



EVERGLADES *Action!*

Everglades Action! is our quarterly newsletter providing articles of interest to Foundation stakeholders about restoration developments, water management issues and other ecosystem activities associated with America's Everglades ~ **Fall 2009**

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Breakthrough in Florida Bay Recovery!

Restoration of America's Everglades took a decisive step forward following the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board approval of the first phase of a key project to save Florida Bay. The District's actions allow engineers to essentially deconstruct parts of the ecologically dreaded C-111 canal in southern Miami-Dade County, while at the same time maintaining the agricultural productivity of nearby land.

The C-111 canal runs between Homestead and Everglades National Park and currently carries fresh water directly into Card Sound. Along with America's race into space during the 1960s, this canal played a pivotal role in the development of moon rocket engines that were so big, they had to be barged. The canal was cut across South Miami-Dade County to benefit the Aerojet Corp., but ended up harming Florida Bay.

The problem, according to **Tom Van Lent**, Ph.D., Everglades Foundation senior scientist, is that a huge volume of fresh water is "dramatically channeled in the wrong place and the canal is the culprit."

Florida Bay is an extremely fragile estuary. The wild swings experienced in Florida Bay waters between hyper salinity at certain times of the year and an inordinate amount of fresh water during other time periods wreak havoc on the delicate organisms that inhabit the area. "If you don't fix the problems created by the C-111, you don't fix Florida Bay. It's that simple," said Van Lent. Florida Bay is a nursery for fish and other species that form a vital food chain. It provides habitat for juvenile fish that later inhabit the region's coral reefs and serve as prey for larger sport and commercial fish species that contribute significantly to the marine-based and tourism dependent economy of the Florida Keys.

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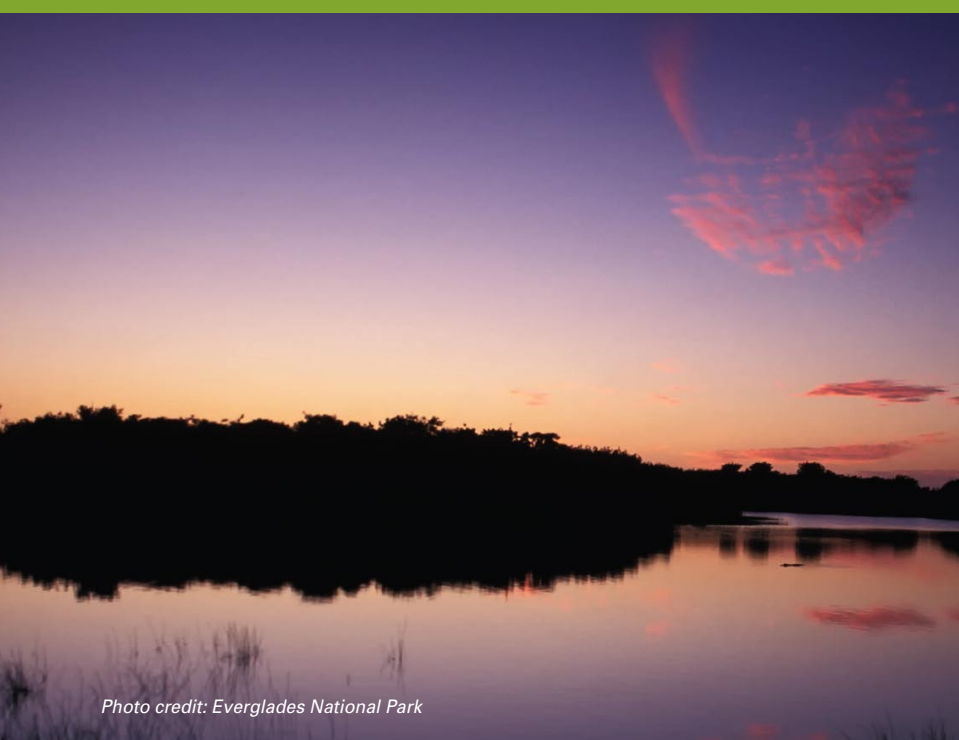


Photo credit: Everglades National Park



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In addition to blocking freshwater sheet flow from reaching eastern Florida Bay, the C-111 system was responsible for occasional widespread fish kills in Manatee Bay and Barnes Sound. Huge amounts of fresh water were released through gated culverts just east of U.S. 1 into the brackish system.

