



Everglades Coalition

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 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
 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
 South Florida Audubon Society
 Tropical Audubon Society
 The Urban Environment League
 World Wildlife Fund

2012 Legislative Agenda

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 Everglades due to its tremendous ecological and economic value.

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of 54 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 Keys.

The Everglades Coalition urges the state legislature to:

- **Provide adequate funding:** Florida pays for 50% of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) through legislative appropriations and the South Florida Water Management District budget, but receives all of the economic and environmental benefits of restoration. The Florida Legislature should set the precedent and restore Jeb Bush era funding levels of \$100 million annually and prioritize SFWMD's annual spending to advance restoration projects and protect water for over 6 million Floridians.
- **Increase Awareness & State Commitment:** State leaders should recognize the importance of this one-of-a-kind ecosystem and world heritage site and recommit to restoration by designating the April 7th birthday of renowned Everglades activist Marjory Stoneman Douglas as Everglades Day in the Florida legislature.
- **Protect water resources:** Everglades provides 1 in 3 Floridians with drinking water. State leaders must advance restoration projects that provide the greatest water quality and quantity benefits. In addition, water pollution is a major and a widespread problem in the Everglades. Florida must prioritize water conservation, promote water quality standards that are safe for swimming and fishing, as well as ensure that Florida's most important resource is not considered a private commodity.

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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 coral reefs of the Keys and the estuaries of Florida Bay. This vast natural wonder – once twice the size of New Jersey – has been severely impacted over recent decades by over-development, pollution, and manmade changes to the natural flow of water.

Historically, water would flow through the Everglades in a slow-moving “River of Grass.” In the annual summer wet season, the broad southern rim of Lake Okeechobee - the second largest lake in the continental United States - would overflow a slow-moving sheet of water south the Everglades and out to sea. This shallow flow covered almost 11,000 square miles, and the process would purify the water so that only the most pristine flow would enter the sensitive ecosystem that is home to an abundance of plants, animals and marine life that have made America's Everglades one of the most diverse, beloved and valuable ecosystems 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 salt water estuaries each day, killing fish and reefs. Fertilizer pollutants run from agricultural lands into the fragile ecosystem of the Everglades and Biscayne and Florida Bays. Red tides bloom on Florida's coasts, killing marine life, jeopardizing public health and our economy. Despite 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.

Everglades and the Economy: Florida's Most Valuable Resource

- 1/3 of Florida's residents – 6 million people! – depend on the Everglades for their daily water supply.
- Florida's multi-billion dollar boating, tourism, real estate, recreational and commercial fishing industries all depend on a healthy Everglades ecosystem, supporting tens of thousands of jobs.
- 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.
- Florida's tourism economy depends on Everglades National Park, Ten Thousand Islands and the Keys to ensure that visitors continue to spend their travel annual dollars in our Sunshine State.
- In 2008, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that Florida's commercial fishing industry, which relies heavily on the Everglades, generated \$5.6 billion and created over 108,000 jobs.