Friends,

In many ways, 2021 was a year of resurgence for Friends of the Everglades. It has been over a decade since Friends last saw the type of growth and success that we achieved last year and it was all due to the efforts of our dedicated staff and the continued support of all of our partners, followers, and friends. And we were thrilled to be able to meet again with you all in person with our first annual Marjory Stoneman Douglas Luncheon!

On the policy front, Friends was a leader on the Lake Okeechobee manual optimization process, has been front and center on growth issues in Miami-Dade County including the plans for the Homestead Air Reserve Base and the South Dade Technology and Logistics Center, and has been working hard on issues related to sugarcane burning and the sugar industry. Many irons remain in the fire for 2022.

We were able to closely follow the 2021 legislative session and provide mid-session and post-session reports to the public on that session’s crop of water-related bills, for better and unfortunately … for worse.

Our outreach programming was greatly expanded, with our Clean Water Conversations reaching over 40,000 people and our action alert campaigns prompting individuals to send thousands of letters to policy makers when timely decisions needed to be made. And there was perhaps no bigger achievement last year than re-establishing the Young Friends of the Everglades youth education program. For the first time since 2016, we are now back in the classrooms with new materials, educating and inspiring the next generation of Everglades advocates!

This report is the result of a year of hard work and I’m very proud for our supporters to see how far we’ve come and how much opportunity lies ahead for Friends!

Sincerely,

PHIL KUSHLAN
BOARD PRESIDENT

Perhaps even in this hour, in a new relation of usefulness and beauty, the vast, magnificent, subtle and unique region of the Everglades may not be utterly lost.”

— Marjory Stoneman Douglas
The mission of Friends of the Everglades is to preserve, protect, and restore the only Everglades in the world.

Friends of the Everglades

OUR GOALS:
- Compel government agencies to comply with existing environmental laws, and resist any efforts to weaken such laws.
- Encourage politicians to recognize the long consequences of their actions.
- Spread awareness of the importance of the Everglades to the South Florida ecosystem.

LEGACY OF JUSTICE
Before she gained fame as an environmentalist, Marjory Stoneman Douglas was, at her core, an advocate for equality. As early as the 1920s, she was writing columns for the Miami Herald that advocated for racial justice and civil rights. She also went head-to-head with Tallahassee lawmakers to lobby for women’s suffrage.

Today, we feel certain she’d be furious and appalled by the continued practice of sugarcane burning in the Everglades Agricultural Area south of Lake Okeechobee. The harvest technique remains one of the most unjust, damaging practices in Florida farming, and disproportionately impacts lower-income communities of color.

In Marjory’s footsteps, Friends of the Everglades has embraced a commitment to stand against the forces of greed and exploitation — not only in the degradation of our environment, but for justice in all forms. We continue to be fueled by her passion, and today our fight to propel social and environmental justice is stronger because of her decades of activism that paved the way.


• **LOSOM Leadership:** We were deeply engaged in the Army Corps of Engineers’ development of a new Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM), which will dictate when and where water moves for the next decade. We successfully opposed a plan backed by the sugarcane industry that would have resulted in more environmental damage, and we advocated for a less-harmful Lake O plan that is poised to reduce (but not eliminate) damaging lake discharges to the northern estuaries while increasing necessary flows to the southern Everglades.

• **Holding the Line:** With key allies, we worked diligently to stop a dangerous proposal to allow non-military aviation at Homestead Air Reserve Base, which sits between Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park. We also worked to stop a nearby 800-acre industrial development. This sensitive region remains vulnerable to development pressure.

• **Opposing Sugar-Cane Burning:** We led a call for Gov. Ron DeSantis to veto the “Right to Farm Bill” (SB 88), which stripped legal rights from residents who live downwind of sugarcane burning. Although DeSantis signed the bill into law, we remain committed to elevating awareness of the harmful health impacts of sugarcane burning on residents of the Glades communities, with the ultimate goal of phasing out sugarcane burning, as other countries have.

• **Legislative Accountability:** We closely tracked environmental legislation in Tallahassee, communicating with Friends of the Everglades supporters about good and bad bills, connecting constituents with policymakers, and publishing a post-session report identifying key players and impacts.

• **Environmental Outreach:** We produced 10 live-stream Clean Water Conversations in 2021 to keep you informed about topics ranging from oil drilling in the Everglades to toxic algae.

• **Classroom Education:** Worked with professional educators to create the Everglades Learning Exploration Kit to teach the next generation about the value of the greater Everglades ecosystem and its inhabitants. The first kit was delivered to our pilot school, Royal Palm Elementary, in December.

• **Standing Against Sprawl:** We filed an amicus brief supporting the Conservancy of Southwest Florida’s legal challenge to the development of Rivergrass Village in eastern Collier County.

• **Campus Collaborations:** Our first-ever student chapter of Friends of the Everglades was founded at Stetson University in 2021.

