

Lainhart Dam on
Loxahatchee River

Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP)

Rulemaking Overview

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Project Purpose & Objectives

- Improve freshwater flows to the national designated Wild and Scenic Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River
- Restore estuarine communities
- Increase spatial extent and function of wetlands
- Restore watershed connectivity to improve hydrology
- Restore abundance and diversity of native plant and animal species in the watershed



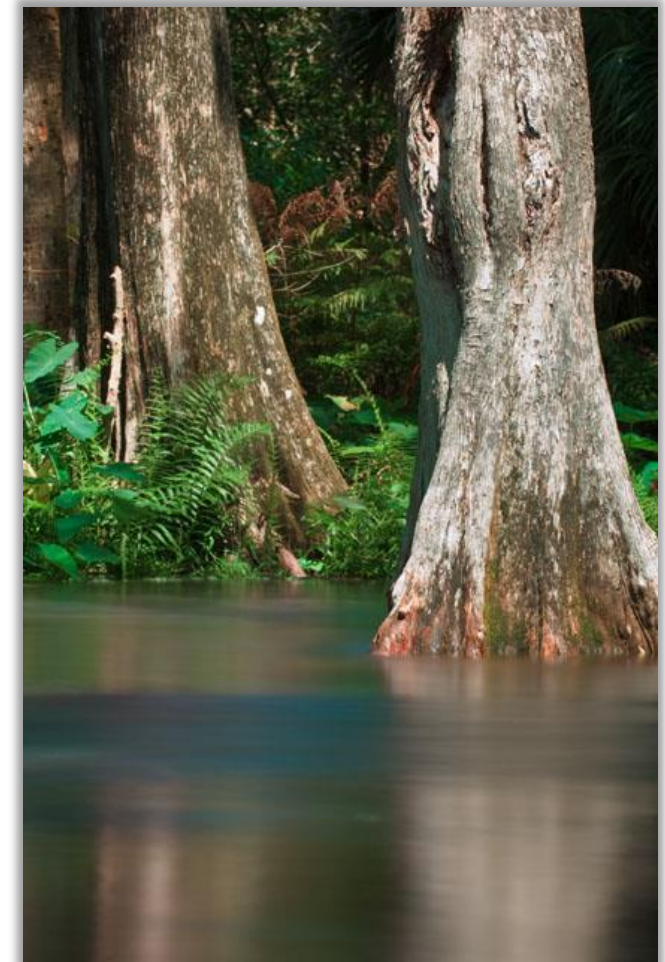
Project Benefits

- Northwest Fork of Loxahatchee River target flows
 - 91% dry season
 - 98% wet season
- Promotes recovery of riverine freshwater species and estuarine zones for fish, seagrass, oysters and other protected species
- Improves watershed wetland hydrology
 - 17,000 acres existing or former agricultural lands
 - 10,000 acres existing natural areas
- Improves/maintains ecological connectivity for ~78,000 acres
- Provides additional recreation opportunities



Water Protection Overview

- Water resource protection mechanisms
 - Minimum flows and minimum water levels (MFLs)
 - Water reservations
 - Consumptive use permitting rules (RAAs)
 - Water shortage rules
- WRDA 2000 & Section 373.470, F.S., authorize use of reservation or consumptive use permitting rules
- Water made available by a CERP project for the natural system must be protected



Restricted Allocation Areas (RAA)

- RAAs are listed in Section 3.2.1 of the Applicant's Handbook for Water Use Permit Applications within the South Florida Water Management District (Applicant's Handbook)
- RAAs are defined geographic areas where use of specific water supply sources is restricted
- RAAs are adopted for a variety of reasons, including:
 - Where there is insufficient water to meet the projected needs of a region
 - To address regional, resource-specific concerns
 - As part of MFL recovery or prevention strategies
- Requests for water allocations in these areas must comply with RAA criteria and all other applicable criteria listed in the Applicant's Handbook

LRWRP Rule Development

- Modified Applicant's Handbook to expand the Lower East Coast Regional Availability area to include LRWRP project components
- Adopted rules to protect the groundwater associated with the project's aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells located at the C-18W reservoir site.
- Rule adoption required because:
 - The NW Fork of the Loxahatchee River MFL identifies the LECRWA criteria as part of the MFL recovery strategy
 - LRWRP is a CERP component that requires the State of Florida to legally protect water developed by the project
- The Rule became effective June 13, 2022 and allows the US Army Corps of Engineers and SFWMD to sign a project partnership agreement.

