



# Everglades Coalition

January 16, 2013

1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA

ARTHUR R. MARSHALL FOUNDATION  
AUDUBON OF FLORIDA  
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE  
EVERGLADES  
AUDUBON OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA  
CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER CITIZENS  
ASSOCIATION/ RIVERWATCH  
CLEAN WATER ACTION  
CLEAN WATER NETWORK  
COLLIER COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY  
CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST  
FLORIDA  
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE  
DING DARLING WILDLIFE SOCIETY  
EARTHJUSTICE  
ENVIRONMENT FLORIDA  
THE ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION  
EVERGLADES COORDINATING COUNCIL  
EVERGLADES FOUNDATION  
EVERGLADES LAW CENTER  
FLORIDA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE  
FLORIDA DEFENDERS OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
FLORIDA KEYS ENVIRONMENTAL FUND  
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
FLORIDA OCEANOGRAPHIC SOCIETY  
FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
FRIENDS OF THE ARTHUR R. MARSHALL  
LOXAHATCHEE WILDLIFE REFUGE  
FRIENDS OF THE EVERGLADES  
HENDRY GLADES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE FLORIDA  
DIVISION  
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE FLORIDA KEYS  
CHAPTER  
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE MANGROVE  
CHAPTER  
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA  
LAST STAND  
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF  
FLORIDA  
LOXAHATCHEE RIVER COALITION  
MARTIN COUNTY CONSERVATION  
ALLIANCE  
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION  
ASSOCIATION  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
ASSOCIATION  
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE  
COUNCIL  
THE OCEAN CONSERVANCY  
THE PEGASUS FOUNDATION  
REEF RELIEF  
SANIBEL-CAPTIVA CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION  
SAVE IT NOW, GLADES!  
SIERRA CLUB  
SIERRA CLUB BROWARD GROUP  
SIERRA CLUB CALUSA GROUP  
SIERRA CLUB CENTRAL FLORIDA  
GROUP  
SIERRA CLUB FLORIDA CHAPTER  
SIERRA CLUB LOXAHATCHEE GROUP  
SIERRA CLUB MIAMI GROUP  
THE SNOOK AND GAMEFISH  
FOUNDATION  
SOUTH FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT LEAGUE  
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

The Honorable «First\_Name» «Last\_Name»

United States House of Representatives

«Address»

«City», «State» «Zip»

Dear «Title» «Last\_Name»,

On behalf of the Everglades Coalition, congratulations on your election to the U.S. Congress. The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of 57 local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. As a member of Florida's Congressional delegation we hope you will make restoration and conservation of America's Everglades one of your top priorities.

Recognized as a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Importance, the Everglades is one of the world's most diverse and productive group of wetlands and a tremendous economic generator for Florida.

In 1948, the Central and South Florida project was authorized to drain the Everglades to provide flood control and re-route water supply for South Florida. Almost as soon as this project was completed, the impact on Everglades wildlife and the unintended consequences of over-draining the drinking water supply for 1 in 3 Floridians was realized. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was passed in 2000 as a modification to the Central and South Florida Project in order to reverse these damaging changes to the ecosystem. Implementation of CERP will benefit Florida's tourism-based economy and provide opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation. Over the course of restoration, an

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Ph: 954-961-1280 ♦ Fax: 954-985-5047 ♦ 450 N. Park Rd, #301, Hollywood FL 33021

estimated 442,000 direct and indirect jobs could be created with a more than 4 to 1 return on investment.<sup>1</sup> Over the past few years, significant steps have been achieved in CERP and other Everglades restoration projects, but there are critical challenges ahead to demonstrate success in the world's largest ecosystem restoration project. During the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Everglades Coalition urges the following:

**Authorize additional Everglades restoration projects through a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) or other vehicles for authorization.** CERP was originally designed to be executed with bi-annual WRDA passage. However since 2000, WRDA has passed only one time, in 2007, and all projects that were authorized then are currently under construction. New projects *must* be authorized to continue progress in Everglades restoration.<sup>2</sup>

During the past year, the Central Everglades Planning Project was initiated to reform delays in planning new CERP projects, using the Central Everglades region as a pilot study. For some time, input from stakeholders, members of Congress and other decision-makers was that planning was taking too long, the process was not inclusive enough and that pieces of CERP were being planned in a vacuum. In response, this pilot is working to better include stakeholder input, plan multiple pieces of projects together and importantly, to shrink the average planning timeline from 5-6 years to 18 months. This reform makes regular passage of a WRDA even more important. If we reform the planning efforts on the front end and these more efficiently developed plans grow stale and circumstances change while awaiting WRDA passage, updates will be needed that could counteract the benefits of this long awaited reform.

**Provide adequate funding for Everglades restoration:** The primary funding sources for restoration projects are Energy and Water Appropriations to fund CERP's federal sponsor, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Interior and Environment Appropriations to fund Everglades National Park. The agency budget requests for appropriations targeted for the Everglades should be fulfilled so that restoration projects that are underway can be completed and new projects can get underway.

Constructing projects is of utmost importance to improve the health of the ecosystem while providing for job creation. The Everglades Coalition views as a priority, constructing CERP projects that put water in the right place at the right time and non-CERP projects, like the Tamiami Trail, that restores sheetflow into Everglades National Park. For example, we urge support for National Park Service funding to construct the additional 5.5 miles of bridging on Tamiami Trail, because this project will restore critical endangered species and fisheries habitat while creating more than 3,500 jobs in South Florida.

**Support efforts that conserve land in the Everglades:** The Everglades is now less than half of its historic size and Federal lands will benefit substantially from restoration because of the numerous National Park units,

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<sup>1</sup> Mather Economics, "Measuring the Economic Benefits of America's Everglades Restoration." 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences has noted, "Without passage of a new WRDA (or some other mechanism) to authorize these additional restoration projects, the federal government will be unable to maintain progress on several state-expedited projects now under way... The uncertain and sporadic occurrence of WRDA legislation has the potential to

<sup>2</sup> The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences has noted, "Without passage of a new WRDA (or some other mechanism) to authorize these additional restoration projects, the federal government will be unable to maintain progress on several state-expedited projects now under way... The uncertain and sporadic occurrence of WRDA legislation has the potential to severely impede CERP progress..." Progress Towards Restoring the Everglades: The Fourth Biennial Review, 2012, pp. 41-45.

Refuges and Sanctuaries within the Everglades.<sup>3</sup>

Conserving land is an important element to ensuring restoration success. Tools such as the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund should be given adequate resources. Other efforts to expand or connect Everglades habitat, such as through the Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative, should be supported.

We look forward to working with you during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to continue our work to restore America's Everglades. If you or any member of your staff would like to visit the Everglades, please free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Dawn Shirreffs  
National Co-Chair  
954-961-1280 x 205  
[dshirreffs@npca.org](mailto:dshirreffs@npca.org)

Jennifer Hecker  
State Co-Chair  
239-262-0304 x 250  
[jenniferh@conservancy.org](mailto:jenniferh@conservancy.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Federal land holdings within or near the Greater Everglades Ecosystem include Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge.