



# Everglades Coalition

## 2014 Legislative Agenda

1000 Friends of Florida  
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation  
Audubon 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 Everglades is widely recognized as one of the world's most unique and spectacular natural wonders. The State of 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 57 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.

### The Everglades Coalition urges the state legislature to:

- **Provide Adequate Everglades Restoration Funding:** Reinforce our partnership with the federal government to fully fund and implement projects. To advance construction of critical projects, the legislature should appropriate at least \$100 million to Everglades Restoration.
- **Promote Florida's Economy through Responsible Growth, Transportation and Energy Planning:** Community and transportation planning should protect agricultural lands, coastlines, wildlife corridors, and eliminate sprawl to support the restoration of our Everglades. Minimize freshwater waste, saltwater intrusion and flooding through expanded use of renewable and water-smart energy sources.
- **Manage Water and Habitat Resources through Sustainable Policies:** Ensure that permitting requires more water conservation and provides adequate water for natural systems. Dedicate funds for environmental lands acquisition to protect and connect wetlands that recharge our drinking water supply and provide habitat for our wildlife.
- **Protect Water Quality as a Critical Economic Resource:** One in three Floridians depend on the Everglades for their drinking water; waterfront economies depend on good water quality. The State needs to increase its investment in its water quality infrastructure. Strong pollution standards and controls should stop pollution at its source and local control should never be preempted. Wildlife and public health impacts should be tracked and addressed.

Thank you for your leadership in protecting America's Everglades and Florida's water supply.

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# *Everglades Coalition*

## **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 entering the sensitive coral reef ecosystem that is home 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 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, killing marine life, jeopardizing public health and our 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), an \$11 billion state-federal partnership to restore the flow of clean water into the Everglades, protect Florida's drinking water, and save its estuarial bays. Everglades restoration has seen tangible progress over the last three years including initiated construction of the one-mile Tamiami Trail bridge that will restore water flow into the Everglades National Park and the backfilling of the Picayune Strand failed housing development to restore 55,000 acres of natural wetlands. However, as the ecosystem continues to decline, it is now more important than ever to maintain and build on this momentum of restoration.

## **Everglades and the Economy: Florida's Most Valuable Resource**

- Six 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.
- 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 2008, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that Florida's commercial fishing industry, which relies heavily on the Everglades and associated ecosystems, generated \$5.6 billion and created over 108,000 jobs.