

# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- [Guide to Collection](#)
- [Everglades Timeline](#)
- [Everglades Biographies](#)
- [Research Help](#)
- [Everglades Librarian](#)
- [Ordering Reproductions](#)
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- [Credits](#)
- [Home](#)

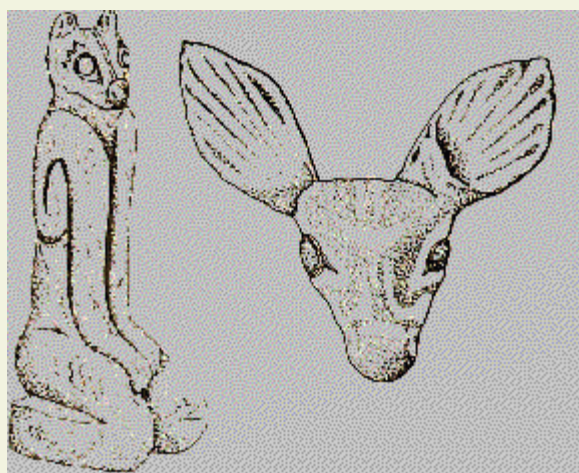
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Access the Original Collection at



## Everglades Timeline



[Timeline References](#)

Before 1492

[South Florida Before Columbus](#)

1900-1919

[Everglades Drainage in Earnest](#)

1500-1819

[European Discovery & Settlement in South Florida](#)

1920-1929

[South Florida Boom and Bust](#)

1821-1858

[Territorial Florida, Statehood, & the Seminole Wars](#)

1930-1947

[Depression, the New Deal, & the War Years in the Everglades](#)

1861-1865

1948-1982

	South Florida in the Civil War	Everglades at Mid-Century
	1865-1900 <a href="#"><u>Reconstruction Comes to the Everglades</u></a>	1983-present <a href="#"><u>The Everglades of Today</u></a>

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# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- [Guide to Collection](#)
- [Everglades Timeline](#)
- [Everglades Biographies](#)
- [Research Help](#)
- [Everglades Librarian](#)
- [Ordering Reproductions](#)
- [Copyright](#)
- [Credits](#)
- [Home](#)

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[Access the Original Collection at](#)



## Everglades Timeline

### South Florida before Columbus (Pre-1492)



Ten thousand years ago it was all under water. What emerged through the centuries gradually took on the characteristics of tidal marsh, mangrove swamp, fen, lake and finally scattered uplands with hardwood trees. The early life of the water, of the land and of the sky must have made the region an incredible semi-tropical Eden. The Everglades muckland -- the largest single body of highly productive organic soil in the world--was fashioned through the centuries by decayed animal and vegetable substance and fertilized by vast hordes and varieties of wildlife. The numerous "kitchen middens" left by the Pre-Columbian humans establish that--second only to what is now known as southern France--southern Florida was the most populated area on earth.

William Roy Shelton,  
*Land of the Everglades*, 1957

10000 BC

Human settlement began in south Florida with the end of glacial era conditions. The Paleo-Indian likely lived with mammoths, bison, and other types of megafauna in an arid environment. With the extinction of these animals, the Paleo-Indian adapted to the changing climate and emerging wetlands and began to establish patterns of subsistence (deer and rabbit hunting, as well as marine life gathering).

During the Post Glacial period, the sea level rose and

	<p>5000 BC to 700 BC</p>	<p>diminished Florida's land base, and the climate began to change. By 5000 years ago, cypress swamps and hardwood forests characteristic of subtropical terrain began to develop. The people of this period increasingly relied on shellfish and other coastal resources, as well as hunting, fishing, and plant gathering. Among the foods eaten were shell-fish and fish, game such as deer and bear, and plants such as seagrape and prickly pear.</p>
	<p>700 BC to AD 500</p>	<p>Sea levels had risen to a level that resulted in highly productive coastal environments, encouraging an increasing reliance on seafood and the exploitation of aquatic plants. South Florida became distinguished from the rest of the peninsula on the basis of this tropical maritime adaptation. The wide range of seafoods included whales, star fish, sharks, crabs, rays, crayfish, and even sailfish and marlin. Secondly, deer, raccoon, reptiles and birds were hunted to supplement the diet, wild plant foods were gathered seasonally, and tubers imported. The coontie plant was used by the Tequesta Indians as a source of ground flour, and was later used in making hardtack biscuits for sailors.</p>
	<p>AD 500 to ca. 1500</p>	<p>Indian cultures thrived across the southern end of the Florida peninsula. The Caloosahatchee culture was centered along the southwest coast, west of Lake Okeechobee, near what is now Port Charlotte and Fort Myers. To its east was the Belle Glade culture area around Lake Okeechobee. South of these two culture areas was a larger area roughly encompassing the Everglades, in which prevailed the Circum-Glades culture. This was the culture area of the Tequesta. Among the three tribes, the Calusa were the most powerful in south Florida, exercising limited political dominance over the other tribal leaders and exacting tribute from them.</p>



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South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

[Guide to Collection](#)  
[Everglades Timeline](#)  
[Everglades Biographies](#)  
[Research Help](#)  
[Everglades Librarian](#)  
[Ordering Reproductions](#)  
[Copyright](#)  
[Credits](#)  
[Home](#)

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## Everglades Timeline

### European Discovery & Settlement in South Florida (1500-1819)



The white man's first contact with this Eden was in 1513 and 1521 when the fierce Calusa twice drove off the Spanish caravels of Ponce de León. Had he succeeded in landing his 200 settlers, the lower Gulf Coast might now contain the oldest city in the United States, predating the founding of St. Augustine by over 40 years.

At first the Calusas enslaved shipwrecked Spanish, French and English, but the ships and guns of sovereign nations, of the pirates, the outlaws and the slave traders of the Florida keys, gradually diminished their numbers. By 1800 after Florida had been ceded to Great Britain then returned to Spain, the ancient Calusas had virtually disappeared.

William Roy Shelton,  
*Land of the Everglades*, 1957.

1500 The first Europeans arriving in Florida encountered a thriving population of at least five separate Indian tribes. South Florida was then home to approximately 20,000 Indians -- the Tequesta in southeast Florida, the Mayaimi near Lake Okeechobee, and the Calusa in the southwest.

1512 While searching for the legendary Fountain of Youth, Spanish adventurer Ponce de León discovered Florida and charted the Keys, which he named Los Martires (The Martyrs), for their

twisted shapes and dangerous coastlines known to cause many shipwrecks.

