The mission of Friends of the Everglades is to preserve, protect, and restore the only Everglades in the world.
Historic Legacy, Growing Impact

2019 was a milestone year for Friends of the Everglades, from celebrating a half-century of advocacy to our merger with Bullsugar Alliance to successes on a number of policy fronts.

Friends helped to Hold the Line with a legal challenge to the plan to extend State Road 836 through wetlands and beyond the Urban Development Boundary in Miami-Dade County, a fight that is still ongoing. We contributed valuable scientific work, funding a peer-reviewed study of the inadequacy of the stormwater treatment marsh being planned for the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir as well as several chapters in a three-volume series comprehensively describing how agriculture contributes to the toxic methyl-mercury problem in the Everglades.

Our biggest effort however has been in advocating for Operational Change in the management of Lake Okeechobee among politicians, decision-makers, and the public. Although there has been progress in getting infrastructure added to the system, many of these projects are years away from coming online and Operational Change gives us the chance to address the problem NOW.

By sending clean, fresh water south during the dry season and lowering the lake level by June 1, we can greatly reduce the chance of a toxic algae discharge if there are heavy rains in the wet season. Although a comparatively dry year, 2019 was a successful case study with lake levels held lower than in previous years and no need for large discharges to the coasts.

With the momentum from our 2019 successes, we are looking forward to an exciting 2020 with a focus on continuing to advocate for Operational Change through the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual process and re-launching our Young Friends of the Everglades program, with a focus on teaching children how to become advocates for change.

Friends of the Everglades was founded as a grassroots organization and we remain grateful to all of our supporters for helping us to have an outsized impact in protecting the only Everglades in the world!

Phil Kushlan
BOARD PRESIDENT

everglades.org
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.

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

- Advocating for policies that put human health at the heart of Lake Okeechobee water-management decisions and other environmental policies.
  - Restoring the flow of clean freshwater to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.
- Stopping toxic discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, where they cause toxic blue-green algae blooms.
- Educating the public on human health risks posed by toxic blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), and pushing policymakers to take preventive action.
Friends of the Everglades was founded by “River of Grass” author Marjory Stoneman Douglas in 1969 with the understanding that grassroots advocacy is critical to preserving what’s left of Florida’s Everglades. Our legacy of advocacy was bolstered in 2019 through a merger of Friends of the Everglades and Bullsugar Alliance. The new partnership empowers us to have greater impact on clean-water policies across the greater Everglades ecosystem — including Lake Okeechobee and three estuaries: the Caloosahatchee River, the St. Lucie River and Florida Bay. Your support makes this possible.
We engaged thousands of residents to provide input on the new Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule being crafted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The new schedule will impact the health of the lake, estuaries and Everglades for decades to come.

Water in the northern estuaries was cleaner in 2019 because the Army Corps of Engineers kept the lake lower in advance of hurricane season, avoiding damaging discharges. Friends of the Everglades is advocating for similar lake management on a permanent basis.

With support from donors and volunteers, we were able to have a powerful impact in 2019:

**LAKE O LEVELS**

We engaged thousands of residents to provide input on the new Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule being crafted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The new schedule will impact the health of the lake, estuaries and Everglades for decades to come.
We worked with U.S. Rep. Brian Mast on crafting H.R. 3324, the PROTECT Florida Act, which would require the Army Corps of Engineers to make public health and safety the primary consideration in its management of Lake Okeechobee.
NEW PARTNERS: Our 2019 merger with Bullsugar Alliance, also a grassroots 501(c)(3), allowed us to expand our impact. Friends of the Everglades relocated its headquarters to Stuart, where it is well-positioned to advocate for protection of the delicate ecosystems of the northern estuaries and improved management of Lake Okeechobee.

RESERVOIR WORK: We collaborated with Dr. Bill Mitsch of Florida Gulf Coast University on a peer-reviewed study examining design flaws related to the proposed $1.8 billion Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir.

MERCURY IN THE EVERGLADES: We funded new chapters in a book on methylmercury pollution in the Everglades and its connection to the agriculture industry.
SUPPORT

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900 SE Federal Hwy., Suite 325, Stuart FL 34994
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…”

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, The Everglades: River of Grass