



Everglades Coalition

2018 Florida Legislative Priorities

The Everglades is widely recognized as one of the world's most unique and spectacular natural wonders. Florida has a compelling interest in protecting and restoring the ecosystem due to its tremendous economic and ecologic value. The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of 62 local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem, from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes into Lake Okeechobee, through the "River of Grass," out to Florida Bay and the Florida Keys.

Everglades and the Economy: Florida's Most Valuable Resource

- Nearly eight million people –one-third of Florida's population– depend on the Everglades for their daily water supply.
- Tens of thousands of jobs are supported by a healthy Everglades in Florida's multi-billion dollar tourism, boating, real estate, recreational and commercial fishing industries in our coastal and southern communities:
 - 1.2 million Florida jobs alone depend on tourism, as reported by Visit Florida.
 - 114,898 jobs supported by the recreational saltwater fishing industry, which contributed more than \$7.9 billion to the state's economy in 2014.¹
 - 14,000 jobs supported by Florida's freshwater fisheries in 2014, contributing an additional \$1.7 billion economic impact.¹
 - 92,858 jobs supported by the commercial seafood industry in 2014. Florida is second in the nation when it comes to highest sales, income and value-added impacts with \$18.3 billion in sales impacts.¹
 - More than 63 million pounds of commercial seafood is harvested from Florida Bay and the coastal estuaries every year, which provide a steady income and food supply for our state.

In 2018 the Everglades Coalition urges the Florida Legislature to:

Provide Adequate Everglades Restoration Funding: The Everglades Coalition urges the Florida legislature to reaffirm the state's commitment to protecting our Everglades and estuary communities by supporting the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's legislative budget request of \$305.8 million to advance the planning, construction, and operation of Everglades restoration projects and programs, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the State's Restoration Strategies project for water quality. This would be a historic level of funding for Everglades restoration, and it builds on the commitment established by the Legacy Florida Act of 2016.

Improve Freshwater Flows to the Northern Estuaries and Southern Everglades through Implementation of Senate Bill 10: Last year communities affected by the mismanagement of water in the greater Everglades ecosystem came together seeking to reduce the harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee that coated beaches with toxic algae and increase the amount of freshwater flowing to the Everglades and Florida Bay. The Legislature approved Senate Bill 10 (SB 10) to get the EAA reservoir project underway and get the water flowing in the right direction for the Northern Estuaries, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The Legislature's oversight of the implementation of SB 10 is critical to ensuring the project will achieve the ecological benefits envisioned in CERP and finally get the water right in the greater Everglades ecosystem.

¹ NOAA's Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2014, at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

1000 Friends of Florida
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Society of the Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Bullsguar Alliance
Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association/
Riverwatch
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund
Florida Defenders of the Environment
Florida Keys Environmental Fund
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Oceanographic Society
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Everglades
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society
International Dark-Sky Association,
FL Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League Florida Division
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
Loxahatchee River Coalition
Martin County Conservation Alliance
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition
Miami Waterkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Outward Bound School
Ocean Research & Conservation Association
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Save It Now, Glades!
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
Sierra Club Broward Group
Sierra Club Calusa Group
Sierra Club Central Florida Group
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group
Sierra Club Miami Group
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
The Urban Environment League of
Greater Miami
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Tropical Audubon Society

Increase Florida Forever Funding: Senator Bradley's SB 370 and its companion House Bill 1353 by Representative Beshears, proposes to allocate \$100 million annually from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to the Florida Forever land conservation program. The Everglades Coalition supports full funding of this crucial and successful state program to advance the conservation of Florida's iconic places.

Protect Florida's Investment in Everglades Restoration through Responsible Energy Production: As we continue to grow, responsible and renewable energy production will help reduce pressure on our natural resources and support the restoration of our Everglades. Minimization of freshwater waste, saltwater intrusion and flooding through expanded use of renewable and water-smart energy sources is the responsible way to plan for a growing population. Oil exploration and drilling projects should not undermine Everglades restoration efforts. Updated oil laws are needed to address all forms of unconventional oil well stimulation, while safeguarding the home rule authorities of local governments. (SB 462 and HB 237)

Thank you for helping us protect our Everglades, estuaries, and water supply.



Co-Chair
Mark Perry



Co-Chair
Michael Baldwin

The Everglades: A Brief History

America's Everglades is a unique and vitally important ecosystem that extends from above the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes to the estuaries of Florida Bay and the coral reefs of the Keys. This vast natural wonder – once larger than New Jersey – has been severely impacted over recent decades by over-development, pollution, and manmade changes to the natural flow of water.

Historically, water flowed through the Everglades in a slow-moving "River of Grass" from Lake Okeechobee, south to the Everglades and out to sea, covering nearly 11,000 square miles. The water is purified along the way, prior to entering the sensitive coral reef ecosystem that is home to one of the most diverse, beloved and valuable habitats in the world and a vital water resource for our state.

In the early part of the 20th century, investments were made in projects to drain and "tame" the Everglades to accommodate agriculture and development. An extensive network of dikes and canals were cut through the Everglades to move water away from farms and new development. These changes altered the natural flow of water, and pollution that accompanied subsequent development compromised the quality and supply of water of the Southern Everglades.

Today, the Everglades ecosystem is on life support. More than 1.7 billion gallons of polluted fresh water is dumped into the northern estuaries each day, destroying sensitive seagrasses, reefs and fisheries resources. Fertilizer pollutants run from agricultural lands into the fragile ecosystem of the Everglades as well as Biscayne and Florida Bays. Red tides bloom on Florida's coasts, kill marine life, jeopardizing public health and our state's economy. Despite an annual rainfall of almost five feet, South Florida faces regular water shortages.

Progress and Promise: Everglades Restoration

In 2000, under the bipartisan leadership of Governor Jeb Bush and President Bill Clinton, Congress passed legislation calling for a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), a multi-billion dollar state-federal partnership to restore the flow of clean water into the Everglades, protect Florida's drinking water, and save its estuarine bays.

Everglades restoration has seen tangible progress in recent years including completion of the one-mile Tamiami Trail bridge, nearing completion of the 2.6-mile Tamiami Trail bridge, and initiated planning for a Combined Operations Plan for the southern Everglades restoration projects that will increase freshwater flows to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Meanwhile on the west coast, the Picayune Strand Project to restore 55,000 acres of natural wetlands is approaching the finish line. A restored Everglades means a resilient Florida, with stronger storms and a growing population posing even more pressure on an already fragile ecosystem, it is now more important than ever to maintain and build on this momentum of restoration.

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