



Everglades Coalition

2021 Florida Legislative Priorities

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of 61 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 ecologic 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:

- Nearly eight million people –about one-third of Florida’s population– depend on the Everglades for their daily water supply.
- 1.6 million Florida jobs depend on tourism.¹
- 114,898 jobs supported by the recreational saltwater fishing industry, and contributed \$8 billion to the state’s economy in 2014.²
- 14,000 jobs supported by Florida’s freshwater fisheries, contributed an additional \$1.7 billion economic impact in 2014.²
- 86,000 jobs supported by the commercial seafood industry in 2017. Florida is second in the nation when it comes to highest sales, income and value-added impacts with \$19.6 billion in sales impacts.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
- 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 Sanibel and Captiva Chamber of Commerce and Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce reported combined losses of \$87 million between July-December 2018.
 - 4.4 million pounds of dead marine life removed from Lee County beaches between June-September 2018.
 - In August 2018, algae discharged into the St. Lucie River from Lake Okeechobee tested positive for microcystins at a level of 495.06 parts per billion, which is nearly 50 times more toxic than the level considered safe for human contact.⁴

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

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, 2017, at www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov

⁴ <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2018/08/29/dep-highly-toxic-blue-green-algae-dam-leading-st-lucie-river/1131439002/>

1000 Friends of Florida
Angler Action Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon Western Everglades
Audubon Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Calusa Waterkeeper
Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife
Center for Biological Diversity
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Bay Forever
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund
Florida Defenders of the Environment
Florida Keys Environmental Fund
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Oceanographic Society
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Everglades
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society
International Dark-Sky Association,
FL Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League Florida Division
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter
Lake Worth Waterkeeper
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
Martin County Conservation Alliance
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition
Miami Waterkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Outward Bound School
Ocean Research & Conservation Association
Peace River Audubon Society
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
Sierra Club Broward Group
Sierra Club Calusa Group
Sierra Club Central Florida Group
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group
Sierra Club Miami Group
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Tropical Audubon Society

Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades

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In 2021 the Everglades Coalition urges the Florida Legislature to:

Fully fund Everglades restoration: The Florida legislature must reaffirm the state's commitment to protecting our Everglades and estuary communities by supporting a budget of at least \$322 million to advance the land acquisition, planning, construction, and operation of Everglades restoration projects and programs, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the State's Restoration Strategies project for water quality.

Strengthen protection for all waters – Everglades, estuaries, wetlands, springs, lakes, rivers, coastal waters and beaches: Building off Governor DeSantis' Executive Order 19-12, the Florida Legislature must engage in an overhaul of Florida's water policy to stop pollution at its source and reduce the likelihood of recurring toxic algal blooms that have plagued the Greater Everglades ecosystem, coastal communities, and Florida's wildlife. Legislative efforts must focus on implementing the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force; strictly regulating the use of biosolids; fully funding the implementation and enforcement of effective Basin Management Action Plans for all impaired waters; prioritizing land acquisition to protect wildlife corridors and increase ecosystem connectivity, as well as to store and clean water; and mandating that all regional water plans account for and prioritize water for the environment.

Reinstate strong statewide and regional land use planning to guide sustainable growth that is protective of Florida's remaining natural areas and resources, including the taxpayer investment in Everglades restoration and Florida Forever: The Florida legislature must reinstate the necessary authority, funding and resources for an independent state land planning agency to meaningfully oversee comprehensive land use planning. It must restore the ability of Regional Planning Councils to evaluate and challenge developments exhibiting significant regional and intergovernmental impacts. It must increase Florida Forever funding to levels compatible with priority land acquisition needs to help offset the development pressures on these parcels before they are lost or are too expensive to protect. It must restore the ability for concerned citizens to challenge developments that are inconsistent with local comprehensive plans by repealing parts of 2019's HB 7103 that force them to pay the prevailing side's attorney fees.

Protect investments in Everglades restoration from the impacts of climate change through increased action in climate change mitigation, including expansion of renewable energy and energy and water efficiency; and by ensuring oil exploration and drilling projects do not undermine Everglades restoration efforts: The Florida legislature must update laws to ban all forms of unconventional oil well stimulation, while safeguarding the home rule authorities of local governments. These actions will help reduce pressure on our natural resources and support the restoration of our Everglades. Minimization of freshwater waste, saltwater intrusion, and flooding through expanded use of renewable and water-smart energy sources is the responsible way to plan for a growing population.

Thank you for helping us protect our Everglades, estuaries, and water supply.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo
Co-Chairs

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

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