

# The Everglades:

## Environmental, Cultural, and Global Responsibility

Fun Stuff

### FINDING YOUR WAY Through the EVERGLADES

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illustrated by Annette Cate

Read and answer each question. Then follow the directions and move to the number shown. If your answer is wrong, you'll be led to the correct answer; if your answer is correct, you'll move forward. Have fun finding your way through the Everglades!

Uh oh. I admit... I am a little scared. Sure are lots of critters in there!

I can fly and I'm scared!

Oh, look at the nice little froggy! Here froggy froggy!

Uh... hell-ooo!!!  
Alligator Alert!

Whew! I made it! I wasn't even nibbled on by an alligator!

Thanks to me!

Enter  
This way

1. If the Everglades covers most of southern Florida, go to #2. If the Everglades is only around Lake Okeechobee, go to #5.

15. The 1.5 million acres of Everglades National Park in the third largest park in the United States—is North America's only subtropical preserve. Go to #3.

14. Some of the many endangered species of the Everglades include the small kite, Key Largo wood rat, and Key Largo cotton mouse. All animals, birds, and plants are protected in the Everglades. Go to #7.

13.

If the Everglades is home to many endangered species, go to #9. If no endangered species live there, go to #14.

12.

In the last 100 years, the Everglades has been reduced by half, drained to build homes and farms. Go to #10.

10. If the Miccosukee people, who once lived within the Everglades, work to preserve this habitat, go to #7. If they do not support controlling pollution, go to #4.

11. Although the alligator is the state reptile, crocodiles also live in Florida's "River of Grass." Go to #13.

9. If Everglades National Park is the largest national park in the continental United States, go to #15. If it is the third largest, go to #3.

8. In one story, the Seminole people say Panther was Creator's favorite animal: majestic, strong, and patient. Go to #6.

7. Congratulations! You have successfully completed your trek through the Everglades.

6. If the Everglades area is half the size it was 100 years ago, go to #10. If it has grown, go to #12.

5. Today the Everglades is about 100 miles long, 50 to 75 miles wide, and just a few inches deep in many places. It covers most of southern Florida, though much of that area has been drained. Go to #2.

4. The Everglades Forever Act, supported by the native Miccosukee people, helps clean the water flowing into the Everglades. Go to #7.

3. If one Seminole creation story says Frog was Creator's favorite animal, go to #8. If it was Panther, go to #6.

2. If alligators and crocodiles both live in the Everglades, go to #13. If crocodiles do not live in the Everglades, go to #11.

Exit

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## 1.0 Introduction

There are many apparent structural factors that impact our environmental, cultural, and global responsibilities to **the Everglades**, in the South of Florida. As a new immigrant to Florida and to the United States of America (U.S.A), and before I committed to this project, I had no prior knowledge or information about the Everglades. How could I enlist in such a supportive role with this lack of information about this global heritage site? In search of knowledge and guidance, I began a two-week journey to learn and process the required information while working on this important project.

**The Everglades** and its environment have created a sense of great awareness on how it can impact the cultural activities and a global responsibility to preserve the wetlands. While many individuals may know the importance to protect the wetlands of **The Everglades**, yet they lack the knowledge of its significance and reasons to preserve its natural state and form. This world heritage site has been one of the most controversial wetland preservation subjects over the last century or so.

As a first step in this venture, I observed the landmark ‘Climate’ issue, On Wednesday, April 22, 2015, Earth Day, by President Barack Obama of the United States of America. He emphatically, refocused minds to the pressing responsibilities, as he toured and engaged us in his poignant appeal during his on site visit of **the Everglades**.

## 2.0 History of the Everglades

Now, let us go on a journey through **the Everglades**; picture yourself in the 460,000 acres of fresh water ponds, prairies, wildlife, plants and forested uplands. Then open your minds to a peaceful, smothering, absorbent 1.7 billion gallons of water daily flowing to the ocean and chirping, singing species of birds, frogs, snakes and crocodile in the wild. An individual can enjoy this endangered world heritage site established as a National Park from December 6<sup>th</sup> 1947.

Let us just go back some centuries ago when **The Everglades** started from the Kissimmee River into Lake Okeechobee through the marsh flats of the Florida Bay. The Everglades was approximately 1.5 million acres, but today it has shank to half that size. In the early 1800s, people did not value this sanctuary; they thought there was no value in the swamp lands according to an article published by the University of South Florida. The article continued to describe how between 1905 and 1910 a large amount of the lands were converted to agricultural lands and how Henry Flagler built the first railroad that would make the Florida peninsula more accessible. The development of canals, roads and buildings attracted a wave of migration of people to the areas of Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Fort Myers.

