

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

What Decision Makers Should Know

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Water is one of Florida's most abundant natural resources. Water is a crucial resource that impacts not just the environment, but important industries that contribute to Florida's economy, such as tourism, agriculture, and business. To avoid water conflicts between users, enact appropriate public policy, and responsibly manage water resources, it is important to understand the best available science on the topic as well as public opinions about water issues.

Public opinions of water in Florida

1. Floridians are more concerned about water quality and safety than water quantity.
2. Florida residents place the most importance on clean drinking water (93%). They are then concerned with clean beaches (90.5%), oceans (89.3%), bays/estuaries (89.1%), lakes and rivers (88.9%); plentiful water for agriculture (88.6%); and clean groundwater (88.1%).
3. More people believe that water quality is getting worse as opposed to getting better.
4. 34.4% of Floridians said quality is declining in bays and 33.9% believe the water quality of our oceans is declining.
5. Almost 40% of Florida residents have experienced some kind of negative impact due to water quality including poor quality drinking water; closed beaches, springs, rivers, or lakes; and prohibitions on eating fish they have caught.
6. Almost 50% of Florida residents feel saltwater intrusion is a highly or extremely important issue.

Specific information about the CERP

Sources of pollutants: Pollutants impacting water quality include pathogens, nutrients, sediment, and metals. Currently, the major pollutants found in Florida are nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, through leaching and runoff.

Wildlife concerns: The expansion of urban areas into natural areas has led to increased wildlife species being placed on the endangered species list. In addition, urban intrusion also leads to increases in invasive species due to increased uses and imports of exotic plants and animals.

Impacts to the environment: Nutrient pollutants can lead to algae blooms in water bodies, including streams, lakes, and others. They can be harmful to humans, wildlife,

and tourism. Additionally, the ecosystems have been adversely impacted by invasive species released to the environment and outcompeting with native species.

Impacts to humans: Water quality degradation can lead to human health issues through drinking water and seafood intake. As for invasive species, some species may have high potential to attack people, especially children, and pets.

Water movement and water storage: Water moves between different water bodies, such as surface water (e.g., lakes, rivers), groundwater, wetland, estuaries, and others. Water can be stored in both the surface water system and underground water system.

Water reuse: Due to rapid increase in water demands from increased urban population, water should be used efficiently. One of the strategies is to construct wastewater treatment plants to treat wastewater making it reusable and/or releaseable to the environment for aquifer recharge.

For more information visit www.piecenter.com/pep.

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