



# EVERGLADES ACTION!

Everglades Action! is our quarterly newsletter providing articles of interest to Foundation stakeholders about restoration developments, water management issues and other ecosystem activities associated with America's Everglades ~ Winter 2011

## CALL TO ACTION: SUPPORT EVERGLADES FUNDING

State funding for Everglades is being threatened by a proposal to cut Everglades funding 66 percent, from \$50 million dollars, to \$17 million. Additionally, it is being proposed that the state's water management districts' budgets be cut by 25 percent. These reductions would not only put projects guaranteeing a secure water supply for South Florida at risk, but also cost Florida private-sector jobs when we need them most.

Please call Governor Scott today at (850) 488-7146 and ask him to support at least \$50 million in Everglades funding in the state's budget. Tell him a 66 percent cut will threaten our water supply and result in layoffs as Everglades restoration projects are stalled or cancelled.

You may also visit [www.evergladesfoundation.org](http://www.evergladesfoundation.org) and send an e-mail directly to your state lawmaker.

***We need your help today to protect our Everglades!***

## AN EVERGLADES-FOCUSED "TO-DO" LIST FOR 2011

Efforts to save America's Everglades finished the year on a high note on several fronts and provide opportunities to sustain progress into 2011.

Everglades supporters can point to key moments in 2010 that turned out to be substantial wins on the Everglades restoration scorecard.

The purchase of 26,800 acres, nearly 45 square miles of land from U.S. Sugar Corp. will allow for significant improvements in water quality for the Everglades. The state of Florida also has a binding contract providing an opportunity to secure additional lands at a later date. A federal judge in Miami embraced a plan by the Environmental Protection Agency to build a vast new series of marshes to filter polluted runoff before it enters the River of Grass.

Then came the Department of the Interior's proposal to bridge an additional 5.5 mile stretch to the Tamiami Trail to improve water flow into parched areas of Everglades National Park. A significant amount of pollution comes from farms and fertilizer runoff, and removing it requires extensive filtering.

EPA's plan complemented the federal government's decision to protect some 26,000 acres along Fisheating Creek in the northern headwaters of the Everglades. The move will put cleaner water into Lake Okeechobee, which will make existing cleanup efforts easier to manage.

So where can Everglades restoration proponents help lawmakers concentrate on efforts to develop an Everglades-focused to-do list to build on achievements of 2010?



PHOTO CREDIT: TAMI HELLEMANN, DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior, meets with Nathaniel Reed, Foundation board member, at Everglades Coalition Conference



**Protect our Water Supply:** Smart business leaders know it is an economic imperative that we protect our most valuable natural resource: water. One in three Floridians depend directly on the Everglades for their daily supply of fresh water (including virtually everyone in Broward, Palm Beach, Monroe and Miami-Dade counties).

The state of Florida is already forced to institute tough restrictions on irrigation and other water uses. How will we ever meet future demands?

If Florida intends to attract new business and provide water to our growing population, our only real choice is to complete the bipartisan Everglades restoration plan.

**Economic Restructuring:** Florida sorely needs to expand industry sectors to create the jobs of the future. In emerging growth centers around our state, biotech, clean energy, life sciences, financial services and health care companies are creating high-wage jobs and attracting better-educated workers.

**Reform our Growth Management Laws:** Taxpayers have made it clear they are fiercely opposed to footing the bill for “bad” development in places it doesn’t belong. Simply rubber-stamping building permits in a more expedited fashion won’t create a market for homes that currently doesn’t exist.

Instead, developers should be incentivized to build affordable, walkable communities in urban and suburban infill areas and along existing road networks that tie into mass transportation systems that are better integrated to our population centers.

**Protect What’s Left:** Florida enjoys world-renowned coral reefs, top-rated beaches and one-of-a-kind wildlife refuges. Everglades restoration will allow us to protect these environmental assets and the recreational opportunities they provide for the millions of Floridians (and visitors) who love to boat, fish, hunt, snorkel and hike their way through our parks and waterways. ■

## BIRDING TOURS BRING HUNDREDS TO DOCUMENT WINTER ACTIVITIES OF FEATHERED FRIENDS

Take out your cameras and binoculars because the Hendry-Glades Audubon/ South Florida Management District bird tours will continue in 2011.

