



South Florida Water Management District

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE COMPONENT A RESERVOIR (LOCAR) PROJECT AGENDA

April 27, 2023

6:00 PM

Indian River State College
Dixon Hendry Campus, Room C-115
2229 NW 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, FL 34972

Zoom Registration Link: <https://sfwmd.link/43b3u7s>

FINAL

1. Open House - Hosted by SFWMD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District
An open house will be held from 6:00-7:00 PM. Opening remarks will begin at 7:00 PM.
2. 7:00 PM Opening Remarks - Ben Butler, Governing Board Member, SFWMD
3. NEPA Process - Gretchen Ehlinger, Chief, Environmental Branch, USACE
4. Section 203 Feasibility Study Purpose - Jennifer Leeds, Bureau Chief, SFWMD
5. LOCAR Project Overview - Elizabeth Caneja, Lead Project Manager, SFWMD
6. Public Comments
7. Adjourn

Draft Presentation(s)

Agenda Item Background:

LOCAR Scoping Presentation

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Public Scoping Meeting
North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir Section 203 Study**

An open house will be held from 2:00-3:00 PM.
Opening remarks will begin at 3:00 PM.

SFWMD and USACE Jacksonville District

April 27, 2023

sfwmd.gov



US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG[®]**3**

Opening Remarks

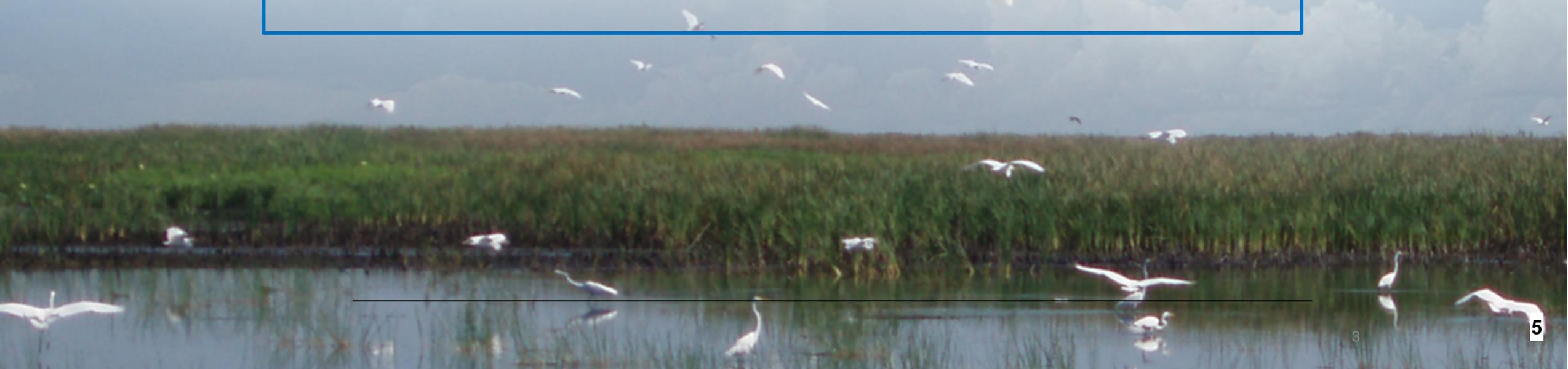
Ben Butler
SFWMD Governing
Board





The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

**Dr. Gretchen Ehlinger – Environmental Branch
Chief, USACE Jacksonville District**



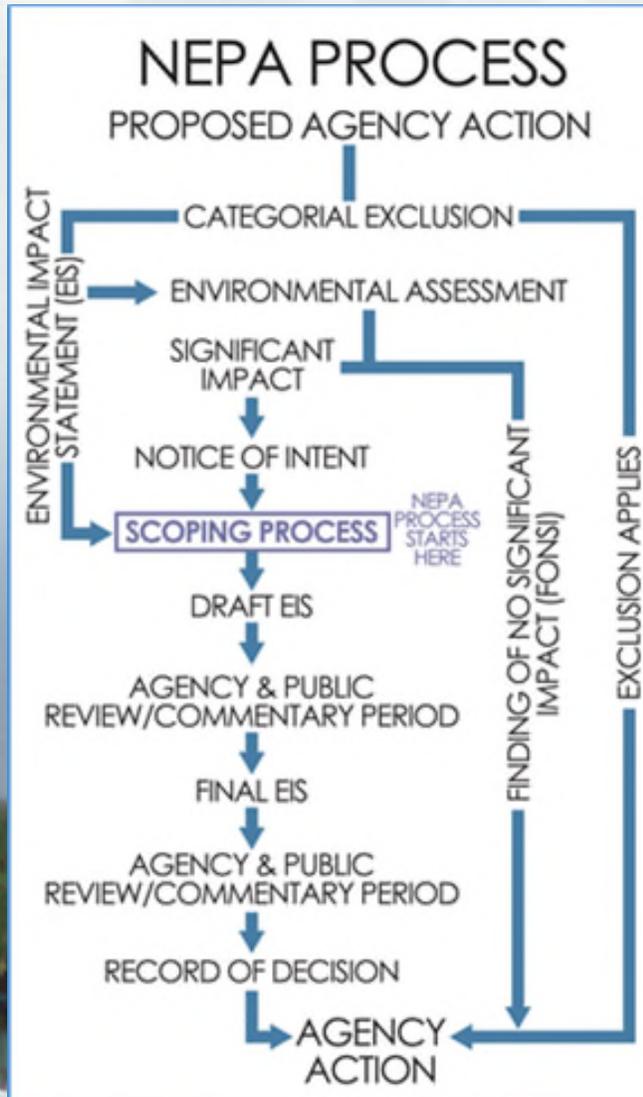


NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969 (NEPA)

- NEPA is a federal law requiring federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of a proposed study that are:
 - Major federal actions that may have a significant affect on the quality of the human environment
- Solicit and consider public views on proposals
- Consult with Tribal, state, and local governments concerning plans
- Provide agencies with a mechanism to coordinate overlapping, jurisdictional responsibilities



NEPA PROCESS & ASSESSMENTS

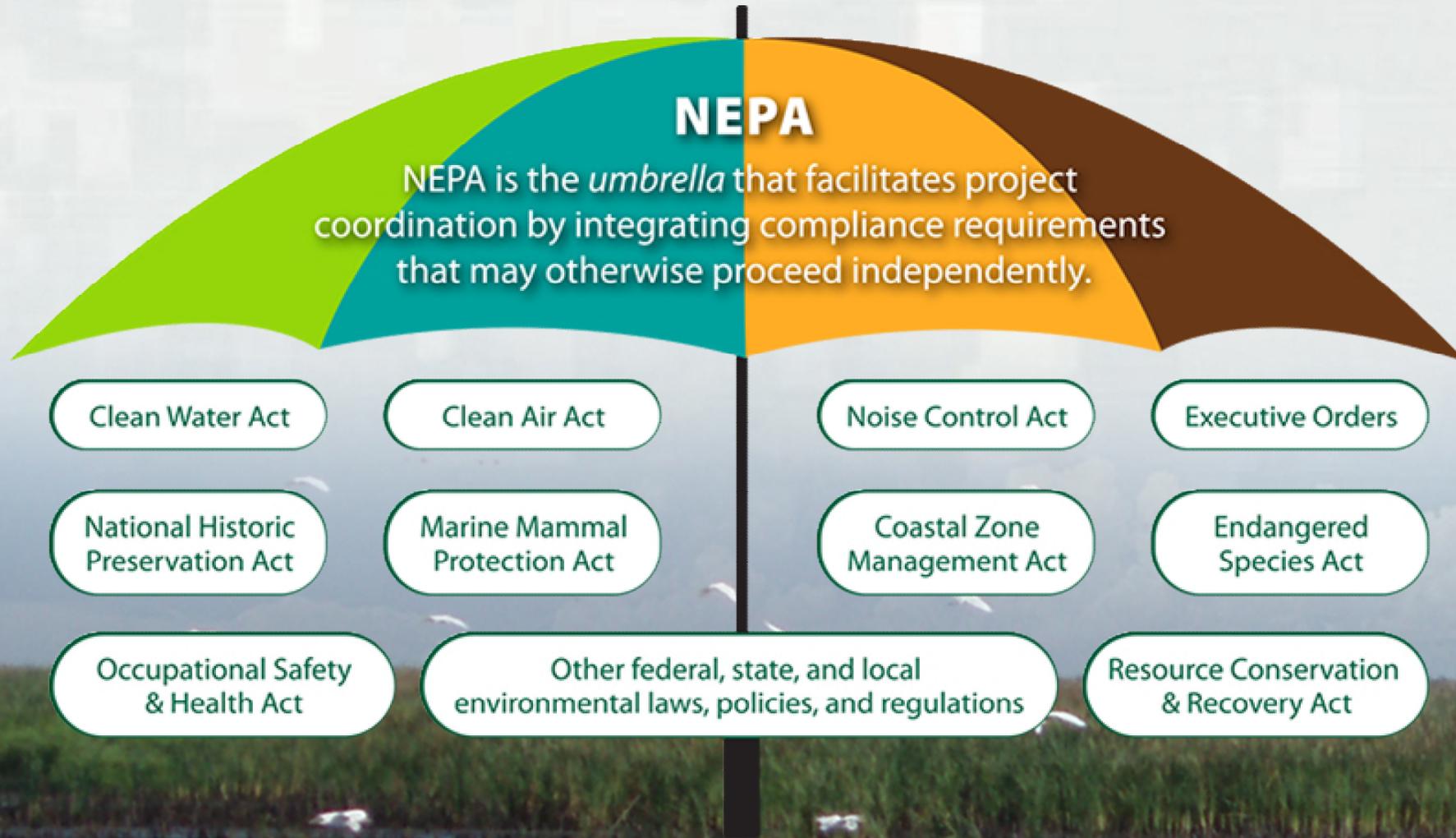


- Prepare detailed statements addressing the potential environmental impacts related to a major federal action:

- Categorical Exclusion (CAT-EX)
- Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)



NEPA – WHAT IS IT?