1513 When Ponce de León approached southwest Florida with three caravels, he and his ships were repelled by the hostile Calusa. The natives tore away the Spaniards' anchors and cables and attempted to board one of the vessels.

1521 Ponce de León again tried to colonize the southwest Florida coast. Accompanied by two-hundred people, fifty horses, and numerous beasts of burden, the Spaniard was repelled and mortally wounded by native Indians. The Spaniards pushed on to Havana.

1500's Spanish teenager Hernando D'Escalante Fontaneda was shipwrecked on the east coast of Florida and spent the next seventeen years as a captive of the Tequesta. His memoirs provided one of the earliest accounts of the south Florida natives.

1530-31 Explorer Hernando de DeSoto led an expedition to Caloosahatchee region of southwest Florida, in search of a route to the Mayaimi Lagoon (Lake Okeechobee).

1566 Spanish Admiral Pedro Menéndez de Avilés sailed to the southwest coast of Florida to make peace with the Calusa. He succeeded in saving several Spanish captives and eliciting an agreement from the Calusa chief to convert to Christianity. To strengthen Spanish influence in the region, Menéndez built numerous small forts along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of lower Florida. He also sent missionaries into the Calusa and Tequesta. Menéndez instructed the captain of the fort in Calusa country to look for a waterway to Lake Mayaimi by means of which communication might be established between the two coasts.

1567-67 Menéndez de Avilés established the first European mission on the Miami River's north bank in 1567. Concerned with coastline defense, Menéndez also built a watchtower at Biscayne Bay to sight endangered treasure ships and pirate vessels. Within a short time, hostile Indians and mosquitoes drove away the Spanish explorers.

Early 1700's Bands of Creek Indians from Georgia and Alabama began settling in Spanish Florida. They were joined by runaway slaves from the southern states. The Europeans named this combined group of people "Seminole", meaning "runaway".

Early 1800's Tequestas and Calusas began to feel the decimating effects of slave raids and European diseases. By 1800, the people of the Glades were reduced to a handful of survivors.



# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- Guide to Collection
- Everglades Timeline
- Everglades Biographies
- Research Help
- Everglades Librarian
- Ordering Reproductions
- Copyright
- Credits
- Home

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## Everglades Timeline

### Territorial Florida, Statehood, & the Seminole Indian Wars (1821-1858)



In 1821 Florida was transferred to the United States following the continuing siege of the United States Navy against the pirates, wreckers, and plunderers of the buccaneer coast. Two years later the word "Everglades" first appeared on maps, and in 1837 the name of a great inland lake became famous to the congressmen, generals and press of a new nation hot on the trail of the bands of Seminoles who were fleeing south into the Florida wilderness. On Christmas day of that year, Col. Zacharay Taylor, later President, met Seminole Chiefs Osceola and Billy Bowlegs in the bloody battle of Okeechobee. By 1858, 13 years after Florida had become a state, the few South Florida Seminoles who refused to go west were peacefully spearing fish in the deep interior.

William Roy Shelton,  
*Land of the Everglades*, 1957.

1817-1818 General Andrew Jackson and his army were sent to northern Florida to fight the Seminoles and seize the land from Spain.

1821 Spain sold Florida to the United States for five million dollars. Slave catchers from southern states swarmed into Florida to reclaim runaway slaves, snagging free blacks and Indians as

well.

When Florida became a Territory in 1821, its first Governor, Andrew Jackson, considered the 7,000 Seminoles in Florida a major handicap in the development of Florida. The ensuing conflict, known later as the First Seminole Indian War, forced the Indians to move further south to elude capture or death.

1823 Facing increasing pressure from white settlers to move farther down the Florida peninsula, several dozen Seminoles Chiefs signed the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, granting them 5 million acres between the Withlacoochee River and Lake Okeechobee.

Civil & Topographical Engineer Charles B. Vignoles, writing in his *Observations upon the Florida*, referred to south Florida's wetlands as the "Ever-glades".

1830 U. S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act; government officials began negotiating with the Seminoles to leave Florida.

1832 John James Audubon visited southern Florida to study and paint the region's unique birds. He was so pleased with his Florida expedition that he planned to return in 1837 to explore the west coast. The outbreak of the Second Seminole War in 1835 curtailed his plans.

In May, the Treaty of Payne's Landing set forth conditions for six Seminole inspectors to travel to Oklahoma to check proposed Seminole tribal grounds there. Under suspicious circumstances, the chiefs subsequently signed the Treaty of Fort Gibson (Oklahoma), agreeing to give up their Florida lands within three years and move west of the Mississippi River, to the country assigned to the Creeks.

1835 Fort Dallas was established as a military post near the mouth of the Miami River, on land destined later to become the city of Miami.

1835-1842 When the U.S. arrived in Florida to enforce Payne's Treaty, the Seminoles were ready for war. The ensuing conflict, known as the Second Seminole War, cost the U.S. more than \$20 million and more than 1500 soldiers and civilians. Hostilities eventually ended with negotiations that recognized hunting and farming grounds for the Seminoles. But no peace treaty was signed, no boundaries were defined for Seminole territory in Florida; and no provisions were made for an independent Seminole government.

1837 On December 25, Colonel Zachary Taylor led his cavalry into the Battle of Lake Okeechobee, one of the major engagements of the Second Seminole War. Approximately 800 federal troops defeated some 400 Seminole Indians, suffering many casualties.



- 1840 In December, Colonel Harney led a canoe expedition westward from the Miami River into the Everglades.
  
- 1845 On March 3, Florida was admitted into the Union as the 27th state.
  
- 1847-48 Engineer Buckingham Smith was hired to examine and survey the South Florida wilderness, reporting on its value and feasibility for reclamation. His report to the 30th Congress, advocating drainage of the Everglades, was published as Senate Document No. 242.
  
- 1850 U.S. Congress granted swamp lands to Florida for the purpose of drainage and reclamation.
  
- 1855 The Florida Legislature created the Trustees of Internal Improvement Fund (IIF) to manage the newly acquired lands gained under the Swamp Lands Act. The IIF was charged with drainage and reclamation, with power to sell lands and then apply the proceeds toward reclamation of these lands.
  
- 1855 The Third Seminole War began when a white survey party raided the plantation of Seminole Chief Billy Bowlegs. White bounty hunters were offered five hundred dollar rewards for Seminole braves, \$250 for women, and \$100 for children. Indians could receive the same rewards for giving up. The Seminoles rejected the financial rewards and pursued guerrilla warfare instead.
  
- 1856 The first detailed description of the Everglades was published by the U.S. Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis. "Memoir to Accompany a Military Map", or the "Davis Map" accurately depicted the extent, bedrock, soils vegetation and water levels in the Everglades.
  