Friends of the Everglades began its work in 1969 with a tangible goal in sight: stopping a major international jetport from being constructed in what’s now Big Cypress National Preserve.

We succeeded in protecting that expanse of wilderness — with help from like-minded allies. And, 53 years later, we continue to play tough defense against development proposals and policy decisions that threaten the health of the Everglades and its interconnected waterways.

Our impact and reach grew significantly in 2021, thanks to your support. Not only did our Friends of the Everglades step up with increasingly generous financial contributions, you also rose to the occasion when we needed you to take action. When we asked, thousands of you sent messages to the Army Corps of Engineers, demanding a more equitable Lake Okeechobee management plan that would send more clean water south and reduce toxic discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and the Lake Worth Lagoon.

You also spoke out against an unjust bill that stripped legal protections from Glades community residents who live downwind of harmful and unjust sugarcane burning. When oil drilling threatened the Everglades, you stood with us, too. Protecting America’s Everglades isn’t solely a game of defense. There’s important offensive work involved as well.

That’s why we are deepening our scientific expertise in 2022 in partnership with leading Everglades scientists. Our goal is to ensure the Everglades restoration projects that taxpayers are paying for will yield the hoped-for results — not just talking points for politicians.

Our founder, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, once said: “Florida has made great strides, but the degradation of the environment has become institutionalized, embedded in the nature of things.”

That remains true. With your support, we are poised to make more strides to protect the vast and inspiring wilderness that comprises the only Everglades in the world.

For the Everglades,

Eve Samples

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LETTER
"I joined Marjory’s Circle to help continue her legacy or preservation of the Everglades, a place which needs to be nurtured in every way possible."

— Marjory’s Circle member Susan Lloyd

By the Numbers

10 LIVESTREAM CLEAN WATER CONVERSATIONS HOSTED

43,000 VIEWERS ENGAGED IN CLEAN WATER CONVERSATIONS

10,474 SUPPORTERS SENT ACTION ALERTS VIA 9 TARGETED ACTIONS TO STATE AND FEDERAL LEADERS ON EVERGLADES ISSUES

4 LESSON PLANS DEVELOPED AS PART OF OUR NEW EVERGLADES LEARNING EXPLORATION KIT FOR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

22 CHAPTERS OF THE EVERGLADES HANDBOOK BY TOM LODGE ADDED AS A RESOURCE AT EVERGLADES.ORG

In 2021, we celebrated the commitment of Marjory’s Circle members with two special events: our first annual Marjory Stoneman Douglas Legacy Luncheon in Naples, Florida; and Stories from the Sawgrass, a virtual storytelling event in December.

At the Legacy Luncheon, we presented Connie Washburn with the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Defender of the Everglades award — an honor bestowed each year on a person whose significant contributions to the world of Everglades restoration embodies the spirit of our founder.

Stories from the Sawgrass featured stories from Miccosukee poet and activist Reverend Houston Cypress, late environmental advocate Maggy Hurchalla and Glades community activist Robert Mitchell during a virtual cocktail hour.

Members of Marjory’s Circle contribute $100 per month or $1,200 annually to help sustain the legacy of environmental hero, celebrated author, and Friends of the Everglades founder, Marjory Stoneman Douglas. This support ensures a continued role in preserving the future of our River of Grass and its connected waterways. To join, visit www.everglades.org/marjorys-circle.
2021 FINANCIAL REVIEW

EXPENDITURES

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SUPPORT

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Special thanks to Evan Wexler for granting permission to use his Everglades photographs in this annual report.

Thanks also to Florida Sportsman for the beautiful graphic design work you see in this report, and to Southeastern Printing for donating printing.

Friends of the Everglades

SUPPORT AMOUNT PERCENTAGE

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Champions Spotlight

THESE ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDED GAME-CHANGING SUPPORT TO FRIENDS OF THE EVERGLADES IN 2021.

Robert Stein
Sylmarie Trujillo
Milda Valvada
Elizabeth Wheaton
Blair Wickstrom

STAFF*

Eve Samples
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Gil Smart
POLICY DIRECTOR
Kymberly Hurchalla
DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
Allie Preston
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

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Peter Upton
VICE PRESIDENT
Alan Farago
CONSERVATION CHAIR
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SECRETARY
Richard Trotta
TREASURER
Jason Evans
Ray Judah
Nathaniel Linville
Robert Mitchell
Dave Preston
Camila Quaresma-Sharp

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“BE A NUISANCE WHERE IT COUNTS. DO YOUR PART TO INFORM AND STIMULATE THE PUBLIC TO JOIN YOUR ACTION. BE DEPRESSED, DISCOURAGED, & DISAPPOINTED AT FAILURE & THE DISHEARTENING EFFECTS OF IGNORANCE, GREED, CORRUPTION & BAD POLITICS — BUT NEVER GIVE UP.”

Marjory Stoneman Douglas