Discussion

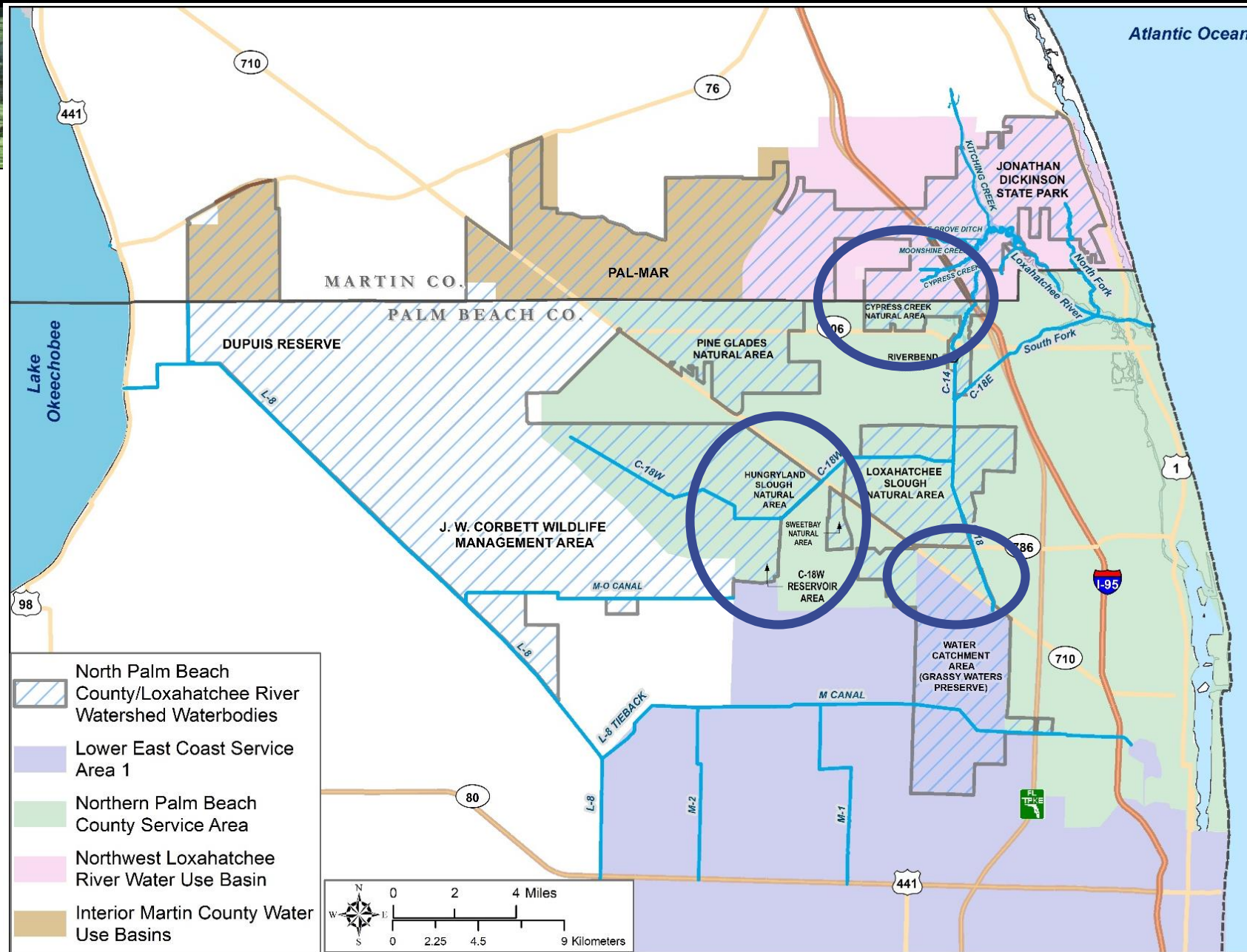
Loxahatchee River in
Palm Beach County

Surface Water Protection

3.2.1 Restricted Allocation Areas

E. Lower East Coast Regional Water Availability

Figure 3-2. North Palm Beach County/Loxahatchee River Watershed Water Bodies and Major Integrated Conveyance Canals.