- 1858 On May 8, federal authorities declared the Florida War closed. In exchange for modest cash payments, Seminole Chief Billy Bowlegs agreed to leave Florida with about 165 members of his tribe. Two organized bands and several families remained in south Florida.

Timeline prepared by [Gail Clement](#), University Librarian, Florida International University



# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- Guide to Collection
- Everglades Timeline
- Everglades Biographies
- Research Help
- Everglades Librarian
- Ordering Reproductions
- Copyright
- Credits
- Home

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## Everglades Timeline

### South Florida in the Civil War (1861-1865)



"...with the passage of the Confederate Conscription Act of 1862, the south Florida bush country soon became the refuge for draft evaders and Union sympathizers."

Taylor, Robert A., "Unforgotten Threat: Florida Seminoles in the Civil War", [Florida Historical Quarterly](#), v. 69 no.3 (1991:Jan), p. 303.

Portrait of confederate soldier who helped to protect Florida's cattle herds. Courtesy of [Florida Photographic Collection](#), State Library and Archives of Florida.

"While most of the larger engagements of Florida's Civil War took place in the northern half of the state, south Florida became the scene of widespread, if not large-scale, military activity during the conflict's last year and a half. Much of this action surrounded Florida's valuable cattle trade and the determination of each side to control the industry to its own benefit. Though occurring on a small scale, the events carried significant implications and repercussions."

Cole, James David, "Chapter Seven: Cattle Wars" in [Far From Fields of Glory : Military Operations in Florida During the Civil War, 1864-1865](#), PhD Dissertation, Florida State University, 2001.

On January 11, 1861, Florida signed a formal Ordinance of

1861 Secession and withdrew from the Union.

When the Civil War began, south Florida was the most remote area in the eastern United States, with approximately 7100 inhabitants. Settlers engaged in subsistence farming. Cattle ranching was becoming an increasingly profitable industry.

At the outset of the Civil War, Florida was a confederate state, but the Union had considerable force in Key West, a strategic location at the end of the Florida Keys. The Union navy's East Gulf Blockading Squadron operated out of Key West. Fortifications at Fort Taylor, Key West and Fort Jefferson, in the Dry Tortugas, remained in Union hands throughout the war.

1863 The Confederate states became increasingly reliant on Florida cattle and salt to feed their troops. This reliance intensified after the Battle of Vicksburg when the South lost its trans-Mississippi supply route. The Caloosahatchee region of southwest Florida supplied 25,000 herd of cattle to the southern army during the war.

1863-1865 In late 1883, Union Brigadier General Woodbury from Key West took up a position in Fort Myers, on the south Florida mainland, to raid the Confederate's cattle herds. The Union presence attracted Unionists in Florida, who formed a company-sized unit called the "Florida Rangers". This force, which expanded in 1864 to become the Second Florida Cavalry, mounted raids against Confederate positions along the Florida Gulf Coast and against the Confederate cattle operations. In response, the Confederates organized local citizens, herdsmen and cowmen into the 1st Battalion Florida Special Cavalry. The force was better known as the 'Cow Cavalry'.

1864 The first recorded combat of the south Florida 'Cattle Wars' occurred in January at Fort Thompson, an old Seminole War outpost on the Caloosahatchee River. A Union scouting party from Fort Myers tangled with a band of Confederates. Other skirmishes ensued in the region, escalating with the arrival of additional troops from both sides. But strained relations between white Unionist refugees and black soldiers from the newly-arrived Union forces weakened the north's effectiveness. The Confederate's position improved as a result.

1865 The southernmost skirmish of the Civil War took place in February, when the Cow Cavalry attacked Union-operated Fort Myers. The southern forces were repelled, with light casualties, but Union authorities decided to abandon the Fort soon thereafter.

1865 The Cow Cavalry surrendered on June 5, 1865 in Bay Port, Florida, formally ending the Civil War in South Florida.

Timeline prepared by Gail Clement, University Librarian, Florida International University

# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

[Guide to Collection](#)  
[Everglades Timeline](#)  
[Everglades Biographies](#)  
[Research Help](#)  
[Everglades Librarian](#)  
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[Credits](#)  
[Home](#)

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## Everglades Timeline

### Reconstruction Era Comes to the Everglades (1865-1900)



Page from Kissimmee Land Company's brochure "200,000 acres best land in Florida: Kissimmee City town lots for sale", 1884?.

"As early as 1769 the English writer, William Stork, called the soil of the lower part of Florida "as rich as dung itself," and later the American generals and soldiers who had lost their artillery in the fertile mucklands during the Seminole Wars, carried home the great dream of an agricultural empire in the south Florida interior. The dream caught fire. A railroad and tourist domain was established by Henry Plant down the West Coast and on a larger scale by Hamilton Disston and Henry Flagler on the lower Atlantic."

William Roy Shelton,  
*Land of the Everglades*, 1957.

- 1860's-1870's Following the Civil War, the railroad and canal companies faced financial ruin with the devaluation of confederate currency. Florida's [Internal Improvement Fund](#), which was obligated to bondholders of these companies, faced bankruptcy. The agency's funds were placed in the custody of a federally-appointed receiver. To raise cash to pay off creditors, Florida was forced to sell lands for significantly less than their value.
- 1870's Chokoloskee, on the western edge of the Everglades, was settled. The former home of the Calusa Indians became the primary trade center for homesteaders scattered across southwest Florida.
- 1871 Dr. J. B. Holder, writing for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, described his travels from Fort Dallas (Miami) to Fort Myers in a series of articles that ran from March to July, 1871. In "[Along the Florida Reef](#)", the author prosaically described the wonders of Florida's Everglades and mangrove coast, recalling the words of an earlier (unnamed writer):
- There is a great deal of truthfulness and poetry in the name that has been given to the beautiful openings which occur in the swampy scenery of the peninsula of Florida. Formed in a low, yet not absolutely level country, these magnificent examples of semi-tropical richness strike the beholder with surprise; and it seems a waste of nature's grandest exhibition to have these carnivals of splendid vegetation occurring in isolated places, where it is but seldom they are seen by the appreciative eye of cultivated and intellectual observers.
- 1880 The population of Dade County reached 257.
- 1881 Philadelphia millionaire Hamilton Disston negotiated with Florida Governor Bloxham and the [Internal Improvement Fund](#) to drain all of the lands overflowed by Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River in exchange for one-half the reclaimed land. Disston also purchased outright from the State four million acres of overflowed lands at 25 cents an acre. This transaction temporarily returned the IIF to solvency, and the agency resumed its practice of making generous land grants to the railroads.
- 1880's Missionary [James Willson](#) and his wife [Minnie Moore-Willson](#) settled in Kissimmee, Florida and took up the cause of the Seminole Indians.
- 1882 Hamilton Disston's companies, the Okeechobee Land Company and Atlantic and the Gulf Coast Canal Company, undertook the first attempt to drain the Everglades. They excavated 11 miles (17.7 km) of canal south of Lake Okeechobee in the direction of Miami. Additionally, Disston dredged a navigable waterway from Lake Okeechobee north to Kissimmee and west to the Gulf of Mexico, thereby opening the region to steamboat traffic.