Restoring Florida Bay was a driving force behind the creation of the Everglades Foundation. The South Florida Water Management District will break ground and begin work on the C-111 spreader canal in the



Photo credit: Everglades National Park

months ahead. "The C-111 canal is sucking what little fresh water there is right out of the southern Everglades," said Van Lent.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built Florida's flood-control system on orders from Congress. Now, there is widespread scientific consensus that the flood-control network diverts and wastes fresh water badly needed to preserve the remaining Everglades and to restore a more natural ecosystem to Florida Bay. "The C-111 now acts as a super highway for water," said Van Lent. "It's like comparing rush-hour traffic on Interstate 95 to a meandering dirt country road."

"We need to keep water flows from swinging so wildly," Van Lent comments. "When work on the C-111 Canal is complete, the flow of freshwater into Florida Bay will be more evenly distributed across a wider area so that the impacts of huge volumes of water entering Florida Bay are minimized. The estuary will then be better able to adapt to seasonal fluctuations that sustain life within the ecosystem."

SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR IN THE EVERGLADES: Alligators are Hatching, Redfish are Schooling



Photo credit: Filemon Lopez

The seasonal changes of late summer and early fall have ushered in a special time of year in the Everglades. In early September, the chirping, grunting and snapping of baby alligators could be heard as they emerged from their shells to face the world, beginning one of nature's fascinating life cycles.

The saga of American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) in Florida is a widely heralded success story. The American alligator is the benefactor of one of the most highly effective wildlife management programs ever implemented. American alligators have been off the endangered species list since 1987 and populations are still growing.

The recreational harvest season for snook began in Florida in early September. Anglers may keep one snook between 28 and 33 inches total length daily in the Gulf of Mexico, Everglades National Park and Monroe County coastal and inland waters until the season closes in these areas on December 1.

In the coastal waters of the Atlantic Ocean and in inland waters, including Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River, anglers may take one snook between 28 and 32 inches long daily until the season closes in these areas on December 15.

Redfish have begun to school in many areas throughout the Everglades watershed, particularly in Southwest Florida. Why the redfish school each fall is purely speculative. The general consensus is that this is an imitation of the spawning ritual that these fish will perform offshore when they are much larger adults in the 20- to 50-pound range.

In the mood for beaks and feathers instead of scales and gills? Some of Florida's first snowbirds are beginning to return as sightings of the American bald eagle are becoming more prevalent. These birds are joining other eagles who are permanent residents of Florida.

It is estimated that about 50 percent of these snowbirds spend their summer on the Chesapeake Bay before coming home during the nesting season. Birds have been seen flying back to nesting sites from Duval to Collier counties. The official start of the nesting season is October 1.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission removed the bald eagle from the state's threatened species list in 2008 and implemented a bald eagle management plan with guidelines to help residents avoid causing a disturbance to nesting bald eagles.

People are advised to follow the management plan whenever activities or projects are being conducted within 660 feet of an eagle's nest when eagles are present. Bald eagles are protected from disturbance by the Florida Administrative Code, as well as two federal laws: the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

In Florida, bald eagles may begin gathering materials for nests in late September or early October. They begin laying eggs as early as October and as late as April, with incubation lasting approximately 35 days. Once hatched, the fledglings begin flying from the nest at 11 weeks, but stay with their parents an additional four to 11 weeks.



Photo credit: Everglades National Park

Restoring the Everglades: One of America's Best Ideas

By Richard Gibbs

For those who enjoyed seeing the **Ken Burns** documentary feature **"The National Parks: America's Best Idea,"** – the six-part series that aired on PBS television stations across the country on September 27 through October 2 and several re-airings later – it is my hope you are able to discern the recurring theme that is inherently integral to the storyline and plays out so well on film. That theme is about people and their love affair with land. Viewers were able to see and hear the stories about this relationship that led to the creation of two national parks in the Everglades ecosystem, Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park, respectively.