NEPA & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- Applies to all Federal actions
- **Disclose** proposed actions and alternatives
- **Consider, evaluate, and document** effects of proposed actions as part of *overall* decision-making
- **Cooperate** with Federal, state and local governments, private organizations, and concerned citizens





PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & DISCLOSURE

- North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir Section 203 Study
 - To be referred to as LOCAR
- Scoping
 - Early and open process to solicit input from the public and stakeholders
 - Required for the NEPA document's preparation to determine the scope of the issues to be addressed by the study
- Public comment during scoping
 - Perspectives on problems, objectives, and constraints
 - Ideas for measures and alternatives
 - Resources of particular importance or concern



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Aesthetics
- ✓ Air Quality
- ✓ Cultural Resources
- ✓ Contaminants
- ✓ Environmental Justice
- ✓ Fish & Wildlife Resources
- ✓ Noise
- ✓ Recreation
- ✓ Socioeconomics
- ✓ Threatened and Endangered Species
- ✓ Water Quantity
- ✓ Wetlands





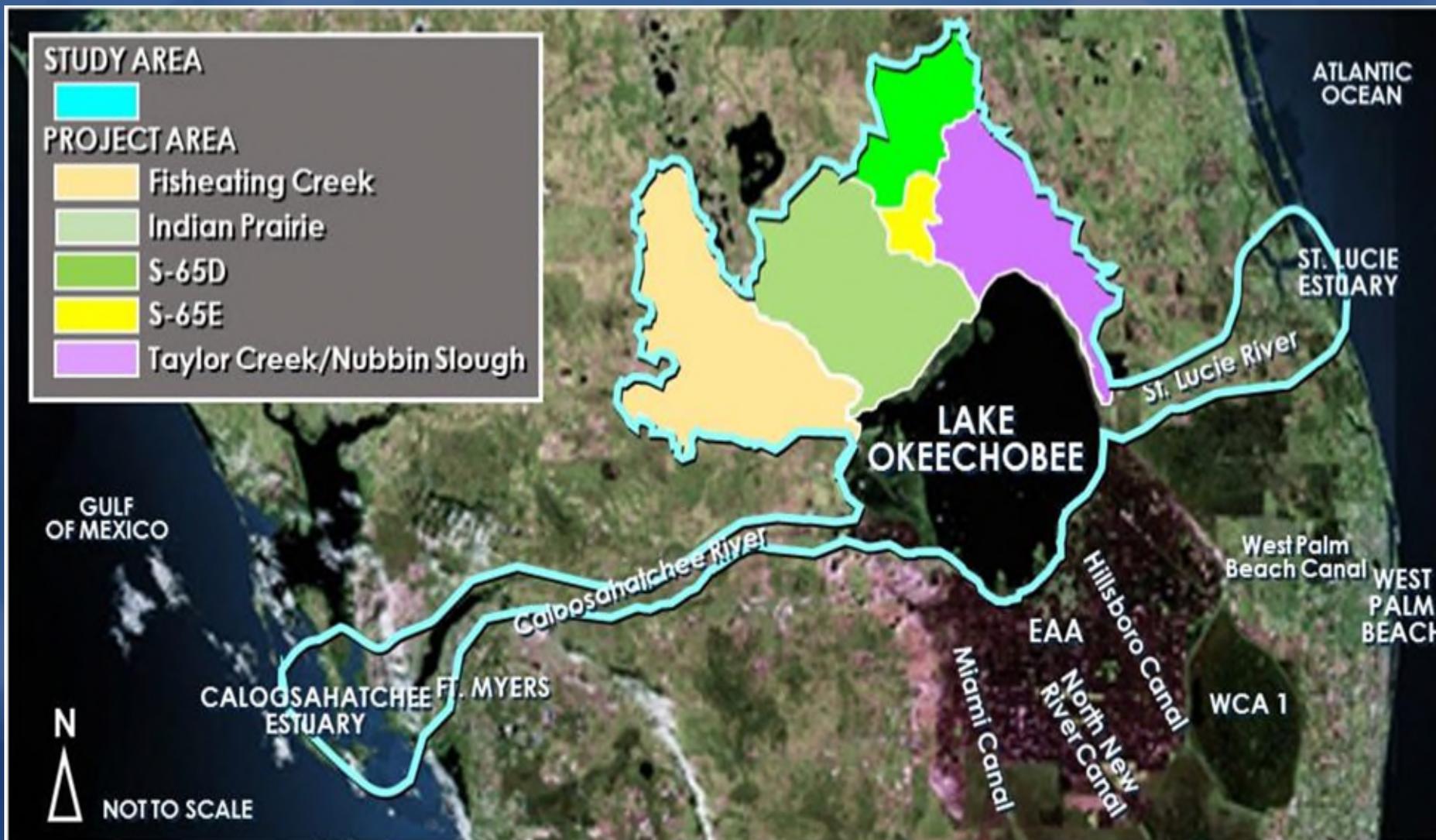
ADDITIONAL COMMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **COMMENT DURING SCOPING:**
 - Share concerns and recommendations
 - Provide information on topics not identified during this presentation
 - Scoping comments considered during the development of the NEPA document's evaluation of potential effects to resources
- **Public Comment Cards**
- **Email: LOCAR@usace.army.mil**
 - Dr. Gretchen Ehlinger
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - 701 San Marco Blvd.
 - Jacksonville, FL 32207
- **Scoping Comment Period Ends May 24, 2023**
- **Additional Information Available at: www.sfwmd.gov/LOCAR**