1882 25-30 Seminole families were reported to be living in Pine Island, Broward County.

1883 The newspaper *New Orleans Times Democrat* sponsored an expedition from Lake Okeechobee to the Shark River, led by Major Archie P. Williams. The journey took 26 days. At the end of the trip, Williams discouraged his readers as to the agricultural possibilities of the Everglades, advising "drainage is utterly impracticable." Subsequent newspaper articles provided the most comprehensive account of a north-south journey through the pre-drainage Everglades.

1884 William Harney, writing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, proposed an elaborate system of canals and dikes to harness the flow of water out of Lake Okeechobee.

1885 Henry Morrison Flagler purchased his first Florida railroad, initiating the first rail service between St. Augustine and New York.

1886 *Field and Stream* editor George Grinnell formed the Audubon Society to counter the unrestricted slaughter of wild birds for recreation and profit.

Yachtbuilder, naturalist and photographer Ralph Munroe settled along Biscayne Bay in the growing suburb of Coconut Grove, Florida.

1887 Lee County was formed with an area encompassing 2 million acres in the Caloosahatchee watershed in southwest Florida.

The American Ornithologists' Union, a professional society dedicated to bird protection, was founded in New York City.

late 1880's The North American feather trade was in its heyday. Florida was the prime hunting ground for poachers, hired by the millinery hunters to provide plumes for ladies hats and gowns. In one year alone, 130,000 snowy egrets were slaughtered for their feathers.

1890's The Internal Improvement Fund remained under the control of railroad interests while Florida faced financial failures in the railroad, bank and other industries. Economic depression culminated in the general panic of 1893.

1891 The Women's National Indian Association proposed to establish a permanent home for the Seminoles in Florida, and bought four hundred acres toward that end. They also succeeded in getting the Florida Legislature to set aside 5000

acres for the Seminoles; however, the government failed to authorize any appropriations to secure the land.

1892 James E. Ingraham surveyed the Everglades for a possible railroad route for Henry B. Plant's railroad system.

1893 Frank and Ivy Stranahan arrived at Fort Lauderdale to operate a ferry at New River. He established a trading post to deal with the Indians living along the river and in the Everglades.

Settlers arrived in Flamingo, at the tip of peninsula; the Flamingo post office was established.

1894-95 Severe winter freezes destroyed crops as far south as Palm Beach, convincing railroad magnate Henry Flagler that the future of America's winter crops lay further down the peninsula. Encouraged by favorable dealings with Miami landowners, Flagler decided to extend his Florida East Coast Railroad to Biscayne Bay.

1896 Mismanagement, litigation and debts continued to mire the IIF. Facing financial ruin, drainage pioneer Hamilton Disston took his own life in Philadelphia. He had succeeded in draining about 50,000 acres in total. His agricultural experiments proved that land in the Kissimmee River valley were quite productive for sugarcane and rice.

1896 Florida East Coast Railway was completed from Palm Beach to Miami. The first train entered Miami on April 13, 1896.

On July 28, 1896, 344 registered voters, a sizable percentage of whom were black laborers, met to incorporate the city of Miami. They elected John B. Reilly as Mayor.

Professor and naturalist Charles B. Cory published *Hunting and Fishing in Florida*, detailing the life of the Seminole Indians, the wildlife resources of the state, and its unique water fowl. He was the first naturalist to recognize the Florida panther as a subspecies.

Henry Flagler, founder and president of the Florida East Coast Railroad, created the Model Land Company (MLC) in 1896 to manage his rapidly expanding real estate holdings in the state of Florida. James Ingraham was named president of the new company. Well-known Miami real estate agent and city council member Frederick S. Morse began serving as agent for the MLC lands.

Fifty Danish families were brought to south Florida to settle the rich muck and high lands around Modelo, and the town



was renamed Dania. A comparable number of Swedes were brought to the nearby colony of Hallandale.

1899 "Friends of the Florida Seminoles" was organized to secure for the Seminoles a permanent home in Florida.

The bimonthly magazine *Bird Lore* (eventually renamed *Audubon Magazine*) was launched by ornithologist Frank M. Chapman.

1900 U.S. Congress passed the Lacey Act, banning the interstate shipment of any wild animals or birds killed in violation of state laws. This gave the new bird protection movement its first effect weapon against the plume and market hunters.

Florida Audubon Society was founded with the rallying cry "Save the Wild Birds of Florida". Founding members and patrons included President Theodore Roosevelt, railroad magnate [Henry Flagler](#), future Florida Governor [William S. Jennings](#), and inventor Thomas A Edison.

Timeline prepared by [Gail Clement](#), University Librarian, Florida International University



# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- [Guide to Collection](#)
- [Everglades Timeline](#)
- [Everglades Biographies](#)
- [Research Help](#)
- [Everglades Librarian](#)
- [Ordering Reproductions](#)
- [Copyright](#)
- [Credits](#)
- [Home](#)

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## Everglades Timeline

### Everglades Drainage in Earnest (1900 - 1919)



"In 1908 inland drainage operations were begun; by 1928, the agricultural economic pattern of America's winter vegetable kingdom was fashioned in the Everglades. With plentiful crops, beef and dairy products assured, the state was set for the metropolitan and industrial expansion that characterizes south Florida today"

William Roy Shelton,  
*Land of the Everglades*, 1957.

1900 William Sherman Jennings was elected Governor of Florida on the promise to expand the role of state government help for the poor, to develop more schools, and to drain the Everglades as part of a land reform effort.

1901 Florida passed a bird protection act and Dade County passed a wildlife protection act, prohibiting the killing, capturing or shooting of deer, crocodile, and any wild bird.

1902 Warden Guy Bradley, deputized by Monroe County Sheriff's department, was hired to protect wading bird colonies in south Florida from plume hunters.

