Reclamation Trust Fund for the management of conservation lands in the Integrated Habitat Network, and submit legislative budget requests consistent with established fund needs.
- Evaluate the benefits of combining the Environmental Resource Permit and Conceptual Reclamation Plan approval into a single mining authorization as a means of improving resource protection and process streamlining.
- Determine whether a formal Peace River Coordinating Committee should be established to facilitate intergovernmental and stakeholder interactions.

- Expedite, in conjunction with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the development and implementation of the Final Evaluation of Stream Flow Losses through Karst Features in the Upper Peace River, in conjunction with the U.S. Geologic Survey.
- Develop incentives to increase the use of agricultural Best Management Practices in conjunction with Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Mid-Term Actions – Complete within two years

- To provide an incentive to direct development away from the 100-year floodplain, review Florida’s Uniform Mitigation Assessment Methodology (wetlands) to determine whether preservation of the floodplain would serve as appropriate mitigation offset for development activities.
- Complete minimum flows and levels for the lower Peace River estuary system and Lake Hancock, scheduled for adoption in 2007 (Southwest Florida Water Management District).
- Provide the Southwest Florida Water Management District with data needed to complete the Peace River Integrated (computer) Model and assure it accounts for phosphate mining lands.
- Take appropriate corrective measures in all sub-basins where specific conductance (a measure of dissolved solids) in surface waters has been increasing (Southwest Florida Water Management District).
- Adopt Total Maximum Daily Load determinations for Winter Haven Chain of Lakes (Northern).
- Conduct a study of mechanisms to remediate stream losses to in-channel Karst features (Southwest Florida Water Management District).

Long-Term Actions – Complete within four years

- Work with the Southwest Florida Water Management District and area local governments to improve the use of zoning, land use and comprehensive planning tools to protect water resources in the basin; provide technical assistance to evaluate, plan and initiate financing for environmental infrastructure necessary to assure sustainable water supplies and improved water quality.
- Complete “middle” and “high” minimum flows for the upper Peace River, scheduled for adoption by 2011 (Southwest Florida Water Management District).
- Evaluate existing regulatory programs in conjunction with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to determine the need for program enhancements or development of special basin rules to protect water resources.
- Revise and update the Integrated Habitat Network and coordinate with Southwest Florida Water Management District to accelerate floodplain mapping modernization.
- Expedite, in conjunction with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, development and implementation of:
 - Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification and Ecosystem Restoration Project.
 - Lake Hancock Water Quality Treatment Project.
 - Peace Creek Restoration Program.
 - Upper Peace River Resource Development Project.

- Complete the Upper Peace River/Saddle Creek Restoration Project.
 - Amend Tenoroc Fish Management Area project area lease to include DEP-Division of Water Resource Management as co-manager with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
 - Provide partial funding in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for complete upland and wetland restoration, drainage, enhancement, and management of entire project area through the sale of on-site resources.
 - Acquire clay settling areas on adjacent privately-owned property to complete drainage enhancement to Upper Saddle Creek in cooperation with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Polk County, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
 - Request funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District since water being managed in the Upper Peace River/Saddle Creek Restoration Project will be used in support of the Peace River Minimum Flows and Levels recovery strategies.