For five years, thousands of outdoor enthusiasts have enjoyed bird-watching on Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 5. Stormwater Treatment Areas are not only good for cleansing water flowing into the Everglades, but also great for wildlife and recreational activities such as fishing, hunting and bird-watching.

Volunteers have led more than a hundred tours for over 4,000 participants from all across the world in STA-5. From endangered Everglade snail kites to great egrets, approximately 187 species of birds have been documented in there. Most recently, an American Pipit was added to the ever-increasing species list of birds observed at the wetland.

Here is the remaining birding event for spring:

### March 23-26 – Big “O” Birding Festival

To get the full schedule of bird tours and information on how to reserve a spot, visit [www.hendrygladesaudubon.org](http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org).

## WELLINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVE PROVIDES OUTDOOR FUN AND GLIMPSE OF RESTORATION

### ***What do you get when you mix a recreational venue with an Everglades restoration project?***

You get the Wellington Environmental Preserve, a 365-acre nature preserve that mixes efforts to restore wildlife habitats with a little outdoor fun.

The preserve, which opened in early November, is giving visitors a glimpse of Florida’s old landscape while aiding to restore the health of the Everglades.

The Wellington Preserve, similar to the Everglades’ original state, has uplands and wetlands. It is a winding waterway of grasses that will clean water runoff from thousands of acres before the water is released to the Everglades. It will also serve as a storage area for stormwater runoff.

Scores of alligators, wading birds and ducks have already made themselves at home on the preserve.

As for humans, 2.5 miles of pedestrian trails, three miles of horse trails, and a six-story observation tower will keep any outdoor lover satisfied. Cameras stream video to monitors located in the parking lots, so that disabled visitors can view the beautiful scenery. Soon there will be educational kiosks that will inform visitors of the animals and plants they are surveying.

The city of Wellington and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) partnered to create this preserve. The Wellington Acme Improvement District plans to budget \$500,000 a year to maintain this \$16 million project. ■

# FOUNDATION INTERNS, FUTURE LEADERS OF EVERGLADES RESTORATION WORK ON KEY PROGRAMS

The Foundation's internship program targets college students or recent graduates from a range of backgrounds ranging from natural sciences and engineering to law, economics and the social sciences to provide support in its efforts to advance Everglades restoration.

Last year's internship program featured students with backgrounds in the fields of environmental engineering, policy and communications.

**Virgalem Chebud**, the Foundation's science intern, worked on a project to check the impacts of Kissimmee River restoration on water-quality parameters (phosphorus, turbidity) using remote-sensing techniques. During his tenure at the Foundation, Chebud submitted a peer-reviewed article that was published in the *Journal of Environmental Monitoring*. Chebud, a Florida International University student, is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in earth and the environment.

**Rebecca Garvoille**, the Foundation's policy intern, spent her summer completing an internal strategy document on the Tamiami Trail Next Steps project. The document outlined an advocacy timeline and strategic roadmap for the Southern Environmental Advisory Council as well as legislative options to pursue for project authorization and project funding. Garvoille is on course to receive her Ph.D. in global and sociocultural studies from Florida International University.

**Juliana Corrales**, the Foundation's hydrology intern, worked on a project to develop a sulfur-mass balance in the Everglades Agricultural Area to identify the most prominent sources of sulfur and suggest a methodology to control methylmercury, a noted pollutant in the Everglades ecosystem. Corrales plans on publishing an article detailing her work in an international scientific journal. She recently graduated from Florida International University with a master's degree in environmental engineering and is now pursuing a doctorate from the university. She continues her work with

Melodie Naja, Ph.D., the Foundation's water quality scientist on cost-effective techniques to reduce pollution entering Lake Okeechobee.

**Milvionne Chery**, the Foundation's communications intern, has enhanced its online presence and developed its social media platform specifically building the organization's Facebook Fan and Cause pages. In addition, Chery has conducted research, drafted press releases and created surveys. She recently graduated from Florida International University with a degree in communications.

This marks the second consecutive year of the Everglades Foundation Congressional Fellowship program. This fellowship places deserving graduate students in year-long programs with a congressional committee or federal agency handling issues affecting the Everglades. Two recent graduates of University of Miami's School of Law now take part in this fellowship.