Congress authorized the Kissimmee River Navigation Project, creating a channel 3 feet deep by 30 feet wide and extending about 109 miles down the Kissimmee River. The project was completed in 1909.

1903 With pressure from Governor Jennings, the Federal government ceded to Florida the title for more than 20 million acres of public land earmarked in the 1850 Swamp Lands Act, including the Everglades.

1904 Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward was elected Governor on the promise to create an "Empire of the Everglades," by wringing the last drop of water out of that "pestilence-ridden swamp."

Chief drainage engineer Charles Elliott at the USDA's new Bureau of Irrigation and Drainage Investigations began assessing the feasibility of draining the Everglades. Engineer James O. Wright was assigned to write the report.

1905 On January 5, the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild birds and Animals was incorporated in the state of New York.

1905 Florida Legislature passed an act to establish the Board of Drainage Commission, soon replaced by the Everglades Drainage District. This entity had the power to build canals, establish drainage districts, and levy annual taxes on landowners within the district.

Poachers shot and killed Warden Guy Bradley in July.

Henry Flagler decided to extend his Florida East Coast Railway from Biscayne Bay in Miami to Key West.

1906 The growing Conservation Movement gained official support when Roosevelt summoned Congress, the Supreme Court and the nation's governors to a conservation conference. "The natural resources of our country are in danger of exhaustion if we permit the old wasteful methods of exploiting them longer to continue," he admonished. Roosevelt's powerful forestry chief, Gifford Pinchot, wrote "Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time."

Dredging began on the North New River Canal, the first in south Florida's system of drainage canals and in the Caloosahatchee River in southwestern Florida.

*Melaleuca* was first imported from Australia as an ornamental; it was later planted to help drain the wetlands.

Attorney Frank Stoneman (father of [Marjory Stoneman Douglas](#)) came to Miami and started the first morning newspaper, the News Record. An opponent of Everglades drainage, Stoneman published editorials that infuriated [Governor Broward](#).

1909 A preliminary (and flawed) draft of the USDA's report on the feasibility of draining the Everglades, prepared by James Wright, was released to the Internal Improvement Fund. The "Wright report" claimed that approximately 2 million acres of Everglades land could be reclaimed by digging eight canals from Lake Okeechobee southeast through the Everglades, at a cost of about one dollar per acre. Land sales boomed.

The Everglades Drainage District dynamited rapids on the Miami River.

1910 Disputes over the accuracy of the USDA's [Wright Report](#) ensnared Florida's legislature, eventually spurring the USDA to discontinue the report's publication.

U.S. Census recorded 49 people living in Flamingo and Cape Sable, at the southern most tip of the Florida peninsula, and 144 people living in the southwest communities of Everglades township and Chokoloskee Island. Most of these south Florida pioneers were farmers, engaged in growing sugar cane and other crops; many also fished and hunted. Two well known pioneers, Charles "Ted" Smallwood and George Storter, made their living as merchants.

1911 Pro-drainage Florida Senator [Duncan Fletcher](#) managed to get the original Wright report, with its erroneous engineering data, published and widely distributed to the general public.

Florida Fruit Lands Company, managed by real estate promoter

Richard "Dicky" Bolles, auctioned off tracts of undrained swamp land at Progresso (now Fort Lauderdale). Several thousand people bought land in "Tropical Paradise" as the sales literature called it. After seeing his inundated property, one disillusioned buyer carped, "I have bought land by the acre, I have bought land by the foot but, by God, I have never before bought land by the gallon."

Florida East Coast Canal (later, the Intracoastal Waterway) was completed from Jacksonville in North Florida to Biscayne Bay in Miami.

North New River Canal completed from Lake Okeechobee to the New River.

Florida East Coast Railway reached Key West, crossing 91 miles of road and 38 bridges.

Responding to mounting negative publicity from land scandals, real estate developer Vance W. Helm of the Everglades Land Sales Company commissioned his own investigation of the Everglades drainage problem. Three independent engineers hired by Helm determined that the state's drainage work was doomed to fail because water from Lake Okeechobee flowed into unfinished canals and overflowed surrounding lands.

Mounting criticism of the Wright report led its author to resign as Florida's chief drainage engineer in September. The ensuing crisis curtailed south Florida's land boom.

1913 The Florida Legislature enacted new drainage laws to revive the floundering reclamation effort. Among the new provisions was a law allowing landowners to create subdrainage districts of their own.

After 20,000 purchasers of swamp lands in south Florida demanded their money back, the Federal Government ordered their own survey of the area to determine what additional work would be required to complete drainage of the Everglades. The ensuing report, prepared by the Florida Everglades Engineering Commission, (headed by Isham Randolph), concluded that "the drainage of the Florida Everglades is entirely practicable". The "Randolph report" recommended several innovations to prevent flooding and provide for water control around Lake Okeechobee.

Federal Migratory Bird Law was enacted, protecting all game birds not permanently with the borders of a state. The law also made illegal the importation of wild bird plumes into the United States.

Railroad magnate Henry Flagler died following an accident in his Palm Beach home, Whitehall.

The U.S. government appointed a Special Commissioner to the Seminoles and opened the first Seminole Agency, in Miami. Directed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the agency was later moved to Fort Myers in 1917 on the premise that it would be closer to the Seminoles' villages.

1914-1918 The increasing demand for agricultural products during World War I fueled an increase in settlers to the Lake Okeechobee to take up truck farming. Lighter than usual rainfall during the growing season resulted in highly productive yields during these years.

1915 Royal Palm State Park on Paradise Key was created from 960 acres purchased by the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs and an equal amount of acreage donated by Mrs. [Henry Flagler](#). The state of Florida ceded an additional 2080 acres to the Park in 1921.

1917 Florida legislature created the Napoleon B. Broward Drainage District to oversee drainage and reclamation of half million acres in Broward County and northern Dade County. By this time, the Everglades was dissected by four canals running from the southeast end of Lake Okeechobee towards Boca Raton, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami.

1918 Forty three miles of the Tamiami Trail were completed westward from Dade County

1919 Dixie Highway was completed through Broward County, opening the lower southeast coast to automobile traffic from the northern states.

Timeline prepared by [Gail Clement](#), University Librarian, Florida International University



# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

[Guide to Collection](#)

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## Everglades Timeline

### South Florida Boom and Bust (1920-1929)



Postcard showing land prospectors in the Everglades. From a private collection, Miami, Florida.

"...where the United States Army and a hundred years of persuasion failed, a highway has succeeded. The Seminole Indians surrendered to the Tamiami Trail. From the Everglades the remnants of this race emerged, soon after the trail was built, to set up their palm-thatched villages along the road and to hoist tribal flags as a lure to passing motorists."

