

Get Involved: Everglades Restoration¹

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Efforts are underway to restore, preserve, and protect Florida's Everglades and the plants and animals that call it home. Many projects focus on restoring the quantity, quality, timing, distribution, and flow of water through the Everglades while providing for other related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection. This publication is for citizens interested in Everglades restoration. It describes a number of ways to get involved. According to individuals actively participating in Everglades restoration, the benefits of citizen involvement include:

- personal fulfillment;
- better public decisions that reflect scientific research, local knowledge and social values; and
- a more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable South Florida.

Visit Florida's Everglades

First, visit the Everglades and see for yourself why the world recognizes this unique natural area as an International Biosphere Reserve, a Wetland of International Importance, and a World Heritage Site.

If you are residing in or visiting south Florida, you don't have to travel far (Figures 1 and 2 and Table 1). This is a great way to begin building your personal relationship with the Everglades. After your visit, you will probably be interested in ongoing restoration efforts.

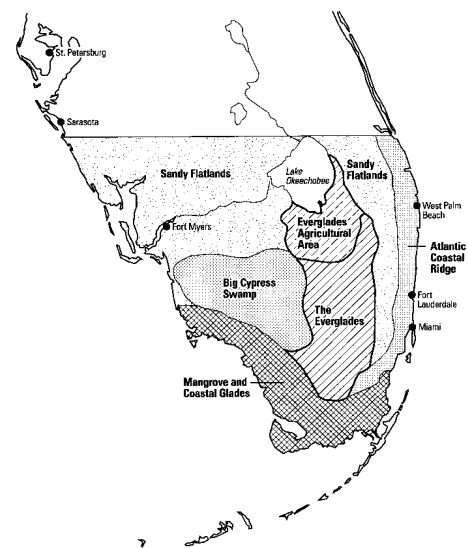


Figure 1. Credits: US Department of the Interior, 1994. The Impact of Federal Programs on Wetlands Volume II. Document PB 96-143110. Available on the web at: <http://www.doi.gov/oepc/wetlands2/>

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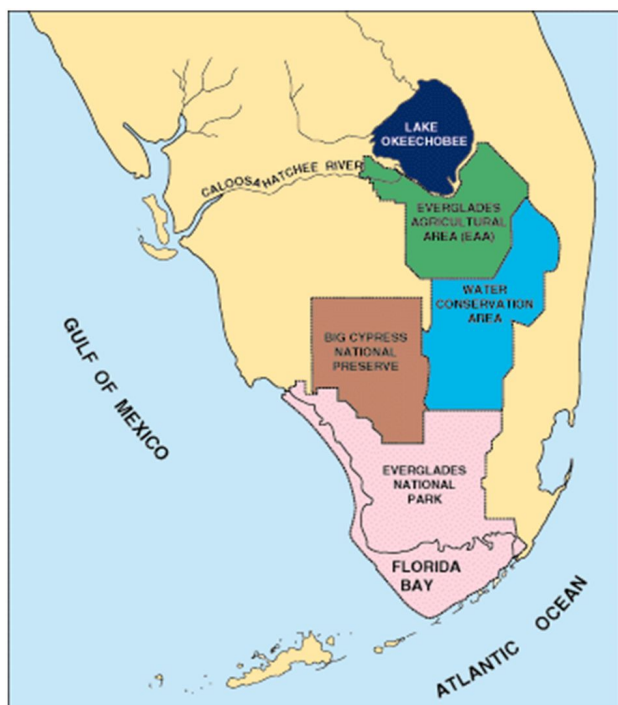


Figure 2. Credits: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey. South Florida Ecosystems: Changes Through Time. FS-171-95. Available on the Web at <http://sflwww.er.usgs.gov/publications/fs/171-95/print.html>

Learn About Florida's Unique Environment

Every day presents an opportunity to learn about Florida's unique environment, the wildlife that thrives here, and why it is important to conserve, manage, and protect our natural resources. Make a personal commitment to learn a little (or a lot!) about Florida's environment. Your local University of Florida County Extension office is a great place to start. You can find a list of Extension offices at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/map/index.html>, or visit the new UF/IFAS Extension Solutions for Your Life Web site at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>.

Be a Friend of the Everglades

As Marjory Stoneman Douglas, environmentalist, wrote, "To be a friend of the Everglades is not necessarily to spend time wandering around out there." One way you can be a friend to the Everglades is by becoming conscious of how your everyday decisions and actions affect the environment. These small decisions can have a significant impact on ecosystems. For example, did you know that the major goal of Everglades

restoration is "getting the water right"? To function as a healthy ecosystem, the Everglades requires clean water in various amounts at different times throughout the year. Your daily efforts to protect the quality of Florida waters and to conserve water in your home and landscape can directly impact the Everglades.

Share Your Knowledge

Share what you know about Florida's environment and the efforts to restore the Everglades with family members, friends, neighbors and others. Better yet, extend an invitation for them to join you on your journey to discover the Everglades! Don't forget to share your knowledge with a child. Today's youth have a large stake in what happens to the Everglades.

Volunteer Your Time and Talents

Volunteer your time and talents to Everglades restoration. The possibilities are endless. Volunteer for an hour, a day, a month, or for years! Consider volunteering for local events that raise awareness about the Everglades, leading a hike at a local nature center, or becoming involved in local government, where decisions directly influence restoration efforts.

"Adopt" a Restoration Project

The Everglades is a large, complex ecosystem and getting involved in efforts to restore it can seem overwhelming. While it's true that the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) includes over 50 individual restoration projects, consider selecting a project that is of interest to you and starting there. To learn more, visit the official Web site of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan at <http://www.evergladesplan.org>, or call the Citizen Information Line toll-free at 1-877-CERP-USA (1-877-237-7872) to request more information.

Raise Your Voice and Participate in Public Decisions

Raise your voice and participate in public decisions that impact the Everglades and Florida's environment. There are a number of formal ways for

you to participate, from casting your vote in local and national elections to reviewing and providing comment on restoration project implementation plans. It is important that all interested citizens and stakeholders participate in order to ensure that public decisions accurately reflect the values of citizens. To learn more about formal opportunities to participate, visit the official Web site of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan at <http://www.evergladesplan.org>, or call the Citizen Information Line toll-free at 1-877-CERP-USA (1-877-237-7872) to request more information.

Table 1. Visiting Florida's Everglades: Information for Residents of and Visitors to Southeast Florida

Name	Location and Contact Information	Description
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge	Boynton Beach, FL Phone: (561) 734-8303 http://loxahatchee.fws.gov	This 147,000-acre refuge is the last remaining portion of the northern Everglades.
The Everglades and Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area	Alligator Alley I-75 Rest Area at Mile Marker 36 Phone: (954) 746-1789 http://myfwc.com/recreation/everglades	This 670,000-acre area forms the northern and center core of the Everglades.
Everglades National Park	Homestead, FL There are several entrances to the park, but this is the main entrance and includes the Earnest F. Coe Visitor Center. Phone: (305) 242-7700 http://www.nps.gov/ever	This national park protects over 1.6 million acres of the southernmost portion of the Everglades and Florida Bay.

To learn more, visit http://www.evergladesplan.org/get_involved/visiting_everglades.aspx.