

*Sharyn Richardson discusses the role of "Friends of the Everglades"*

Richardson: Our main role is protection of the Everglades, of the Everglades System, as a whole. That system includes a lot of different areas. It includes the Big Cypress. It includes the Fakahatchee Strand. It includes Everglades National Park. It includes all the Everglades that are not designated wilderness areas or whatever. I think our main objective is to make people, in general and specifics, specifically the bureaucracy, the people who make the laws, make them aware that that whole system is a part of us, that we're all connected, in some way. I mean, that's our water. That's how our water is; it originates in the Kissimmee chain of lakes, but it filters down through the entire Everglades System. All of South Florida depends on that water. Without water, what do you have? Not much. And so, we have to make people aware of the fact, we have to educate them, first of all, as to exactly what the Everglades System is, what it does, what it means to people, to wildlife, to everything. It's all connected: people, wildlife, water, cypress trees, malaleucas, everything. We're all intertwined in this life that we have down here in South Florida, and that's what we have to let people know. We have to make them realize that if we lose it, if we don't protect it, if we don't preserve it, and keep it functioning as a system, we're not going to be here. We're not going to be here, comfortably, like we are today. I think this is the thing, really, because I think once people know, they're not going to turn away in ignorance. They're going to want to do something.