

critical to its well being. If it is to survive in the natural state which justified its establishment by Congress as a national park, it must continue to be nourished with sufficient water to provide the environment necessary for the production and maintenance of aquatic plant and animal populations.

The pronounced arid conditions which resulted from this deficiency of supply were alleviated, at least temporarily, by the late-starting rainy season of last fall. Hurricane Betsy, with 6 to 10 inches of rainfall directly on the park, and other rains, have raised the water levels to the point that, at the end of 1965, they were about equal to levels at the end of 1964. The question as to how soon, or if, the animal and plant life that has been so severely damaged in the dry period can recover remains to be seen. ~~It is estimated that~~ ^{and property damage, the} Corps of Engineers starting in 1928 constructed the Okeechobee waterway involving the existing St. Lucie Canal, the lake, and the Caloosahatchee River and enlarged the existing levees around much of the lake.

In 1947, the Everglades National Park was established. At that time, and subsequent thereto, there was some overland flow of water into the park from the north.

In 1948, the Congress authorized the construction and operation of the Central and Southern Florida flood control project. Considerable detail as to purposes of the project are contained in House Document No. 643, 80th Congress, 2nd Session. This document also contained assurances that "the plan of improvement has also been developed in full recognition of the importance of the Everglades National Park * * *. Releases of water from conservation storage will assist in restoring and maintaining natural conditions within the national park area, by reducing damage from drought and fire which have threatened the preservation of lands, vegetation and wildlife."

With specific reference to the Everglades National Park, the Central and Southern Florida flood control project works include construction of three conservation areas north of the park for storage and release of water for beneficial use. Conservation Area 3, directly north of the park, is the main storage facility designed to hold water which can be released into the park. As a part of this conservation area there was constructed in 1962 a levee (L-29) for approximately 10 miles along the northern edge of the park. This levee contains five sets of gates through which water can be released from the conservation area into the park.

At present, several factors make supply of water to the park difficult. The southward flow of water released into Conservation Area 3 from Lake Okechobee ~~and Conservation Area 3~~

Tests conducted in 1965 indicate that the release capacity of the existing system for the benefit of the park can be improved by the use of project pumps. Funds for this purpose have not heretofore been available. However, even using maximum pumping capability, it may be necessary, in an emergency, to discharge excess water via the St. Lucie Canal and Caloosahatchee River to safeguard life and property when heavy rainfall is encountered and the hurricane season is imminent.