



Everglades Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE JANUARY 9TH, 2009

CONTACT DAN MACKEY
(954) 401-6168

RELEASE THE EVERGLADES COALITION ANNOUNCES ITS 2009 ACTION AGENDA

Miami, FL – At its 24th Annual Conference, the Everglades Coalition celebrates the enormous changes of 2008 that will benefit the restoration of America’s Everglades. The 2008 Presidential and Congressional elections, coupled with the State of Florida’s decision to purchase U.S. Sugar’s land for restoration, establishes a number of new opportunities and challenges for 2009.

“Today, the Coalition looks forward through 2009 to urge specific priorities that will help us achieve the *Essentials for Everglades Restoration*,” said Mark Perry, State Co-chair of the Everglades Coalition. “Within the context of fiscal challenges at the federal and state levels, we believe the following priorities will substantially help restoration turn the corner.”

1. ***President Obama must provide the necessary leadership, funding, and accountability to help revitalize restoration.*** The President should appoint a Director of Everglades Restoration, based in the White House Council on Environmental Quality, to lead federal efforts to implement CERP and other aspects of Everglades restoration, and help restore the federal-state partnership.
2. ***Congress must include federally approved restoration projects in the 2009 Economic Stimulus package to help jumpstart federal funding for the Everglades.*** The federal government must reestablish its commitment to being a full partner in restoration of the Everglades. It should be noted that by initiating these authorized projects, Kissimmee River, C-111, Modified Water Deliveries, Picayune Strand, Indian River Lagoon, Site 1, STA-1 East/C-51, Critical Projects, C-43, and CERP design, it will create between 3021 – 3566 jobs in critical industries in south Florida.
3. ***The State of Florida must finalize the deal with U.S. Sugar and initiate an inclusive planning process for restoration projects on this land.*** Restoration projects on this land must be conducted expeditiously and transparently, with all stakeholders actively involved, with an overarching objective of restoration. In conjunction with this planning, the state of Florida and relevant private companies should assist in an economic transition for affected local communities, compatible with restoration.
4. ***The federal government must begin construction of Tamiami Trail modifications under the Modified Water Deliveries for Everglades National Park project, and immediately develop an integrated planning and implementation process for Decentralization, seepage management, in ways consistent with the future implementation of the Skyway as funding***

becomes available. The Department of Interior must engage USDOT and FDOT to develop the plan for Tamiami Trail to allow for more water flow into Everglades National Park.

“Everglades restoration is at a crossroads,” said Sara Fain, National Co-chair of the Everglades Coalition. “We have suffered from broken processes, funding shortfalls, and development pressures that continue to compete with restoration, all while the Everglades continues to decline. We need a renewed commitment from the Administration and Congress to get the largest restoration plan in the world back on track.”

A healthy, functioning Everglades will assist in offsetting sea-level rise and climate change impacts in South Florida. Accordingly, integrated water and energy planning is needed. We ask the Florida Legislature to consider our attached Climate Change Resolution and adopt a strong renewable portfolio standard (RPS) that targets 20% greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 which supports genuine renewable energy solutions.

A strong federal-state partnership, combined with new opportunities provided by land in the EAA and moving forward on bridging Tamiami Trail, will ensure that this nationally-significant resource is saved for all future generations. A recent report by the National Research Council (NRC), an independent body directed by Congress to review restoration progress, found that, “CERP is bogged down in budgeting, planning, and procedural matters and is making only scant progress toward achieving restoration goals.” Although some projects have begun construction, not one has been completed. Even worse, Congress has not given any funding for construction of CERP projects.

The Everglades Coalition annual conference is the largest annual forum for Everglades conservation and restoration, bringing together the Coalition’s 51 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, and water quality. For more information, visit: www.evergladescoalition.org.