For the State of Florida, U.S. public relief program (1935-1943). Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State (The WPA Guide to Florida), p. 5, in Contemporary Scene," Oxford University Press (1939).

Partial drainage of the Everglades spurred dramatic growth in South Florida; newcomers were lured by cheap land, luxurious new railroad hotels, and favorable reports by northern newsmen touting the region's glamour and financial promise. The July 30 headline in the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* declared "Building Boom Started And Will Continue". Glamorous resorts and new cities sprung up across the southern end of the State: Miami Beach, Coral Gables, and Boca Raton on the east coast; Naples and Marco Island on the west.

1920's

The population of the Lake Okeechobee area was estimated to be around 2000 persons scattered in 16 settlements. To protect these settlements from flooding, the state's Everglades Drainage District constructed a small levee along the southern shore of the lake. The structure, composed largely of muck and



sand, rose 5-9 feet in height and extended some 47 miles long.

1921 Commercial agricultural activity around Lake Okeechobee flourished and the area's population grew to 2000. The first crops grown commercially included sugar cane, tomatoes, beans, peas, peppers and potatoes.

1921-1923 Wealthy entrepreneur Barron Collier amassed 1.2 million acres of land in southwest Florida, making him the largest landowner in the State.

1922 The *Miami Herald* was the heaviest newspaper in the nation due to its extensive land advertisement section.

1924 Rapid subsidence of the peat soils around Lake Okeechobee, caused by their drainage, drying, and oxidation, led to repeated flooding of the area's croplands. Consequently, many agricultural pioneers abandoned their south Florida farms and move away. The Internal Improvement Fund struggled to secure funding for the canals recommended in the Randolph Report of 1913.

1923 When the Tamiami Trail project encountered delays due to financial problems, Trail supporters took matters into their own hands. The "Tamiami Trail Blazers" led a caravan of Fords, tractors and wagons across the incomplete roadway to demonstrate its feasibility and desirability. The trip took ten laborious days.

Barron Collier committed his millions to complete the Tamiami Trail, in exchange for the creation of Collier County in southwestern Florida.

The new Director of the National Park Service, Stephen Mather, proposed that the Florida Everglades be considered for national park status. The idea was largely ignored.

1925 Minnie Moore Willson submitted to numerous newspapers a proposal to create a wildlife refuge and reservation for the Seminoles in the Florida Everglades.

1926 Refused a university by the Florida Legislature, Coral Gables' founder George Merrick established the largest private university in the south. The new University of Miami appointed Bowman Ashe as its first President.

Though only 75 million cubic yards of canals had been excavated in South Florida in accordance with the plans of the Randolph Report, state officials abandoned the scheme in favor of a newly devised master plan. Engineers deepened existing canals and constructed water control structures (locks and

dams) in the major canals.

A hurricane on September 16 hit Palm Beach County with winds in excess of 125 miles per hour. Stormwaters spilled over the dike, destroying 13,000 homes and farms and killing over 400 people. Marjory Stoneman Douglas reported mild damage to her home in Coconut Grove and received an insurance payment of \$250.

A Seminole Reservation opened in southern Broward County.

1928 Completion of the Tamiami Trail was celebrated with a 500-car motorcade that journeyed from Ft. Meyers to Miami. Florida's two tropical coasts were connected for the first time.

With increased access provided by the Tamiami Trail, collapse of the frontier Seminole economy threatened the Florida Indians with assimilation and extinction. Economic desperation drove the Seminoles to pursue nontraditional activities such as alligator wrestling in the many small tourist attractions that sprouted up.

A devastating hurricane struck Belle Glade with winds of 135 miles per hour. A wall of water from Lake Okeechobee drowned nearly 2000 people in one hour.

The Federal Government recognized the need for water control around Lake Okeechobee to ensure the region's agricultural future. New engineering plans featured the construction of Hoover Dike, a massive levee, around the lake's southern rim.

Landscape architect Ernest Coe formed the Tropical Everglades Park Association and prepared a proposal for a national park to be located within the Everglades of southern Florida.

1929 Due to the depression all drainage activity in South Florida was halted.

The Okeechobee Flood Control District was established.

Ernest Coe presented his plan to the federal government recommending the Everglades be placed in the National Park Service.

Botanist John K. Small published "From Eden to Sahara: Florida's Tragedy" chronicling the "fast and furious" destruction of the Everglades. Small's advice that "it is not too late to act" gave weight to the fledgling National Park movement.

# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

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[Everglades Timeline](#)  
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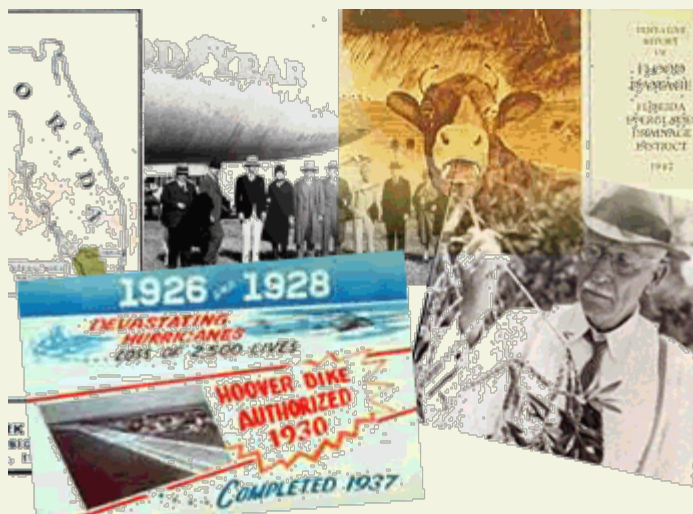
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## Everglades Timeline

### Depression, the New Deal, & the War Years in the Everglades



1929 President-elect Herbert Hoover toured the South Florida areas devastated by the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928. "As a humanitarian he had been saddened by the evidences of destruction and great loss of life. As an engineer, he had visualized the means to prevent a recurrence of such disasters -- and later, as president, he utilized his authority first, to accelerate the involved legislation..."to better protect south Florida's settlers from nature's wrath (Will, 1961).

1930 Congress passed the River and Harbor Act of 1930, authorizing the construction of 67.8 miles of levee along the south shore of Lake Okeechobee and 15.7 miles of levee along its northern shore. This was the first phase in the construction of the Hoover Dike, a seven-year public works project that boosted the region's economy during the peak years of the Depression.

