



EVERGLADES COALITION

2024 Legislative Priorities

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of nearly 60 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 is widely recognized as one of the world’s most unique and spectacular natural wonders, and Florida has a compelling interest in protecting and restoring the ecosystem due to its tremendous economic and ecological value.

Everglades and the Economy: Florida’s Most Valuable Resource

- 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.
- 9 million people – more than one-third of Florida’s population – depend on the Everglades for their daily water supply.
- More than 1.7 million Florida jobs depend on tourism.¹
- 86,000 jobs are supported by the state’s commercial seafood industry and Florida is second in the nation when it comes to highest sales, income, and value-added impacts at \$19.6 billion.²
- In 2017, U.S. fisheries supported 1.74 million jobs and contributed \$244 billion in sales, with 40% of all recreational fishing trips taken in Florida.³
- South Florida’s national parks – Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Dry Tortugas National Park – supported over 5,500 jobs and generated \$431M in visitor spending to Florida’s economy in 2021.⁴
- Florida’s waterways have been impacted by recurrent harmful algal blooms and seagrass die-offs that have damaged local economies and businesses, harmed wildlife, and threatened human health and safety.
- The iconic West Indian Manatee has suffered catastrophic starvation fatalities linked to seagrass die-offs from impaired water quality, generating national media coverage of this environmental crisis and impacting Florida’s ecotourism economy.⁵

¹ <https://www.visitflorida.com/about-us/>

² NOAA’s Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2014, at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov

³ NOAA’s Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2014, at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov

⁴ https://www.nps.gov/nature/customcf/NPS_Data_Visualization/docs/NPS_2022_Visitor_Spending_Effects.pdf

⁵ <https://myfwc.com/media/25428/preliminary.pdf>

The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.

In 2024 the Everglades Coalition urges the Florida Legislature to:

Fully fund Everglades restoration:

- Support a budget of at least \$740M for Everglades restoration.

Strengthen protection for all Florida waters:

- Enact legislation to stop pollution at its source and reduce the likelihood of recurring toxic algal blooms.
- Implement the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force.
- Protect existing or future stricter-than-FDEP-Model urban fertilizer local ordinances
- Support enforcement mechanisms for agricultural best management practices (BMPs).
- Strictly regulate the use of biosolids.
- Support the implementation and enforcement of adopted Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).
- Prioritize land acquisition to protect wildlife corridors, increase ecosystem connectivity, store and clean water.
- Mandate that all regional water plans account for and prioritize water for the environment.
- Reject any attempt to preempt local authority on wetlands protections, while safeguarding existing state-level protections.

Reinstate strong statewide and regional land use planning to guide sustainable growth:

- Reinstate the necessary authority, funding, and resources for an independent state land planning agency to meaningfully oversee comprehensive land use planning.
- Restore the ability of Regional Planning Councils to evaluate and challenge developments exhibiting significant regional and intergovernmental impacts.
- Increase Florida Forever funding to levels compatible with priority land acquisition needs and fully allocate Amendment 1 (Article X, section 28) funds to land acquisition and land management.
- Restore Citizens' planning rights to protect our investment in Everglades restoration from sprawl and over-development.
- Safeguard the home rule authority of local governments.
- Establish additional land use planning protections for the Greater Everglades Ecosystem to limit sprawl, support smart growth, and to ensure restoration remains viable.

Protect investments in Everglades restoration from the impacts of climate change:

- Prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation to ensure the long-term resiliency of the infrastructure in the C&SF system upon which Everglades restoration relies.
- Prioritize actions that will promote water conservation and protect against saltwater intrusion.
- Invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts.
- Implement a statewide ban on all forms of unconventional oil well stimulation.
- Prioritize nature-based solutions in resiliency plans and funding efforts such as mangroves, oyster reefs and wetlands.

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