



2024 IMPACT REPORT

PRESERVE. PROTECT. RESTORE.



A CONTINUING LEGACY



Friends of the Everglades continues to expand its impact and honor its conservation legacy through **science, swift action and youth education**. In 2024, Friends **strengthened its scientific capacity** by hiring a full-time Science & Policy Analyst to enhance independent research essential for Everglades restoration, building on the highly regarded work of Senior Scientist Dr. Tom Van Lent. Through the Maggy Hurchalla Opportunity Fund, the organization swiftly **mobilized legal resources to oppose an 8,000-acre rock mine south of Lake Okeechobee**. Additionally, the Young Friends of the Everglades program **inspired over 700 students in 32 classrooms in 2024**, hosting its **first Everglades field trip** for Miami Beach fourth-graders and **enlisting a new educator to expand impact** in South Florida schools.

DEFENDING LAND, WATER AND PEOPLE

Friends of the Everglades is working hard to address the intertwined threats of climate change, pollution and unchecked development. Back-to-back hurricanes this year underscored the urgency of **preventing irresponsible development**, which intensifies flooding and erosion risks. Friends' ongoing advocacy supports science-driven efforts to protect the Greater Everglades and secure a sustainable water supply. In March, Friends of the Everglades and allies celebrated a key legal victory that **halted a proposed 350-acre warehouse complex on low-lying farmland near Biscayne Bay**, safeguarding it for future restoration efforts. Friends' advocacy also helped to bring a temporary **end to harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges** into the sensitive northern estuaries early this year, while also mobilizing more than a thousand supporters to join us in waging a longer-term campaign to **fix the rigged system** that favors Big Sugar's irrigation and drainage over the health of the Everglades. August marked a significant milestone with the **activation of the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM)**, a plan that reduces discharges, mitigates toxic-algae health risks and improves water flow to the Everglades — outcomes shaped by Friends of the Everglades' advocacy.



HOLDING GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE

Friends of the Everglades is actively defending Florida's environment and public health through **advocacy and action**. This year, Friends joined a coalition petitioning the EPA to **establish federal cyanotoxin standards** for blue-green algae, as state action has proven insufficient against the health risks of toxic blooms. Additionally, **new research** funded by Friends reveals that **sugarcane pre-harvest burning near the Everglades exacerbates doctor-diagnosed asthma** cases by 10.8%, especially impacting vulnerable communities — and underscoring the need to **address sugar industry pollution as Congress reviews the Farm Bill**. Friends also **challenged the Army Corps of Engineers' proposed operations for a new Stormwater Treatment Area** that's part of the EAA Reservoir project, emphasizing the plan risks becoming another taxpayer-funded cleanup for sugarcane runoff rather than a solution for Lake Okeechobee's toxic discharges.



MOBILIZING COMMUNITY VOICES

Friends of the Everglades empowers community voices to protect Florida's environment, achieving notable wins in 2024 through collective action. This year, the organization worked with partners on a successful campaign to **halt development proposals in nine state parks**, with Governor DeSantis pausing the plans in response to public outcry, rallies and citizen engagement. This significant victory showcased the **impact of grassroots efforts in preserving natural lands**. Additionally, during Florida's 2024 legislative session, Friends mobilized public support to **defeat bills that threatened wetland protections and local environmental measures**. Using **livestreams and advocacy to keep citizens informed**, Friends amplified community influence in Tallahassee, thanks to a third-year grant from The Tierney & Wetzel Foundation.



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.



Friends of the Everglades
everglades.org