In February, the Everglades National Park Committee visited south Florida, writing in their report to the Interior Department that the

tropic Everglades met the standards for a national park. Members from the Senate Public Lands Committee visited the Everglades in December.

The first State reservation, consisting of 99,200 acres of forbidding wilderness in the Ten Thousand Islands region of Florida, was established for the Seminole Indians.

1931 An extreme dry spell resulted in lowered water tables and the threat of serious seawater intrusion into the municipal wells of Miami and other coastal cities.

1934 The Everglades National Park Project was authorized by Congress on May 30. To make the Park a reality, the State of Florida was required to acquire over 2 million acres by through public and private donations. Several of the large landowners in the Everglades met to set a minimum price for their lands of \$5.00/acre.

US Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, reversing earlier policies and encouraging tribes to form their own governments

Big Cypress Reservation – 104,800 acres of swamp and marsh in south Florida -- was set aside for the Seminole Indians. More than half was taken back by the government in 1951 for a drainage project.

1935 Concerns from Seminoles living within the boundaries of the future national park went largely ignored by government officials and the National Park Committee, but newspapers reported on the problem.

A Labor Day Hurricane struck the Florida Keys at Matecumbe, killing 409 people and destroying the tracks of the Florida East Coast Railway. The history-making railroad was subsequently abandoned and its bed was used as the foundation for the Overseas Highway.

1937 A giant mastodon graveyard was dredged up in the Caloosahatchee River during dredging operations.

The Hoover Dike, flanking three quarters of Lake Okeechobee, was completed at a total cost exceeding \$23 million dollars. The top of the dike extended 18 to 22 feet above the normal lake level.

1939 Small Indian villages were established along the Tamiami Trail where motorists could stop to purchase craft items and color patchwork clothing.

1943-44 Severe drought, following decades of drainage, led to dramatic wildfires across the Everglades. The region's precious organic soils were consumed by the fires and lost forever.

1947 Marjory Stoneman Douglas published *The Everglades: River of Grass*

President Truman dedicated 1.3 million acres Everglades National Park, the first national park to be established because of its biologic wonders.

1948 Congress authorized a massive public works project called the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project to control the water flow in the Everglades. From 1949 to 1969, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District built and operated the project works.

# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- [Guide to Collection](#)
- [Everglades Timeline](#)
- [Everglades Biographies](#)
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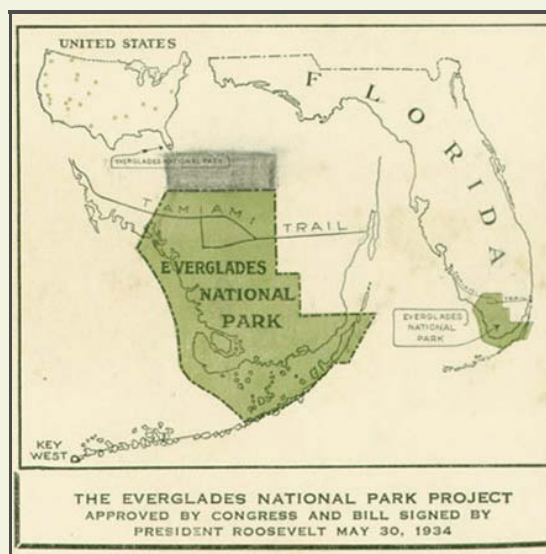
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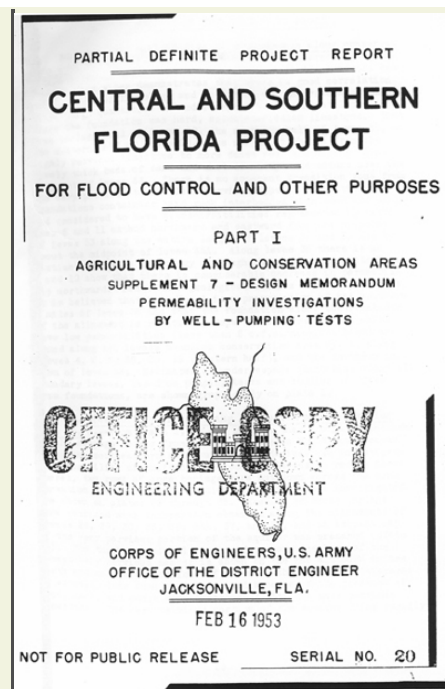
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## Everglades Timeline

### The Everglades at Mid-Century (1948-1980)





1948 Congress established the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project for Flood Control. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was placed in charge of constructing the massive water delivery system for South Florida.

1957 The Seminole Tribe of Florida was established in Hollywood, Florida.

1959 Engineered structures constructed by the C&SF Project cut off the northern Everglades, now known as the Everglades Agricultural Area, from the central and southern Everglades.

1960 On September 10, Hurricane Donna crossed Florida Bay and hit the southern coast with winds over 140 mph.

1903 Revolution in Cuba fueled growth of the sugar industry in the Everglades Agricultural Area.

1962 The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida was established.

The Army Corps of Engineers began channelizing the Kissimmee River in the interest of flood control. Some 48,000 acres of marshland were destroyed.

1963 A system of canals and levees were completed, dividing the central Everglades into three Water Conservation Areas. The Florida Freshwater Game and Fish Commission assumed

management of WCA 2 and WCA 3. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began leasing WCA 1, better known as the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, from the state.

1967 On March 11, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service placed the Florida panther, the snail kite, and the Cape Sable seaside sparrow on the federal endangered-species list.

1968 A defeated proposal to create a jetport in the Big Cypress, just west of Everglades National Park, galvanized the movement to preserve the unique swamp.

Congress designated Biscayne a national monument, citing its "rare combination of terrestrial, marine, and amphibious life in a tropical setting of great natural beauty."

1970 Marjory Stoneman Douglas founded the Friends of the Everglades.

Congress enacted the National Environmental Policy Act, establishing the Environmental Protection Agency.

1970-1971 A period of extreme drought heightened awareness of water supply and environmental problems in south Florida. The Governor's Conference on Water Management in South Florida concluded that water quality was deteriorating significantly and that water quantity was insufficient during the dry season

1971 With the opening of Disney World in Orlando, tourism surged in Florida.

Congress set the minimum water flow to Everglades National Park at 315,000 acre-feet per year following several years of extreme dry conditions.

The Army Corps of Engineers, as part of the Central and Southern Florida Project for Flood Control, completed the straightening of the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee's largest tributary. As a result, some 45,000 acres of floodplain became pasture.

1972 Florida Water Resources Act established fundamental water policy for Florida, attempting to meet human needs and sustain the natural systems.

