



South Dade Wetlands

"There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth; remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them..."

- Marjorie Stoneman Douglas

Freshwater Wetlands

Wetlands are places where the land is covered by shallow water: marshes, swamps, and low-lying areas where water remains at or above ground level for most of the year. Freshwater wetlands are a major element of the South Florida landscape, making up about one-third of the total wetland area, the largest of these being in the Everglades.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)

The Everglades Restoration Project has been developed with the efforts of the State of Florida and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The plan was approved to restore the original "river of grass." It will capture water that would otherwise make its way to the ocean and direct it back into the marshland. This is the nation's largest such project, costing \$7.8 billion and about 20 years to develop. Two major CERP Projects are located in the South Dade Wetlands.

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The EEL Program has been acquiring lands in the South Dade Wetlands in partnership with the South Florida Water Management District and other grant partners since 1994. The South Dade Wetlands Project Area arguably contains the most important wetland system in the southern part of Miami Dade. Public agencies have targeted the area for acquisition because of the wetland's **strategic location between two national parks** (Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park) in the watersheds of Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay, Card Sound and Barnes Sound and because of the importance of the region to endangered and threatened species. This region is characterized by low-lying, relatively flat terrain and pronounced wet and dry seasons. During the longer wet season, eighty per cent of the rain in this region falls between May and December and the average rainfall is sixty inches per year. The soils consist of relatively thin layers of poorly drained marls and mucks over the porous limestone bedrock.

These wetlands are home to many of South Florida's endangered species. Species of note include the Florida Panther, the American crocodile, the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, the white-crowned pigeon, the swallow-tailed kite, the Southern bald eagle and the roseate spoonbill. Although the Everglades call up images of expansive sawgrass landscapes, there several types of wetlands here: spike rush and beak rush flats, muhly prairie, cypress stands, native dominated forested wetlands, tree islands, mangrove flats, hydric hammocks, and exotic dominated forests.

Natural disturbances, such as fire, play an important role in maintaining a diverse mosaic of vegetation communities. In addition, the EEL Program works hard to eradicate and control invasive vegetation through intense management and restoration projects.