Section 203 Feasibility Study Purpose

- Executive Order 23-06: January 10, 2023
- SFWMD is initiating the planning of the North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir Section 203 Study in 2023 as the local sponsor
 - Also known as the Lake Okeechobee Component A Storage Reservoir (LOCAR) Section 203 Study
- SFWMD is preparing a Feasibility Study to evaluate the effects of implementing the LOCAR project under Section 203 of Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986.
- Must be technically and policy compliant with federal planning process
- SFWMD will transmit it to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (ASA)
- SFWMD will recommend submission to Congress

LOCAR Study Area



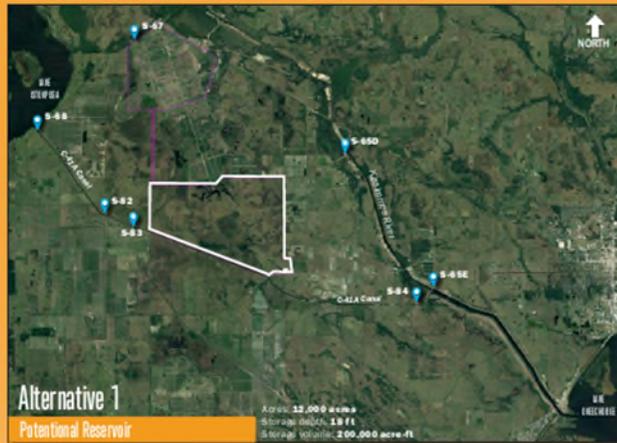
LOCAR Project Overview

- The goal of LOCAR is to construct Component A of CERP, a storage reservoir north of Lake Okeechobee providing approximately 200,000 ac-ft of storage.
- The purpose of LOCAR is to detain water during wet periods for later use during dry periods to benefit Lake Okeechobee.
- Increased storage capacity would reduce the duration and frequency of both high and low water levels in Lake Okeechobee that are stressful to the lake's ecosystems.
- Reduce large discharges from the lake that are damaging to the downstream estuary ecosystems.

LOCAR Initial Array of Alternatives for Storage

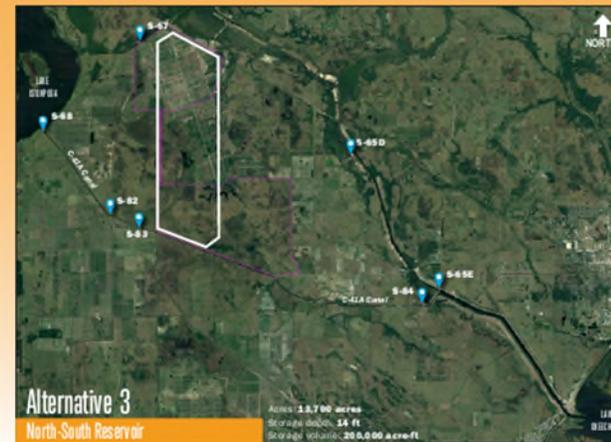
LOCAR Initial Array of Alternatives

North of Lake Okeechobee Storage Reservoir Section 203 Study being conducted by SFWMD

