

Essential #7

Restore Florida Bay and improve Biscayne Bay by restoring sheetflow in the southern Glades

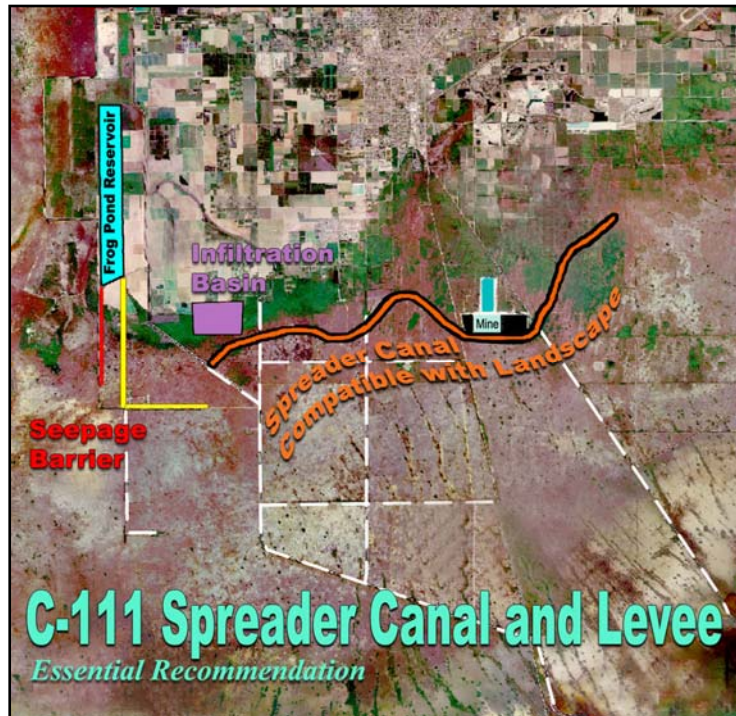
The Problem

Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay are among the most spectacular natural treasures anywhere on Earth. With almost all of Florida Bay within Everglades National Park and about half of Biscayne Bay within Biscayne National Park, they enjoy the highest level of national and international protection. Moreover, these bays contribute significantly to the local, tourism-based economies.

Still, Florida and Biscayne Bays have suffered tremendously from the changes to the water regimes wrought by the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project. In 1992, Florida Bay suffered a catastrophic algae bloom, killing thousands of acres of sea-grass. A similar bloom is occurring now. Biscayne Bay has also suffered a loss of its estuarine functions, and lack of freshwater has transformed it into a marine lagoon.

The Solution

If Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay are to be restored, the first step is to restore the upland and wetland systems they depend upon. The degree to which these wetlands can be recovered will determine the degree of restoration success. Therefore, the restoration focus should be the restoration of the wetlands that support both Florida and Biscayne Bay. This requires the following actions:



- **The construction of a C-111 North Spreader Project that restores the patterns of freshwater to Florida Bay.** This project should include a reservoir in the Frog Pond and seepage control near Everglades National Park; the removal of canals and levees that disrupt sheetflow; a spreader canal that follows the landscape (and does not simply repeat past mistakes with a new spreader canal); and, appropriate water quality treatment.

This project needs to restore the area where water enters Florida Bay, and the spreader canal needs to be designed to minimize the damage from the flood control

system's stormwater releases from developed areas. To support this step, an estimated 12,000 acres of wetlands currently in private ownership will need to be acquired or secured through conservation easements.

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The Solution continued...



as a county or state preserve. A comprehensive plan that showcases this area as the portal to the Everglades and Biscayne National Parks and the Florida Keys must be developed to ensure the area contributes to the recreational, economic, and educational opportunities while preserving the natural values of the region. For instance, a regional visitor center and recreational trails connecting the region to both national parks will provide recreation, education, and economic opportunities for these strategically located open lands.

- Build the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Project to address three primary goals--to restore the distribution of wet season flows; to reduce the timing of wet season flows into the dry season; and, to recover the wetland functions that contribute flows to the Bay.** The critical component that has been lost between the CERP formulation and the current planning process is water storage. BBCW needs to recover some of the storage provided by the coastal wetlands which have been lost to development. This is the only way to change the timing and distribution of flows into Biscayne Bay.

- Implement a comprehensive strategy to secure the long-term management, restoration, and protection of the coastal wetlands upon which Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay depend.** The focus of restoration of the twin jewels of Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay should be the restoration of the wetlands that support them. The wetlands between Biscayne and Florida Bays (the Southern Glades and Model Lands) should be protected

