



Everglades Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT Shannon Andrea, National Parks Conservation Association, 202.365.5912

RELEASE **EVERGLADES COALITION REVEALS 2008 ACTION ITEMS FOR
EVERGLADES RESTORATION**

Adequate funding and sensible management decisions needed to restore ecosystem health

Captiva Island, FL – At its 23rd Annual Conference, the Everglades Coalition today released its 2008 action items to help achieve the restoration of America's Everglades. The Coalition's priorities continue to build upon the Essentials for Everglades Restoration, originally released in 2007. The Essentials focus on reversing threats of development and poor management decisions, and improving conditions for wildlife habitat, spatial extent, and water quality of the greater Everglades ecosystem.

"Today, the Coalition looks toward 2008 to urge specific priorities that will help us achieve our Essentials for Everglades Restoration," said Mark Perry, Co-chair of the Everglades Coalition. "Within the context of fiscal challenges at the federal and state levels we believe our priorities will achieve positive steps towards Everglades Restoration."

The Everglades Coalition's 2008 Action Items include:

1. ***Provide adequate funding for the Fiscal Year 2009 budget to meet Everglades Restoration goals.*** Federal funding of \$370 million is needed to implement Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects (e.g. Picayune Strand and Indian River Lagoon-South), and non-CERP projects (e.g. Kissimmee River Restoration and Modified Water Deliveries). State funding must include money to implement Everglades restoration projects (e.g. Acceler8 and the Northern Everglades Plan) and acquire land in part through the successor program to Florida Forever.
2. ***Advance a suite of comprehensive projects that restore a greater volume of clean water flowing south through the Everglades.*** Our vision for the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) contingency plan should be in accordance with our Essentials for Everglades Restoration. This year, progress must be made in the Northern Everglades Plan, the Tamiami Trail Blue Shanty Proposal for Modified Water Deliveries, more restoration uses in the Everglades Agricultural Area, Decompartmentalization, and water quality treatment in all areas.
3. ***Complete the Southwest Florida Feasibility Study.*** Considering the development threats facing Southwest Florida, we must finalize this study to enable sensible decisions are made for the area's future ecological health, wildlife, wetland and upland habitat, water flows, quality, and quantity.

4. ***Begin providing relief to Florida Bay by addressing the algae blooms and designing the C-111 Spreader Canal project that restores clean freshwater flow to Florida Bay.*** We must restore how and where clean water enters Florida Bay. The spreader canal must be contoured to minimize damage from flood releases and maximize wetland restoration.
5. ***Government must respond aggressively to the soil and water pollution in the Everglades, as outlined in the EPA's Everglades Ecosystem Assessment (August 2007).*** Mercury, phosphorus, and sulfate contamination in Everglades water and soil, as well as soil loss, threaten the ecological integrity of the Everglades ecosystem.

The Coalition believes that ASR will not work at the level envisioned in CERP. The Everglades Essentials propose an alternative plan to store the water that ASR was intended to handle, by increasing natural wetland storage and water quality treatment. The Coalition recognizes that storage without consideration of flowing water south by removing artificial barriers within the Everglades and modifying Tamiami Trail will never accomplish restoration. Plans for storage, treatment, and sheetflow must be developed concurrently.

“The ASR contingency plan has been promised, but not delivered in seven years,” said Drew Martin, Co-chair of the Coalition. “More storage both north and south of Lake Okeechobee will be required to achieve Everglades restoration goals.”

“We support the Blue Shanty Canal plan for Tamiami Trail that would be a springboard for the Everglades Skyway,” said Jonathan Ullman, Sierra Club. “This plan will pave the way for advancing other projects that will increase the water flowing south.”

“We must maintain a comprehensive view of Everglades restoration,” said Sara Fain, National Parks Conservation Association. “Individual projects alone will not restore the Everglades.”

Earlier this year, Congress passed the first water bill since the CERP was originally authorized—the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. Furthermore, Governor Crist exhibited leadership as evidenced by his choices for state administrators and his open-door policy. This progress reaffirms the state-federal partnership and helps advance Everglades restoration goals.

“The Coalition recognizes the commitment from Congress to Everglades restoration,” said April Gromnicki, National Audubon Society. “Now we need the federal government to appropriate construction dollars to see actual progress made on restoration projects.”

Tonight Florida Governor Charlie Crist will address conference attendees at 6:30 p.m. in the Captiva Ballroom. Other keynote speakers include Senators Bill Nelson and Bob Graham, Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett, U.S. Representatives Tim Mahoney, Alcee Hastings, Ron Klein, Connie Mack, and Porter Goss, among others.

The Everglades Coalition annual conference is the largest annual forum for Everglades conservation and restoration, bringing together the Coalition's 47 allied organizations with local, state, and federal partners. Senators, Members of Congress, and political figures come to discuss their positions, pledge their support and offer challenges to the community. Conference session's focus on topics such as growth management, political and public partnerships, endangered and invasive species, wildlife habitat, energy policies, water quality and flow plans. For more information, visit: www.evergladescoalition.org.

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