After **the Everglades** was established as a National Part in 1947, the United States Congress authorized in 1948 the U.S Army Corp of Engineering to build water-control structures, canals, and roads to help preserve **the Everglades**. What I found ironic is how in less than 15 years afterwards this same Congress, in 1960 to be exact, had plans in place to build an international airport in **the Everglades** area. Thanks to the Friends of **the Everglades** founded by the Florida environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas, an opposition to this plan took momentum and rallied against it.

### 3.0 What are The Everglades?

In the beginning it was believed **the Everglades** were associated with the 5,184,000 acres of watershed that occupied nearly one third of Florida according to the Center for Educational Technologies in the article titled “Exploring the environment Florida Everglades.” Yet, this preserve’s true vastness stretched over only 3,000,000 acres from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. Sadly only 1,000,000 acres of **the Everglades** were dedicated as a National Park and 500,000 acres became a historic site with water conservation area that included dams, canals and dikes used for flood control.

**The Everglades** are a World Heritage Site and an International Biosphere Reserve, the largest subtropical wetland ecosystem in North America. **The Everglades** really are an extremely slow-moving river. They serve as a home for sixty-seven endangered species and many habitat types. These endangered species can be categorized by the following: mammals, birds, plants, reptiles and amphibians. Some examples of those specific animals include: The Florida Panther, West Indian Manatee, Leatherback Turtle, Green Turtles, American Crocodile, Wood Stork, Snail Kite, Red- Capped Woodpecker, Cape Sable, Seaside Sparrow, and Schaus Swallowtail Butterfly. Their habitats are as follows: pinelands, hardwood hammocks, mangrove swamps, sawgrass marshes, open-water sloughs and cypress swamps.

### 4.0 How does it affect the Environment?

According to Michael Grunwald, a senior staff writer, ‘Climate Change’ was not a primary problem that **the Everglades** Comprehensive Everglades Restoration plan was designed to fix in 2000. However, Barak Obama’s press secretary said that the President is eager to promote a

national debate over ‘Climate Change’, and how to prevent and mitigate it. He indicated that the vulnerable **Everglades** is a “ground zero” for that debate.

Now, it is a fantastic idea to have plans to restore and make **the Everglades** a priority, yet the number one factor of the **Everglades** deterioration is some form of human activity. According to the Everglades Foundation, “there is 1,800 miles of canals and dams designed to breakup with water control point and pump stations diverting the natural flow of the water to coastal town and cities.”

Another major problem **the Everglades** are facing is loss of nutrient levels such as phosphorus and an increasing invasion of unnatural species like the Cuban tree frog and the Burmese python. These problems are the result of human interference and influence. The agricultural fertilizer has sulfur which causes fish, birds, and mammals to become exposed to higher levels of toxic mercury. This chemical creates an active threat to the unique fauna and flora, plants and animals. Additionally, when animals that are not native to the Everglades and get introduced, they create and impose a major imbalance of the ecosystem.

Some solutions to these problems include switching the agricultural farms to organic farming by limiting the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Also, more regulations are needed to limit and monitor the import of exotic pets and the introduction of new animals or plants to this fragile sanctuary.

## **5.0 What is the Cultural impact on society?**

Historically, this has been a site of conflict between global perspective initiatives and local concerns. The President’s first visit to **the Everglades** is one of the activities that directly highlights the significance and importance of these projects. In all that conflict and controversy,

there are still Indian tribes living in **the Everglades**, and who dismiss the government's efforts to put them out. There are about 4,400 Florida Indians of the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes living in **the Everglades** today according to USA Today.

We can learn some valuable lessons from these tribes because they are living in harmony with their environment while upholding the value of nature to human survival. In my opinion, the climate change has a partial effect on **the Everglades**; however, human interference has a greater impact. This human interference first started out when individuals did not understand the value of these lands in the late eighteen hundreds and began the draining process. This was done to create an economic substance for survival of individuals with no concept of the long term threat it would cause to these unique, one of a kind wetlands. Later, settlers added insult to injury when they manufactured dams and changed the natural flow and pathways of the water, causing more problems.

Some ways we can correct this problem is to learn the patterns and the flow of water in **the Everglades** and build and restore them to the original state to preserve the landscape of the area. To bring more awareness, all our airports and tourist attractions in Florida should display visuals of **the Everglades** to show their importance and significance.

