

The Everglades Coalition

ESSENTIALS FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION

Congress approved the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) six years ago, however, key elements of the plan have not been implemented. Wildlife habitat and the spatial extent of the Everglades continue to disappear as development, invasive species, and poor water management decisions further threaten the sustainability of the remaining ecosystem. The Everglades Coalition has identified nine restoration essentials and benchmarks that must be achieved if CERP is going to deliver benefits as it originally promised.

1. Restore historic sheet flow in the southern Everglades and to Florida Bay

The Essential: Fill in the lower C-111 canal, construct a spreader canal along the highest feasible elevation, while restoring flow through Taylor Slough to Florida Bay, and secure long-term protection and restoration of wetlands necessary to carry this out.

2. Restore historic sheet flow in the Everglades

The Essential: The maximum removal of artificial barriers to flow and ecological connectivity within the Everglades should be initiated. Maximum sheet flow depends on the widest possible flow-way under the Tamiami Trail. Replace the existing grade-level Tamiami Trail with an elevated roadway that will not impede water flow. This should be financed as a transportation project.

3. Provide adequate water storage for the ecological needs of Everglades National Park and the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs)

The Essential: Secure a volume of approximately 1.6 million acre-feet of dedicated storage in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) for adequate water supply to meet the ecological needs of Everglades National Park and the WCAs during droughts and dry seasons.

4. Provide for large wet year flows from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades

The Essential: Create the conveyance capacity to move at least 1.5 million acre-feet of water from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades. This will require about 45,000 additional acres of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) in the southern EAA.

5. Provide additional water storage to protect the estuaries and Lake Okeechobee

The Essential: Beyond the storage volume needed for Everglades National Park and the WCAs, there is a scientifically demonstrated need for at least 2.8 million acre-feet of *additional storage*, preferably as natural wetlands, to avoid harmful discharges to the estuaries.

6. Restore the Kissimmee River

The Essential: Restore and maintain historic flows of the Kissimmee River from its headwaters to Lake Okeechobee.

7. Improve and protect water quality

The Essential: Prevent water pollution from entering the greater Everglades ecosystem. Eliminate harmful discharges to the coastal estuaries.

8. Prevent development that undermines the greater Everglades ecosystem protection and restoration

The Essential: Ensure effective growth management and permitting decisions for agricultural land that is important to restoration, such as the EAA, prevent intensification of use or conversion of land to non-agricultural uses, and acquire adequate amounts of land to avoid expensive remediation by future generations.

9. Restore the federal-state partnership

These Everglades restoration essentials can only be achieved by renewal of a full working and funding partnership between the federal government and the State of Florida. Renewing and restoring that relationship should be one of the highest priorities of the new administration in Tallahassee.

2007 ACTION AGENDA

The Everglades Coalition has identified specific steps that must be taken in 2007 toward achieving these essential restoration elements.

- Authorize Indian River Lagoon, Picayune Strand and Site 1 CERP projects, and assure compliance with WRDA 2000 “assurances” requirements
- Increase Congressional funding for the Kissimmee and Modified Water Deliveries projects
- Identify and begin acquiring land in the EAA for dynamic water storage
- Evaluate a topographically aligned canal for the C-111 Spreader Canal Project
- Acquire land in the Southern Everglades to protect Florida and Biscayne Bays
- Coordinate the C-111 Spreader Canal Project with the Florida Department of Transportation regarding the 18-mile stretch construction and bridging
- Secure state funding for the Tamiami Trail Skyway
- Advance the CERP Decompartmentalization Project-planning process to bring the project back on track
- Secure at least 1.2 million acres in the Kissimmee Basin for dynamic water storage
- Fully fund and complete the Southwest Feasibility Study
- Clean the water entering Lake Okeechobee to the water quality standards of the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act of 2000 and begin reversing decades of neglect
- Authorize Broward County WPA CERP Project by Congressional Committee resolution, and assure compliance with WRDA 2000 “assurances” requirements
- Congressional passage of the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act
- Make water reservations and the corresponding operational changes to assure the Everglades is protected and restored
- Implement an aggressive land acquisition program to increase the spatial extent of natural areas and increase wildlife habitat connectivity
- Reduce or eliminate damaging discharges of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries by changing the regulation schedule, urban and agricultural Best Management Practices, and adequately sizing STAs
- The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District must undertake a CERP reevaluation report, a.k.a. CERP Update, and include reconsideration of Plan 6 as a viable part of restoring the Everglades ecosystem