



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.



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2013 Legislative Agenda

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 Everglades is widely recognized as one of the world's 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 funding for Everglades restoration, environmental lands, and water quality projects:** Florida pays for its 50% of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) through legislative appropriations and the South Florida Water Management District budget in exchange for tremendous economic and environment benefits. The Florida Legislature should restore funding levels adequate to implement Florida's recently approved Everglades water quality plan and advance construction of vital Everglades projects.
- **Promote responsible growth and transportation planning:** Invest in Florida's communities through infrastructure improvements, public transportation, and encourage much-needed, and cost-effective infill development. Planning for new corridors or communities should protect agricultural land, flow paths, wildlife corridors, eliminate sprawl and support the restoration of our Everglades.
- **Conserve and protect sufficient clean water as an essential public resource for natural systems and economic vitality:** One in three Floridians depend on the Everglades for their drinking water. Florida must advance restoration projects that improve water quality and quantity in the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Water conservation, water quality standards that are safe for swimming and fishing, and ensuring Florida's water remains a public resource, not a private commodity, are essential to our economic health.

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

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