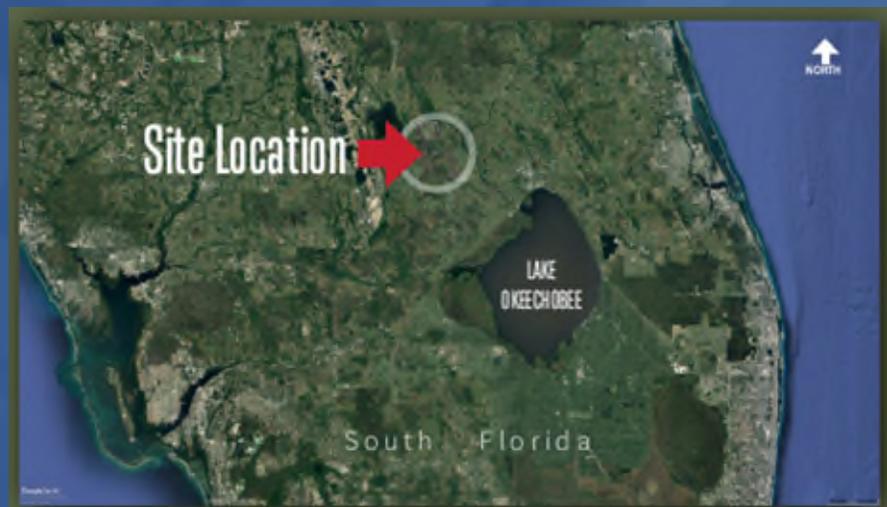


Legend

- Proposed Reservoir Boundary
- Other Alternative Reservoir Boundary

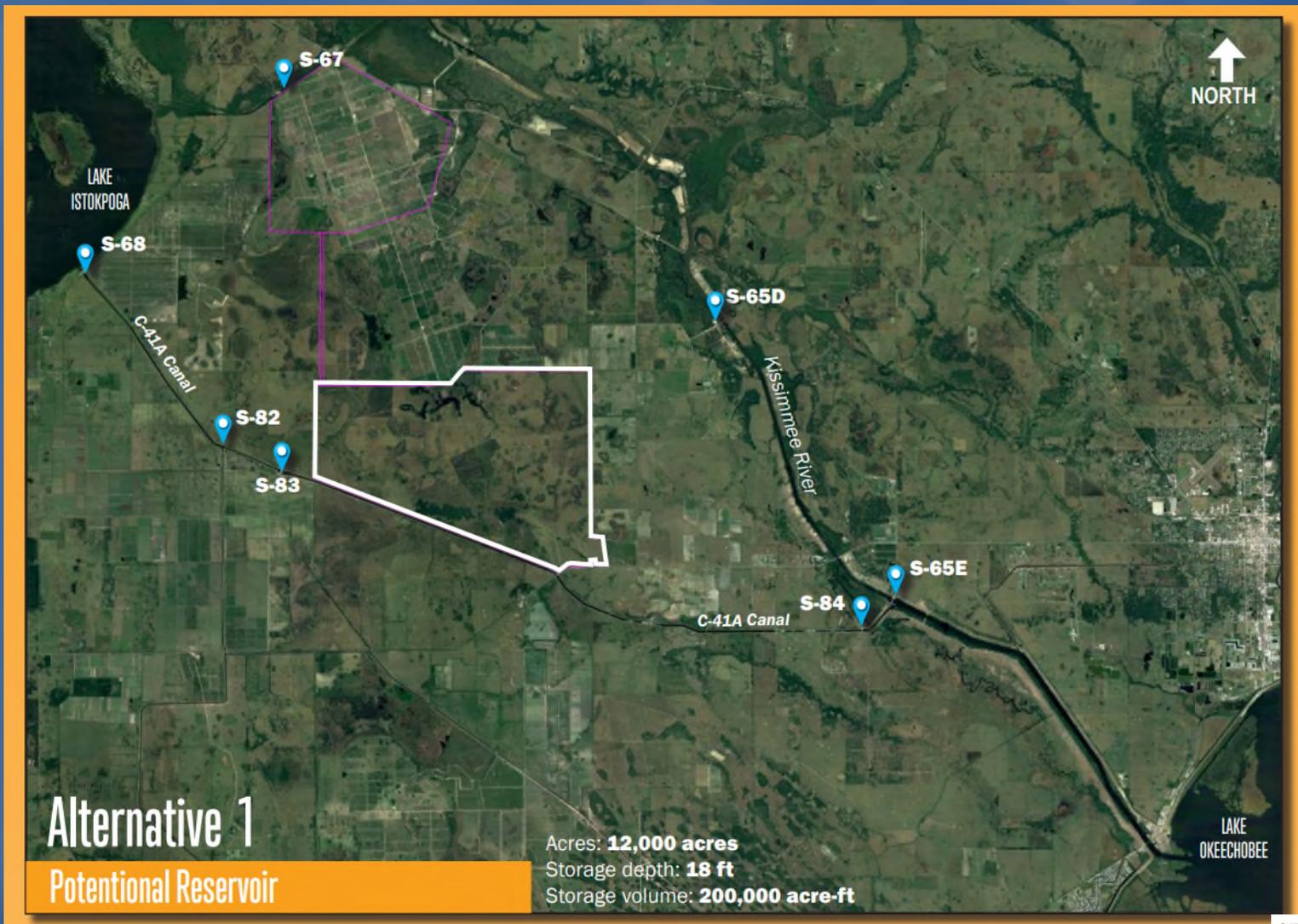


LOCAR Alternative 1 Potential Reservoir



Legend

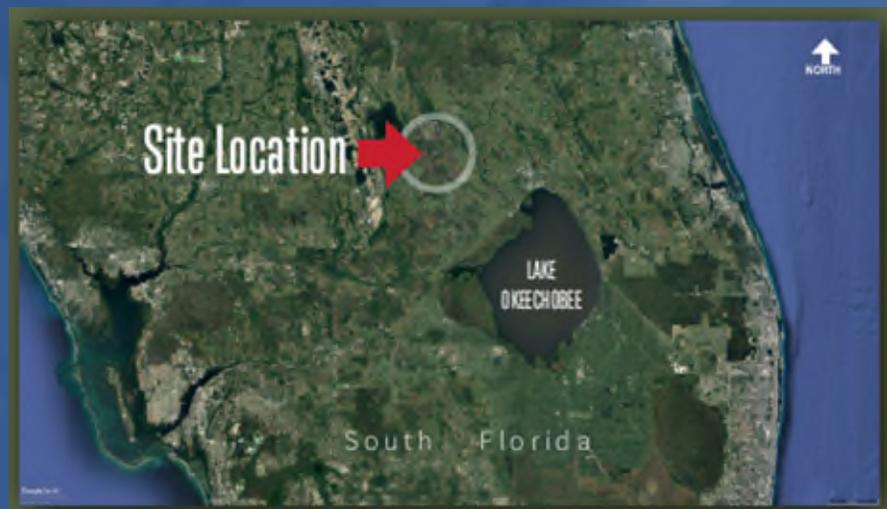