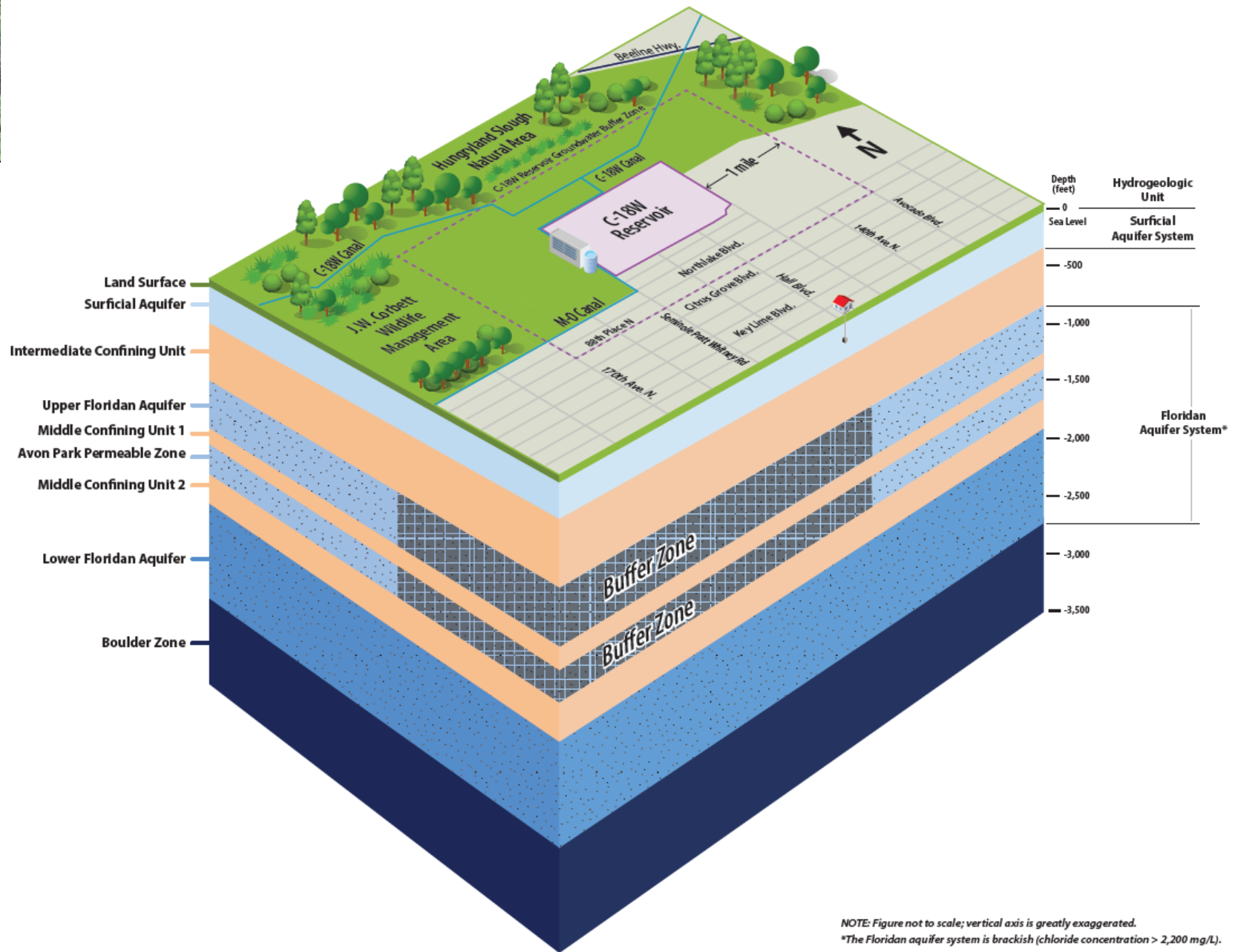


ASR Groundwater Protection

3.2.1.G

Utilization of the Upper Floridan Aquifer or Avon Park Permeable Zone Near the C-18W Reservoir

Figure 3-4. Protected areas in the UFA and APPZ related to the ASR wells at the C-18W Reservoir.



NOTE: Figure not to scale; vertical axis is greatly exaggerated.
 *The Floridan aquifer system is brackish (chloride concentration > 2,200 mg/L).