**Bryan Harrison**, a graduate of the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in history and political science also attended the University of Miami's School of Law in 2010. As an Everglades Foundation Congressional Fellow, Harrison started working at Sen. Bill Nelson's office in September. In this role, he advances Everglades' restoration federal efforts by tracking and guiding federal Everglades policies. Some of his tasks have included analyzing policy implications related to Lake Okeechobee and water quality/flow and BP's Gulf Research Initiative.

**Jason Brodsky** is a graduate of Brandeis University where he earned a degree in



Virgalem Chebud conducts field research.

African/Afro-American studies and history. He went on to graduate in 2010 from the University of Miami's School of Law. After being awarded the Everglades Foundation Congressional Fellowship, Brodsky started working in August at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in the Executive Office of the President. At CEQ, he assists with inter-agency coordination of the president's environmental policy agenda, specifically on ecosystem restoration issues, and advises the Obama administration on related law environmental issues.

The Everglades Foundation Congressional Fellowship awards are awarded through the UM Leonard and Jayne Abess Center for Ecosystem Science and Policy. ■

# PARK IMPLEMENTS SNAKE BIGHT POLE AND TROLL ZONE IN FLORIDA BAY

**A**t the beginning of this year, the much-frequented boating area of Everglades National Park known as Snake Bight became a pole-and-troll boating zone in Florida Bay.

Superintendent Dan Kimball announced the designation of Snake Bight as a pole-and-troll boating zone in Florida Bay. "This new protective zone was created to provide enhanced protection of Snake Bight's sensitive aquatic vegetation and wilderness resources, improve the quality of flats fishing, enhance paddling and wildlife viewing opportunities, and expand education on proper shallow-water boating techniques," said Kimball.

Boaters should be aware that within the pole-and-troll zone, internal combustion motors can only be used in Tin Can or Snake Bight channels (where on-plane transit is permitted), and in the Jimmy's Lake idle speed, no-wake area. Within all other areas of the pole-and-troll zone, boats may only be propelled by push poles, paddles or electric-trolling motors.

This management strategy emerged following General Management Plan (GMP) meetings in 2009, when new scientific and visitor-use information, along with a new set of preliminary marine area alternatives, was presented to the public. That effort resulted in meaningful public input on ways to improve management of Florida Bay. Park

staff developed several alternatives for a pole-and-troll zone, held public meetings and received written comments over the past year on how to best implement a pole-and-troll zone in Florida Bay. In response to public input and support, park management selected the Snake Bight area to implement a pole-and-troll zone in advance of adopting the GMP, which is expected to be completed in 2012.

Implementation of the pole-and-troll zone will include an educational component. Waterproof brochures in English and Spanish will be distributed at the park entrance station and at local bait and tackle shops, marinas and boat ramps. Rangers will also be talking with recreational anglers and park fishing guides about the new zone to ensure park users understand the new regulations. "This protective management measure should help prevent new seagrass scars in those areas of the bay that take several years to recover and negatively impact the ecology of the bay," said Kimball.

The park received financial support for the project from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Restoration grant program and donations from the Herman Lucerne Foundation, the Flamingo Friendly Fishing Tournament and the South Florida National Parks Trust. These funding sources allowed the park to print educational materials, fabricate and install signs and conduct scientific monitoring activities. ■

# CHEKIKA REOPENS

**F**or a quick lesson in understanding the dynamics of South Florida's wet and dry season and its impacts on local habitats, now might be a good time to visit Chekika. The start of the dry season ushers in the reopening of Everglades National Park's Chekika.

Named after a famous Seminole chief and Indian leader during the Seminole Wars, Chekika was added to Everglades National Park in 1991, along with 44,000 acres of state-owned lands, as part of the Everglades Expansion Act of 1989. Before becoming part of the Park, it was a private resort called Grossman Hammock Mineral Springs, famed for a bubbling mineral spring that some believed had healing powers.

Chekika is a popular picnic area located within the Park. It contains canal banks and paved roads, which are perfect for bicycle rides. There is also a short hiking trail through a hardwood hammock.

Chekika, which is part of the Eastern Everglades, is closed every year during South Florida's rainy season due to its tendency to flood. This section of the park is now open for day use, from dawn to dusk, through May 1.

For more information, visit [nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/chekika.htm](http://nps.gov/ever/planyourvisit/chekika.htm).

The Everglades Foundation is dedicated to ensuring a restored Everglades by creating relevant and creative solutions to complex restoration issues.

WWW.EVERGLADESFUNDATION.ORG



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