- Proposed Reservoir Boundary
- Other Alternative Reservoir Boundary



Alternative 1
Potential Reservoir

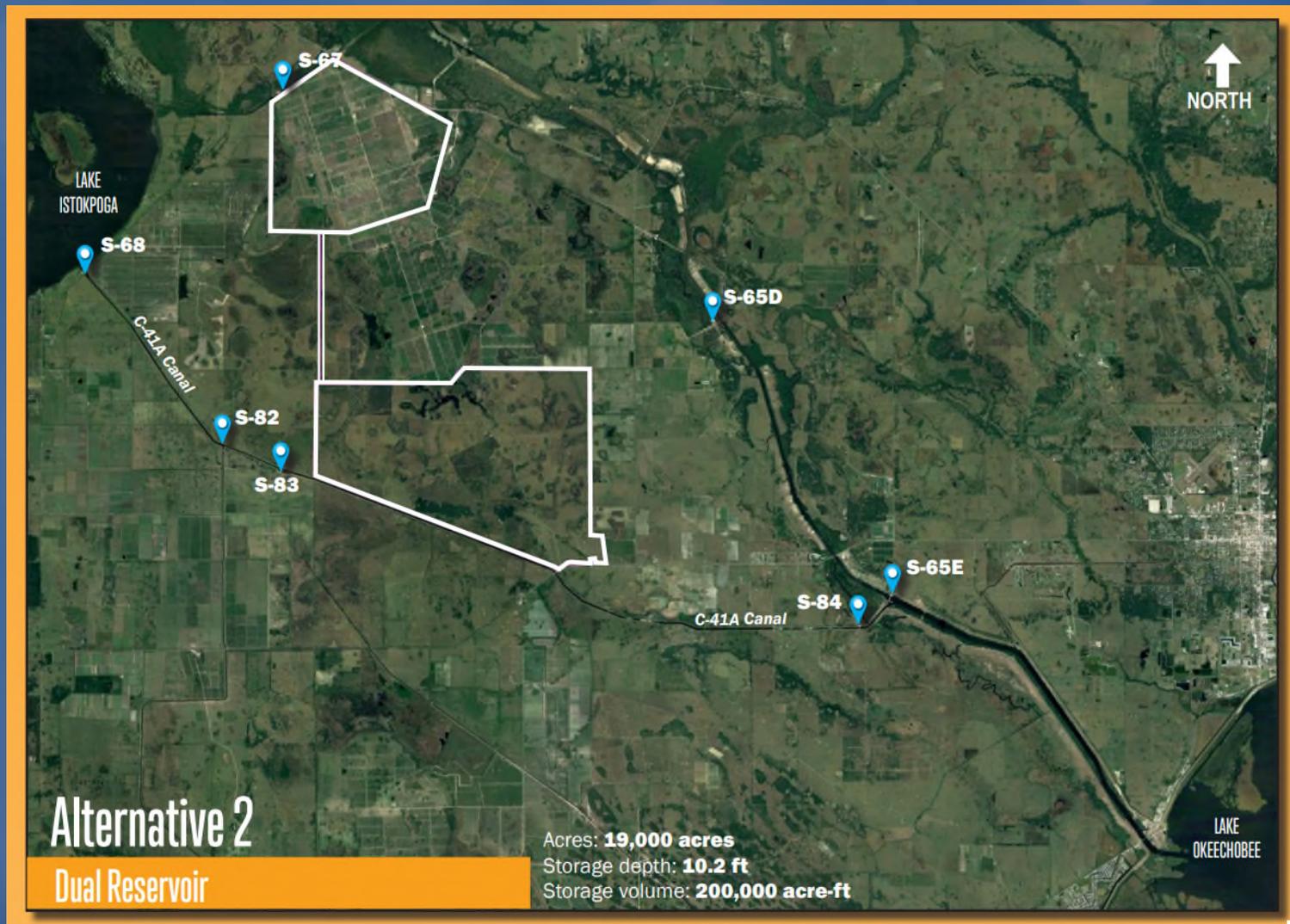
Acres: **12,000 acres**
Storage depth: **18 ft**
Storage volume: **200,000 acre-ft**

