



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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RiverWatch announces "The Historic Ft. Denaud Oxbow Restoration Celebration",
an ongoing project of recreating historic oxbows as part of the
legacy of the Caloosahatchee

LABELLE, FL - The Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (RiverWatch), the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and Hendry County invite the public and media representatives to the ceremonial ribbon-cutting of the Historic Ft Denaud Oxbow Restoration Project, 10:30a.m., Friday, December 16, 2005 at the oxbow site, just west of LaBelle in West Hendry County. A map of the site is attached.

This is scheduled in conjunction with Hendry and Glades County Schools' field trip, as students participated in the project with hands-on activities through a curriculum developed by RiverWatch Officers Margaret England and John Capece. The project representatives and students will be available on site from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Scientists will be conducting tests on the water and students will be working on hands-on activities throughout the morning.

Short demonstration boat trips to the oxbow island will illustrate the kinds of observations and data collecting procedures that the initiative will utilize for research and education.

"This project is the culmination of a dream of RiverWatch - to develop useful scientific information to better conserve a beautiful river locally while providing wonderful environmental training and experience for local students," said Margaret England, Hendry County Media Specialist, certified Florida Master Naturalist, and Vice President of RiverWatch. "The first and obvious benefit of the restoration was apparent the day the oxbow was opened. The water flowed, the fish jumped, and birds were once again seen in this restored section of the original meandering Caloosahatchee.

The Oxbow Restoration is a joint effort between the SFWMD and Hendry County to assure the environmental health, boating and fishing opportunities, and quality eco-tourism potential of the Caloosahatchee watershed. The local endeavor complements regional and

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state plans for river restoration. For the Fort Denaud Oxbow (Oxbow #24), SFWMD contributed \$400,000 from 2004 ad valorem funding. Hendry County contributed \$40,000 in cost share.

This project is part of the ongoing effort by the SFWMD and other government agencies to collaborate on efforts to improve conditions in the River and help with water quality downstream. The oxbow restoration projects revegetate the newly-restored areas so that the slower-moving water in the oxbows can be cleansed with the natural filtration systems of the littoral plantings. Water quality and water flow are measured on the oxbows so that scientists will have the data necessary to design future projects.

Speakers during the ceremony include representatives from the SFWMD, Hendry County and local officials.

The Caloosahatchee River flows to the Gulf of Mexico between Lake Okeechobee and Charlotte Harbor.

The Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of the River and its watershed, through education and promotion of the responsible use and enjoyment for all people.

For more information, media representatives should contact Mary Rawl at (239) 849-0964 or Kurt Harclerode, SFWMD at (239) 229-7295.



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