The stories of the people dedicated to Everglades restoration parallel the chronicles of those who fought to create national parks throughout the documentary. People from every conceivable background — rich and poor; famous and unknown; soldiers and scientists; natives and newcomers; idealists, artists and entrepreneurs – an improbable lot that answered a call straight out of central casting created conflict and drama that continues to be played out on the grandest of stages. These unknowing thespians stay true to a script that involves saving one of the planet's last great places and in turn showcase the true power of democracy – a great idea indeed.

I had the opportunity to meet Burns on his promotional tour and preview the documentary's segments on Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park earlier this year. There, gathered among hundreds of people, it was clear that everyone's passion and appreciation of the world's great places transcended all lines of political affiliation, ethnicity and social standing.

Several people addressed Burns following the preview and spoke at length about their personal connections with two of the National Park System's jewels featured in the film series – Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park. It is the treasured ecosystem of America's Everglades that supports these two emblematic American landmarks that our organization – the Everglades Foundation along with its supporters and stakeholders – are trying to protect and restore.

Burns makes it quite clear that our national parks system was a radical idea. What began as a provocative ideal with the goal of establishing "national parks" is now a cohesive parks system with a mission to make the parks accessible to all and to preserve them for future generations. I see clear parallels that can be drawn here between the creation of the National Park System and the efforts of the Everglades Foundation to advance Everglades restoration. Some would say that the acquisition of agricultural land for restoration to save a natural park and an ecosystem for future generations can also be categorized as radical. I say audacious, revolutionary thinking has yielded countless solutions to address the problems that ail our planet and that thinking is part of what makes America great.

The coming months will be critical in the Everglades restoration timeline. Major projects include a habitat reclamation effort in Southwest Florida, the bridging of the Tamiami Trail which would enhance water flow to Everglades National Park and a canal expansion project that would improve the health of Florida Bay. It is clear to see that the final chapter on the story of Everglades restoration is yet to be written. I hope that Burns has another opportunity to revisit Everglades National Park as restoration projects begin to show results. There will be plenty of footage and stories for another great documentary here as well.

"Passion and appreciation of the world's great places transcended all lines of political affiliation, ethnicity and social standing."



Photo credit: Everglades National Park

Jacksonville Welcomes Everglades Supporters to Art Opening and Benefit



On November 12th, Everglades Foundation board member **Joe Duke** and his wife **Jennifer Johnson Duke**, will host a special event to be held at the J. Johnson Gallery in Jacksonville to benefit Everglades Foundation restoration science programs.

The evening will feature a special preview of an exhibition by artist **Cecilia Paredes** (www.ceciliaparedes.com) an extraordinarily gifted Peruvian artist, now residing in Costa Rica and Philadelphia.

This event provides the Everglades Foundation a great opportunity to communicate the importance of the ecosystem to supporters in North Florida. "It doesn't matter where in the state you live; Floridians are strong supporters of the Everglades. This event gives us a chance to explain what is happening with Everglades restoration and gives folks an opportunity to help," said **Kirk Fordham**, Everglades Foundation CEO. To learn more about the event, please visit: www.jjohnsongallery.com or call (305) 251-0001, ext. 222.



The J. Johnson Gallery in Jacksonville

THINK OF YOUR BEQUEST TO THE EVERGLADES FOUNDATION AS AN INVESTMENT IN SAVING ONE OF THE WORLD'S LAST GREAT PLACES . . .

Please support our restoration science work by including a bequest in your will, or by naming the Everglades Foundation as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets.

We suggest the following language:

I bequeath \$ _____ (or _____ percent of my residuary estate) to: The Everglades Foundation, Inc., a 501 (C) 3 environmental organization dedicated to Everglades restoration, with its principal offices located in Palmetto Bay, Florida.

For more information, please contact:

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The Everglades Foundation is dedicated to ensuring a restored Everglades by creating relevant and creative solutions to complex restoration issues.

www.evergladesfoundation.org



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