LOCAR Alternative 2 Dual Reservoir

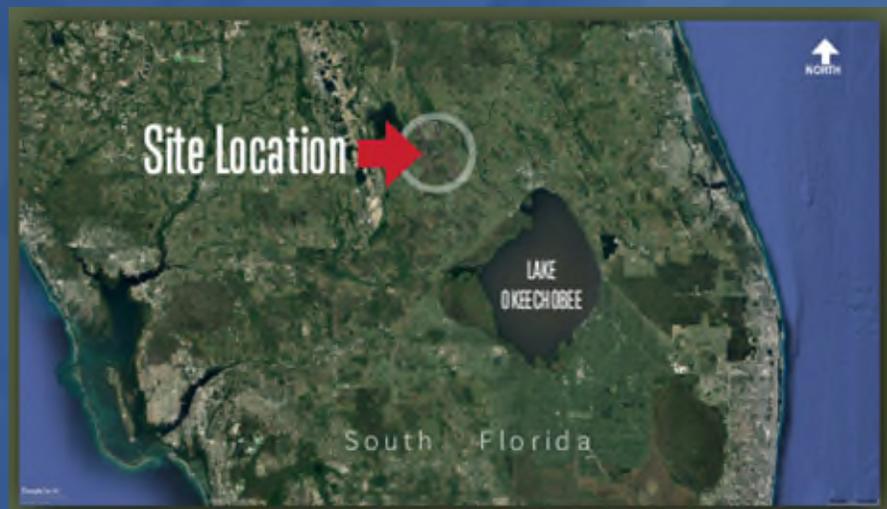


Legend

- Proposed Reservoir Boundary
- Other Alternative Reservoir Boundary

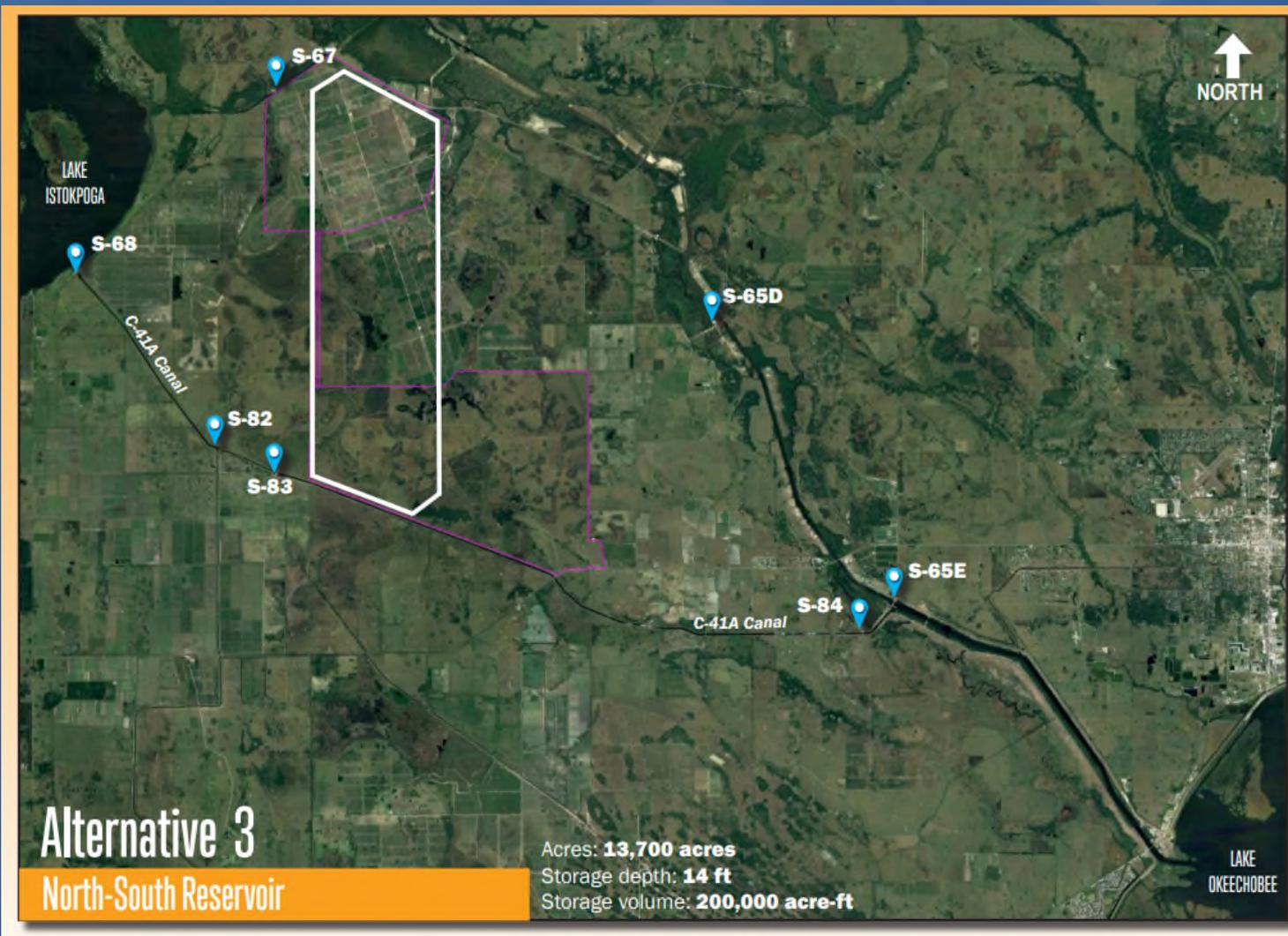


LOCAR Alternative 3 North-South Reservoir



Legend

- Proposed Reservoir Boundary
- Other Alternative Reservoir Boundary



LOCAR Project Opportunities

- Improvements to lake ecology by reducing dramatic fluctuations in water levels
- Improve marsh inundation patterns to minimize invasive species opportunities caused by annual variation
- Improve herbaceous vegetation communities and habitat
- Create better conditions for emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation habitat in nearshore and littoral zones in Lake Okeechobee
- Increase fish, invertebrates and plankton populations and diversity
- Improve timing and distribution of flows to the estuaries
- Improve water supply reliability to existing legal users
- Provide multiple recreation and economic opportunities

LOCAR Project Must Maintain Requirements

- **Comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies**
- **Maintain levels of service for flood protection to agricultural and urban lands**
- **Maintain levels of service for existing legal users**
- **Maintain rights of the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida**
- **Maintain navigability to the lake, within the lake, and within the watershed**

LOCAR Information

➤ Information regarding the LOCAR project can be found at:

- www.sfwmd.gov/LOCAR

The screenshot shows the website page for the Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir (LOCAR) project. The page features a navigation bar with the South Florida Water Management District logo and menu items: WHO WE ARE, OUR WORK, DOING BUSINESS WITH US, COMMUNITY & RESIDENTS, SCIENCE & DATA, and NEWS & MEETINGS. A search bar and social media icons are also present. The main content area includes a large image of a waterway with green vegetation. Below the image, the breadcrumb trail reads: Home >> Our Work >> Lake Okeechobee Component Reservoir Locar. A sidebar menu on the left lists various categories: Flood Control, Water Supply Planning, Water