

Marjory Stoneman Douglas talks about where the Everglades begins and its various tributaries and flows:

Interviewer: Do most people think of the Everglades as just that part perhaps south of Lake Okeechobee or perhaps just...?

MSD: In a way, you might say the true grassy glades are just south of Lake Okeechobee but it is only a part of the whole basin. I like to make it clear that it is the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades basin so they realize that the Everglades don't go all the way up to -- that is the grassy glades don't go all the way up to Orange County.

I: So where does the Basin truly begin?

MSD: Well the Basin begins just south of the end of Orange County. Actually Orange County has lots and lots of lakes leftover from the original runoff of the saltwater. The northern lakes flow into the Ocklawaha River. The eastern lakes of Orange County flow into the St. Johns so they are naturally in the St. John's Water Management District. Well, there were one or two small lakes at very the southern end of Orange County from which water could be said to flow down southward into the Everglades. But actually there's a little lake called Lake Clear where a little of the water may have started, but now the poor little lake is so filthy all full of inadequately treated sewage tin cans and stuff that. When I was in Tallahassee at one time when they were setting up these Water Management Districts I said, "you can have Lake Clear, we don't want it. You will have to clean it up yourselves if you want to get it into the St. John's system. But we don't want it at all". So we consider the Kissimmee valley - what we call the Lake Okeechobee-Everglades-Kissimmee begins south of Orange County. There are upper lakes of the Kissimmee and some of those lakes up there but their conditions are [a] different event. We don't have to worry our heads about them. They are in the St. John's Water Management District.

I: Are there any other tributaries into Lake Okeechobee?

MSD: Yes, there's one called Fisheating Creek. That's at the northwest corner of Lake Okeechobee, and actually I think Fisheating Creek is mainly in what we call the Southwest Florida Water Management District. There are a number of river systems in Southwest Florida, more even than just the ones that flow into Tampa Bay from the Green Swamp. There is a

watershed there somewhere, which I'm not familiar [with], which the Fisheating Creek flows eastward into Okeechobee from the northwest. And I actually can't tell you exactly where that limit of the South Florida Water Management District begins. I know it is north of the Caloosahatchee River but if it includes something of the Fisheating Basin, I'm not sure. I should really know about that but I don't. Fisheating Creek is lovely, it's almost untouched. And it might just be part of ours, I just don't know.

It is not regulated, thank goodness. Nobody has tried to run a canal up it. It's in a very primitive state. Perfectly lovely, lovely to go canoeing down. People can put their canoes in quite upward and go all the way down to the Lake. It's a perfectly beautiful canoe trip.

I: I've canoed a bit on Fisheating Creek but I've never been....

MSD: Oh have you? You didn't go as far Lake Okeechobee? Well you could, so I don't know what the source of the Fisheating Creek is.

Does it begin in the Green Swamp? I don't think it begins in the Green Swamp because of the river system that is north of the Caloosahatchee. Uh, let's see which is that? There's the Peace River in there, and what's the other river. Is it the Peace River at Bradenton? They come in -- there must be a divide -- a watershed -- between the sources of Fisheating and the Peace River and that other river whose name I can't think of at the moment.

I: You know, we always speak of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades Basin and I am assuming from that the Kissimmee is the primary or the major tributary of Okeechobee.

MSD: Oh yes, it is indeed because the Caloosahatchee flows out and the St. Lucie and the Loxahatchee Slough, when it's flowing, flows out. So the major -- oh you couldn't call it a tributary, it's almost a source. But it's a source of the extra water; it isn't a source of the fundamental water. You do get the distinction there? If there were no Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee would still be its normal height because of the rainfall. The extra water that comes in the Kissimmee it what crosses Lake Okeechobee and flows into the Everglades. So the Everglades is more dependent on the Kissimmee even than it is on Lake Okeechobee, curiously enough. The Okeechobee is like a holding basin, the surface of which flows out. People have not understood

that. But Garald Parker, who did the great study of the groundwater of southeastern Florida, brought that point out which needs to be emphasized.