



Everglades Coalition

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Everglades Coalition Releases 2011 Restoration Priorities at 26th Annual Conference

Business Leaders, Elected Officials and Environmentalists will Gather to Discuss Strategies to achieve Full Everglades Restoration

Weston, Fla.-- Adequate funding. Continued land acquisition. Adherence to water quality standards. For those who support the restoration of America's Everglades and believe the old adage that good things happen in threes, then the Everglades Coalition's trifecta of key priorities for 2011 adds new wrinkles in efforts to save one of the world's last great places.

At its 26th annual conference, *Renewal of Life for the Everglades: Moving Forward Together*, the Everglades Coalition shared its vision and priorities for 2011. Consistent with this year's Conference theme, these goals focus on protecting wildlife and establishing new partnerships dedicated to advance Everglades restoration. This year's conference is hosted by Defenders of Wildlife, Florida Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation.

"Over the past year, we saw unprecedented progress on Everglades restoration and the creation of hundreds of construction jobs in Florida," said Julie Hill-Gabriel, National Co-Chair for the Coalition. "These projects are coming online at a time when it makes sense to 'buy straw hats in winter,' which means they now cost less and dollars go further. In 2011, Congressional approval for critical projects through a Water Resources Development Act and support for the Tamiami Trail Next Steps are essential, while securing vital state and federal funding."

"Our conference mission is to motivate Everglades advocates everywhere and get them excited about becoming part of the process to save the River of Grass," said Mark Perry, State Co-Chair for the Everglades Coalition. "The Coalition wants everyone within a mobile phone call or computer keystroke of a state or federal lawmaker to support these Everglades ecosystem initiatives and understand that the economic return on investment from restoration is a strong argument in making the political case for continued funding."

2011 priorities from the Everglades Coalition include:

- ***Adequate funding at the state and federal level to sustain momentum on key Everglades restoration projects, which will boost the economy and continue to create jobs in Florida.*** A recent economic study shows that funding restoration of America's Everglades can generate a 4-to-1 financial return on investment and create more than 400,000 jobs. The additional 5.5

miles of bridging on Tamiami Trail and the authorization of various Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects will offer additional opportunities for future job creation. Congress and the state legislature must continue to fund Everglades restoration to demonstrate their commitment to real environmental and economic progress. There no longer has to be a choice between saving the environment and promoting business interests.

- ***A top restoration priority is the acquisition and conservation of land needed to connect wildlife habitat, and provide water storage and treatment.*** Connecting wildlife habitat and natural lands remain viable options to advance restoration through acquisition and conservation easements. The River of Grass planning process must proceed while looking for opportunities for additional land acquisition in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). A strong statewide growth management program must ensure that development does not compromise future Everglades restoration options.
- ***Timely implementation of protective water quality standards is essential to achieve full Everglades restoration.*** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Florida Department of Environmental Protection must begin to implement numeric nutrient water quality standards for Florida's lakes, flowing waters, springs, estuaries and coastal waters to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act. Agricultural and stormwater best management practices must be strengthened both in the EAA and as part of the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan. Stormwater Treatment Areas must also be expanded to bring us closer to meeting current water quality standards for the Everglades.

According to Everglades Coalition board member Richard Grosso and 1000 Friends of Florida Executive Director Charles Pattison, effective state, regional and local growth management is crucial to protecting the Greater Everglades Ecosystem while allowing compatible land uses.

"We look forward to progress in critical Everglades projects promoting cleaner waters and hydrological connectivity and key conservation land linkages to benefit the Florida Panther and other fish and wildlife", said Manley Fuller, Executive Director of the Florida Wildlife Federation. "Everglades restoration benefits people through enhancing Florida's resource-based economy and providing places to enjoy nature."

"The Greater Everglades is one of the most fascinating, biologically diverse areas of the world. Several large-scale planning initiatives are underway that, in concert with Everglades restoration plans, have the potential to preserve a network of public and private conservation lands that benefit not only wildlife, but people as well," said Laurie Macdonald, Florida Director for Defenders of Wildlife. "Yet the region - as well as many endangered species who call it home - continues to face grave threats. Just this week, the National Endangered Species Coalition identified the Everglades in its study, *Top 10 Places to Save for Endangered Species in a Warming World.*"

"Increased stress from climate change adds urgency to Everglades restoration," said Malia Hale, Director of National Restoration and Water Resources Campaigns for the National Wildlife Federation. "To sustain the impacts of climate change - rising sea levels, increased storm intensity, saltwater inundation, to name just a few - we must restore the ecosystem's natural resiliency."

Joining the Coalition for this year's 26th annual conference are Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Executive Director John Hankinson, Region IV EPA Administrator Gwen Keyes Fleming and former Senator Bob Graham.

The Everglades Coalition Conference is the largest annual forum for Everglades conservation and restoration, bringing together the Coalition's 53 allied organizations with local, state and federal partners. For additional information, please visit: www.evergladescoalition.org/conference.htm.