## 6.0 Whose Global Responsibility is it?

The protection of **the Everglades** is everybody's business because the disappearance will impact all Florida resident either directly or indirectly; furthermore, the loss of these wetlands would also impact every human being in general. However, the general framework, the leadership and means of protecting **the Everglades** should be delegated by government officials because



there is an accountability of the government to protect our natural resources. The rapid deterioration of **the Everglades** started with individuals having very little knowledge of their benefits for the global environment and ecosystem. Individuals drained **the Everglades** to build and establish agricultural and economic hubs with no regards to the environment and the sustainability efforts of these lands.

If **the Everglades** were to be completely destroyed, the world ecosystems would be off-balanced. Other foreign countries cannot say it is not their problem because the same effect and concern the world is now facing with the melting of ice glaciers of Greenland—or **the frozen Everglades**, and global warming, which has become a taboo phrase that many politicians plainly deny its existence or its impact.

It is not an easy task to set laws to enable individuals' to change their behavior towards **the Everglades**; on the other hand, if we teach and educate the value of **the Everglades**, individuals would cherish and appreciate their significance and value. One method and value of persuasion that can be a worthwhile tool is to hold and affirm the importance of **the Everglades**.

This would include to involve and engage local and global citizens, scientists, local governments at state and even Federal levels. These will be more structured efforts to engage at various levels, all the technological resources from various world support networks and system. The current US President just made a promise to families and parents of current Fourth Graders to have access to America's National Parks free of charge this year.

## 7.0 Conclusion

**The Everglades** play a role on the protection of the environment, impact cultural activities, and create an awareness of global responsibility. I conducted a survey to gather information on the significance and awareness of Floridians as far as **the Everglades** are concerned. In order to accumulate an unbiased response, I gave out the questionnaire at the mall, on our college campus, via email, and in different parts of Central Florida. I got responses from twenty-three participants and the results were quite surprising.

The results revealed that 86% of the respondents have not yet visited **the Everglades** and that the remaining 14% that visited the area to enjoy the wildlife. It was shocking to find out that while most people in the survey knew the importance of **the Everglades** to the environment both locally and globally, they still could not specify the significance and the role of these wetlands.

Some recommendations are: firstly, we start by providing awareness for the importance of **the Everglades** to all Floridians at an early age all the way through middle and high school. We can create and give away merchandise that depicts **the Everglades** for all age levels, so there is a constant reminder of its importance. Then, we should make it mandatory to include materials and resources that focus on protecting this global sanctuary in every Florida classroom.

We have a responsibility to educate the masses, locally and internationally, on the value of our **Everglades**. This is a perfect opportunity for Floridians to take ownership, implement and effectively put in place, with this President's help, a model to sustain and preserve our natural resources for current and future generations, and for all people across the globe. There must be a commitment that demands global attention to **the Everglades**. Any weak efforts will be lost

among the tides and 'seas' of growing world problems and difficulties; we need a worldwide thrust to teach people to appreciate, value, and preserve **the Everglades** for all mankind.

## 8.0 Appendix

### Sample of Questionnaire :

My name is Melissa Thomas-Yarde. I am a student at Valencia College. I am participating in a Capstone project with specific emphasis on the Everglades, and I am in need of your assistance and your responses to this survey. Your time would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

**Please place a tick where it is applicable to your response.**

1. What is your age?  
Under 18 \_\_\_ 19-25 \_\_\_\_\_ 26-35 \_\_\_\_\_ 36-45 \_\_\_\_\_ above 45 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your educational level?  
No high school \_\_\_\_\_ High school \_\_\_\_\_ college credits \_\_\_\_\_ AS/AA  
degree \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor degree \_\_\_\_\_ Master's Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your sex?                    \_\_\_\_\_ male                    \_\_\_\_\_ female
4. Are you a born and raised Florida resident?    \_\_\_\_\_ yes                    \_\_\_\_\_ no
5. Have you ever heard of the Everglades?        \_\_\_\_\_ yes                    \_\_\_\_\_ no
6. Have you visited the Everglades?                \_\_\_\_\_ yes                    \_\_\_\_\_ no
7. If yes what did you liked the  
most? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you think that the Everglades are important to the environment?    \_\_\_\_\_ yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ no
9. Why is it important or not important for the environment?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. If all the Everglades are lost; do you think it would impact the global environment?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
11. Why would it effect or not affect the global environment?

## 9.0

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Environment Florida Everglades. 2005 Web. 24 April 2015

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### **For more Information on the Everglades, Consult the Following:**

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever/about/>

<http://www.evergladesonline.com/history.htm>

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/southflorida/everglades/conservation.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/>