Restoration Progress Highlights

Legislative and Public Support for Restoration Remains Strong

In 1996, Congress called for a comprehensive approach to restoring the hydrology of south Florida. In 2000, the resulting Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was authorized, providing a blueprint for restoration that will be implemented over four decades. Each individual CERP project requires Congressional authorization. In 2007, the first three major projects were authorized (Indian River Lagoon South, Picayune Strand, and Site 1). In 2014, four more projects (C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project, C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project Phase 1, and Broward County Water Preserve Areas) were authorized.

In 2014, the citizens of Florida passed the Land Acquisition Trust Fund amendment to the Florida Constitution that requires the Legislature to appropriate funds annually for land conservation and improvement. A portion of these funds is intended to go toward Everglades restoration. In 2016, the Florida Legislature implemented this amendment in part with the Legacy Florida Act that provides Everglades restoration a dedicated funding source through 2026. The Legacy Florida Act will provide approximately $200 million each year for 10 years to restoration projects for the Everglades.

Restoring the Heart of the Everglades—Ready for authorization

The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) was completed and submitted to Congress for authorization in August 2015. The goals of CEPP are to improve the quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the northern Everglades, central Everglades, and Everglades National Park in order to restore habitats and ecological function. The CEPP combines six individual CERP water storage, conveyance, and decomplementation projects in the heart of the Everglades. As of September 30, 2016, both the U.S. House and Senate authorizing bills included CEPP.

Restoration Planning Continues

In 2016, expedited planning was undertaken for three additional CERP projects. Once planning is complete, the following projects will be submitted to Congress for authorization.

The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project will address the quantity and timing of water entering Lake Okeechobee from the major tributary systems north of the lake while improving regional water management flexibility and restoring wetland habitat.

The Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project will restore and sustain the overall quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of fresh water to the federally-designated “National Wild and Scenic” Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

The Western Everglades Restoration Project will improve the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water in the western Everglades.
America’s Everglades stretches from Orlando to the Florida Keys. Spanning over 18,000 square miles, it is twice the size of New Jersey. In addition to being a unique ecosystem, home to vibrant and diverse populations of plant and animal life, the Everglades also provides drinking water to more than 8 million people and is home to two Native American tribes.

The quality of life and regional economy of south Florida depend on the health and vitality of the Everglades. Historically, water flowed slowly from the Kissimmee River to Florida Bay across the ecosystem’s extremely flat landscape. This natural “River of Grass” was extensively altered in the 20th century by multiple drainage efforts that sought to control the flow of water to promote agricultural and urban development.

A healthy Everglades depends upon reversing the unintended consequences of these drainage efforts. To that end, federal, state, tribal, and local government partners are engaged in the world’s largest intergovernmental ecosystem restoration effort. The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by Congress in 1996 to provide long-term strategic coordination among agencies and governments engaged in Everglades restoration, and is required to report on restoration progress every two years. This overview summarizes the most recent progress report. The full Biennial Report (2014-2016) can be found at EvergladesRestoration.gov.

Progress Restoring America’s Everglades
2014-2016

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