

Nicodemus Slough



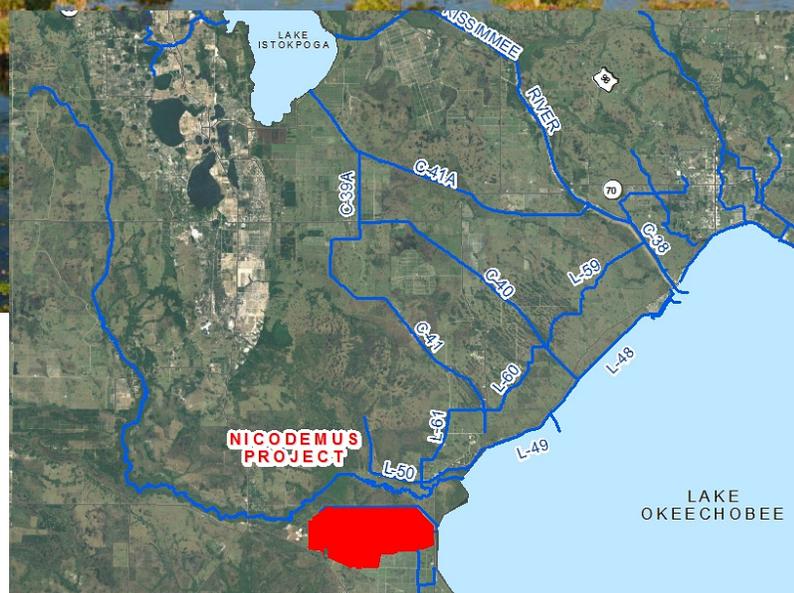
Nicodemus Slough by Carlton Ward Jr.

THE CHALLENGE

When water levels are high, additional storage is needed to hold excess surface water on private and public lands in the greater Everglades system. Dispersed water storage projects are needed to help reduce the amount of water delivered into Lake Okeechobee during the wet season and discharged to coastal estuaries for flood control. Nearly one million acre-feet of water storage is needed upstream of Lake Okeechobee.

THE SETTING

The Nicodemus Slough project encompasses 15,858 acres of eastern Glades County in central south Florida. The slough is located immediately west of Lake Okeechobee and about six miles northwest of Moore Haven. Fisheating Creek meanders along the northern project boundary but



remains separated from the project by a series of dikes and canals. The site is connected to both Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee River via the C-5 and C-19 Extension Canal.

THE PROJECT

The Nicodemus Slough project began operating in late 2014. When Lake Okeechobee levels are high, water is pumped from the lake's rim canal west to the highest of the project site. The water then moves in a sheetflow east across the site through a series of basins. Nicodemus Slough is capable of providing up to 34,000 acre-feet or 11 billion gallons of water storage annually.

The project objectives include reducing high stages in the lake, reducing harmful freshwater discharges to coastal estuaries, improving water quality by reducing phosphorus loads, and rehydrating wetlands that enhance plant and wildlife habitat. Additionally, the project can provide stored water back to the lake or the Caloosahatchee River as needed in dry periods.



Swallow-tailed Kites by Linda McCarthy

THE BENEFITS

Nicodemus Slough provides temporary storage for 34,000 acre-feet of water drawn from Lake Okeechobee. Between the pumping of water from Lake Okeechobee and the retention of rainfall on the project, **17.32 billion gallons of water was retained in 2017 and not discharged, and in total, 62.56 billion gallons of water have been retained.** In addition, the project was able to deliver 2,686 acre-feet of water to the Caloosahatchee River when desired.



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ABOUT LYKES

Lykes Bros. is the largest private property owner in the Lake Okeechobee watershed and one of the largest in Florida, managing more than 300,000 acres of the land for agriculture and conservation. Because of the size and location of the Lykes Ranch, Lykes is a strategic partner for the South Florida Water Management District. Nicodemus Slough is the second in a series of water management projects in partnership with District, following on the success of the West Waterhole Project. Lykes Bros. is now pursuing development of a third project called Brighton Valley. The hallmark of the Lykes-SFWMD joint projects is relatively low cost, early implementation, opportunity, and flexibility of operational management. Lykes is an efficient and important cooperative partner in reaching both water quality and water storage goals for Lake Okeechobee and the greater Everglades system.