



STORMWATER TREATMENT



The Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRLNEP) has ambitious goals to improve water and sediment quality and restore and rehabilitate damaged coastal habitat. Excessive freshwater discharges into the central and southern lagoon due to diversion of floodwaters from the St. Johns River and Lake Okeechobee and pollutant-laden stormwater into the lagoon have caused fish kills in some areas of the lagoon along with the loss and/or degradation of thousands of acres of seagrass, salt marsh and mangrove wetlands.

THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program

To reverse the damage and save the lagoon, the IRLNEP, along with numerous local, state and Federal government agencies including county mosquito control districts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, St. Johns and South Florida Water Management Districts (SFWMD), Canaveral National Seashore National Park Service and the National Aeronautic, and Space Administration (NASA), have joined forces and funding efforts. As a result, more than 100 stormwater reduction and treatment projects now exist throughout the watershed. Stormwater retrofit projects and large stormwater

abatement and detention projects have been implemented or are in the planning stages, including a state-funded \$10-\$20 million project to redirect 100 miles of expanded watershed back to the St. Johns River.

Signs of recovery are already present with respect to coastal wetland habitat, water clarity, seagrass habitat, and fisheries. The reconnection and rehabilitation of more than 27,000 acres of coastal wetlands and reductions in pollutant loads from constructed stormwater treatment projects, coupled with substantially less rainfall in the last de-



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cade, have helped reduce runoff. This also helps lower inputs of nitrogen, phosphorus, soils, and turbidity.

The IRLNEP goal for wetland rehabilitation is 34,943 acres. To date, approximately 24,760 acres have been rehabilitated in the north central portion of the lagoon and 4,695 acres in the south. The rehabilitation of nearly 30,000 acres, along with a marked increase in seagrass coverage across these estuary segments and increased landings of sea trout, pinfish and mangrove snapper, indicates that this ambitious and fast-acting NEP is effecting change.

Visit **www.sjrwmd.com/itsyourlagoon** to learn more about this and other IRLNEP efforts.

EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments. The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.

For more information about the NEP go to www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries.