

The Everglades Watershed

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT LESSON 1

The Everglades is a tropical wetland that covers a large portion of south Florida. The Everglades *watershed* – a system of interconnected waterways – starts in Central Florida with the Kissimmee River just south of Orlando.

The system of waterways that make up the Everglades ecoregion once covered about 11,000 square miles. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, much of the Everglades was drained to create farms and build cities. Today the area is only about half of its original size!

The Everglades is made up of nine different ecosystems that support a rich variety of plants and animals. It is home to dozens of federally threatened or endangered species, such as the Florida panther, American crocodile, snail kite, and wood stork. It contains a mix of saltwater and freshwater. That makes the Everglades the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles exist side by side.



History AT HOME

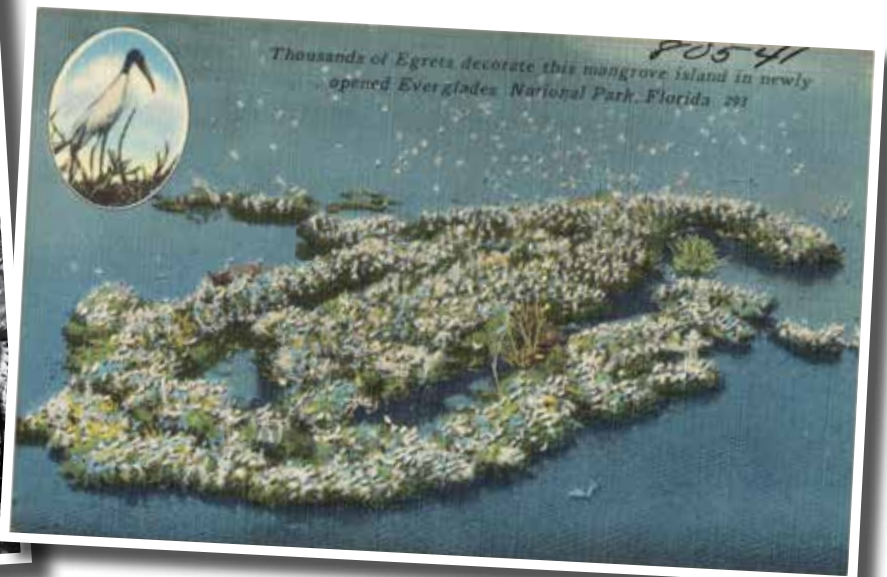
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Recognizing the importance of protecting this unique treasure in our state, journalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas gained worldwide recognition for her pioneering work to save the Everglades from further drainage and development. She became a fierce defender of the area when she joined the Everglades Tropical National Park Committee. Formed in 1928, the group was committed to turning the Everglades into a protected national park. Nearly 20 years later, Everglades National Park was dedicated on December 6, 1947.

The Everglades was in danger again when the potential construction of an airport in the 1960s threatened its environment. Encouraged to speak out, Douglas founded an organization called Friends of the Everglades. She gave hundreds of speeches around the state against the airport project and ran a campaign from her home. Under pressure from Friends of the Everglades and other groups, President Richard Nixon pulled funding from the project – a huge win for the people working to protect the area!



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Today it is more important than ever to protect the Everglades and the wildlife that lives there. So what can you do? Since the Everglades watershed starts up here in Central Florida, we are connected to the Everglades by water. We can do our part by making sure we do not pollute our waterways, which can directly affect the Everglades!

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS?

- **Don't litter**
- **Pick up and discard your pet's waste**
- **Take showers instead of baths**
- **Use a water can instead of a sprinkler to water your garden**
- **Learn more about our waterways and share what you know with others**



The Everglades Watershed ACTIVITY

Make an easy model of a watershed to see how pollution in one area can cause trouble for the whole system.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Shallow plastic storage container, dishpan, or other type of basin
- 4 or 5 cups or containers of different sizes
- Clear (or light-colored) plastic tarp or garbage bag
- Watering can (or spray bottle or pitcher)
- Food coloring
- Sprinkles



The Everglades Watershed

ACTIVITY



WHAT TO DO:

1. Place containers around the inside of the storage container or basin – these will create peaks for varying elevation in the watershed.
2. Lay the tarp over the containers and adjust it to create peaks and valleys. You will want long valleys for water to flow through and shallow areas where water can pool just like it would in rivers and lakes on the Earth's surface.
3. At one or two areas varied of the watershed, place a few drops of food coloring – this will represent chemical pollution such as pesticides.
4. At one or two varied areas of the watershed, place a few small piles of sprinkles – this will represent solid waste such as trash and litter.
5. Carefully pour water over your entire watershed to mimic rain.
6. Observe. What is happening to the clean water as it makes its way through the watershed? How is the whole watershed affected?



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This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:

- SS.1.A.2.1 Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places
- SC.1.E.6.1 Recognize that water, rocks, soil, and living organisms are found on Earth's surface
- SC.1.E.6.2 Describe the need for water and how to be safe around water
- SC.4.E.6.6 Identify resources available in Florida (water, phosphate, oil, silicon, wind, and solar energy)