Quality Improvement, Ecosystem Restoration - By Region, Ecosystem Restoration - Projects and Programs, MFLs & Water Reservations, & RAAs, Land Management, Local Projects and Programs, and Addressing Blue-Green Algae. The main heading is "Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir (LOCAR)". The text below the heading states: "On January 10, 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Executive Order 23-06 (Achieving Even More Now for Florida's Environment) to further expedite restoration projects and advance the protection of Florida's natural resources. In the order, the South Florida Water Management District is directed to make every effort to advance Everglades restoration projects to ensure meaningful progress over the next four years, including all Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) storage components within the Lake Okeechobee watershed. The South Florida Water Management District continues its efforts to implement all on-going CERP storage projects like the EAA Reservoir, Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project, Caloosahatchee (C-43) Reservoir, and Indian River Lagoon-South reservoirs. The South Florida Water Management District, as the non-Federal sponsor for CERP, is also conducting a Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir (LOCAR) under Section 203 of the federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, as amended. The Feasibility Study and EIS will explore opportunities for aboveground water storage north of Lake Okeechobee with an estimated water storage capacity of 200,000 acre-feet. The study area covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed north of Lake Okeechobee and will provide ecological benefits to the lake and the



PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Please provide written or verbal comments at this time

- **Verbal or in writing via Public Comment Cards, email, or letters**
- **Email: LOCAR@usace.army.mil**
- **Physical Address:**
 - Dr. Gretchen Ehlinger**
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
 - 701 San Marco Blvd.**
 - Jacksonville, FL 32207**
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