The state of Florida began acquiring land to create Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, the largest, deepest strand in the Big Cypress Swamp, to protect its unusual collection of rare plants and animals.



- 1973 The Endangered Species Act authorized to conserve the ecosystems that host endangered or threatened species and to conserve endangered or threatened species themselves.
- 1974 Big Cypress National Preserve was established.
- 1975 The American crocodile, whose entire North American range is in and around Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay, was placed on the federal endangered-species list. At the time, the population was listed as 200 animals, with just 10 nesting females.
- 1976 The C&SF Flood Control District was renamed to the South Florida Water Management District. The renamed agency assumed new responsibilities and challenges in managing water resources across the greater Everglades ecosystem. The following year, five water districts were established across the State.
- On October 26, UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, recognized Everglades National Park and the Dry Tortugas as part of the international network of biosphere reserves.
- 1979 The decision to pump stormwater from the Everglades Agricultural Area into the Water Conservation Areas, instead of into Lake Okeechobee, resulted in the spread of phosphorus-loving cattails across the northern Everglades
- Everglades was designated as a World Heritage Site on October 24.
- 1980 Congress authorized new acquisitions of keys and reefs in Biscayne Bay, and changed the national monument's status to a national park.

Timeline prepared by [Gail Clement](#), University Librarian, Florida International University



# Reclaiming the Everglades

South Florida's Natural History, 1884 to 1934

- Guide to Collection
- Everglades Timeline
- Everglades Biographies
- Research Help
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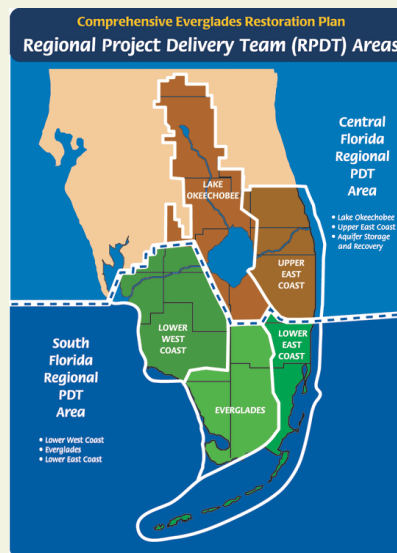
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## Everglades Timeline

### The Everglades Today (1983- )



1983

The Save Our Rivers program established by Florida Governor Bob Graham recognized that the entire ecosystem needed to be restored, not just parts of it; the State initiated the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.

Florida's Warren Henderson Act gave authority to the State

1984 Department of Environmental Regulation (now DEP) to protect wetlands and surface water of the state for public interest.

1987 The Everglades was designated a Wetland of International Importance on June 4.

The Florida legislature passed the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act, creating the first cleanup plan for the Everglades. The Florida Surface Water Improvement and Management Act (SWIM) required the five Florida water management districts to develop plans to clean up and preserve Florida lakes, bays, estuaries, and rivers.

1988 In August, the federal government filed a lawsuit against South Florida Management District for polluting the Everglades with excessive phosphorus.

Construction began on the Everglades Nutrient Removal (ENR) Project, the first manmade wetland to remove phosphorus.

1989 On December 13, President Bush signed into law the Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-229), authorizing the addition of 107,000 acres of the east Everglades to the park. The Act also directed the Corps "to construct modifications to the Central and Southern Florida Project to improve water deliveries into the park and shall, to the extent practicable, take steps to restore the natural hydrological conditions within the park."

1990 The sugarcane industry in the northern Everglades encompassed approximately 450,000 acres.

The Florida Preservation 2000 Act established a coordinated land acquisition program to protect the integrity of ecological systems and to provide multiple benefits, including the preservation of fish and wildlife habitat, recreation space, and water recharge areas.

1991 Florida's Everglades Protection Act provided water management districts with clear tools for ecosystem restoration.

The Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree, entered into by the federal government, the state of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District, established interim and long-term total phosphorus concentration limits for the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park.

1992 Settlement agreement (consent decree, 847 F. Supp 1567 (S.D. Fla 1992)) set out in detail the steps the State of Florida would take over the next ten years to restore and preserve water quality in the Everglades.

Hurricane Andrew blasted southern Dade County causing heavy damage to the Everglades region and to National Park Service structures.

The federal Water Resources Development Act authorized certain restoration activities, including the establishment of an interagency South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The latter was charged to coordinate federal restoration activities. The Act was expanded in 1996 to enable the Taskforce to include tribal state and local governments.

Congress authorized the 'Restudy' to review the Everglades water management system.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1992 & 1996 authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to review the current C&SF Flood Control Project and develop a comprehensive plan to restore and preserve south Florida's ecosystem, enhance water supply and maintain flood protection.

1994 The Florida Legislature passed the Everglades Forever Act, calling for the restoration and protection of the Everglades. Part of the law mandated construction of Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) to improve water quality in the Everglades. The sugar industry agreed to pay \$320 million over 20 years with taxpayers expected to pay the rest.

The Everglades Nutrient Removal Project began operation and was quickly considered a huge success, removing 112,000 pounds of phosphorus in its first three years of operation.

1995 The South Florida Water Management District purchased over 5,000 acres of the Frog Pond, east of Everglades National Park's main entrance, to restore a more natural flow of water to Taylor Slough.

1997 Construction of the first of six Stormwater Treatment Areas to clean up the Everglades is completed and construction begun on three others. Landowners in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) reduce the phosphorus amount leaving the basin by a long-term average of 51% due to improved practices called Best Management Practices (BMPs), also a component of the Everglades Forever Act.

1998 Marjory Stoneman Douglas died at the age of 108.

1999 The Everglades C&SF Restudy report finalized, recommending a 30+ year restoration plan and a multibillion dollar budget for the comprehensive restoration of south Florida's ecosystem.

2000 President Clinton authorized the Water Resource Development Act of 2000, committing a multibillion dollar budget to comprehensive Everglades restoration. Florida's Governor Jeb Bush signs the Everglades Investment Act, committing the state to 50% of Everglades restoration costs.

2001 On November 3, U. S. Congress passed Restoring the Everglades, an American Legacy (REAL) Act (S. 2797), authorizing and initiating funding for the \$7.8 billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Miami-Dade County decided not to fight to build an airport near the Everglades and Biscayne Bay national parks, thanks to aggressive protests by environmental groups and the public.

2002 On January 9, President George Bush and Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed an agreement providing for Everglades restoration at a cost of \$7.8 billion. The cost will be shared by the federal and state government.

Timeline prepared by [Gail Clement](#), University Librarian, Florida International University



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