

October 1, 1995

The Honorable Lawton Chiles  
Governor, State of Florida  
The Capitol, Room 1501  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Chiles:

It is with much pleasure, enthusiasm, and satisfaction that I provide you with this Initial Report of the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida. It is the product of our first seventeen months of intensive meetings and deliberations. The Report was unanimously approved by the Commission at its last meeting and was strongly endorsed by the Commission's five non-voting Federal members.

We believe endorsement and support by you, your agencies, cabinet agencies and other affected governmental jurisdictions will move the South Florida region toward long-term recovery of its natural systems and its decaying urban centers and enable them to be sustained at a level we would find appropriate for future generations of South Floridians.

The Initial Report reaffirms the value of the consensus process which is essential for further Commission involvement in Everglades restoration and urban redevelopment activities. The assistance of the Florida Growth Management Conflict Resolution Consortium was invaluable. The consensus building process proved successful largely because of the dedicated attendance and sustained commitment of the Commission members. The process has established an unprecedented sense of reciprocal trust and common commitment among Commission members. This, in turn, lays the foundation for continued efforts toward finding ways to restore the ecosystem while maintaining a healthy economy and quality communities. One of several examples of the trust that has been established among Commission members is a private sector agreement to provide agricultural lands for federal research on more water-tolerant varieties of sugar cane. Such research is important in protecting soils from subsidence and in enhancing water storage capacity of sugar cane growing areas. This will assist in the development of a sustainable agriculture in the Everglades Agricultural Area.

The unanimous adoption of the Initial Report does not reflect the often contentious discussions and deliberations that led to its adoption, but its content does represent the months of difficult negotiations that were needed to find means of resolution. The Commission broke new ground in consensus building as diametrically opposed stakeholders gradually realigned their positions to reach sustainable solutions. For example, the Commission agreed that past water management activities in South Florida, geared predominantly toward satisfying urban and agricultural demands, have often ignored the many needs of the natural system, particularly in drought conditions. The Commission, under the consensus approach, has strongly recommended that the South Florida Water Management District establish minimum flows and level describing when withdrawals from a water source must cease. The management strategy proposed is to utilize water more efficiently to avoid ever reaching these critical threshold levels. For the present, the Commission recommends reconsideration of present surface water management practices, examination of present operational and conveyance capabilities, and improved coordination between water use and water control entities to increase water storage in the existing system.

Meeting restoration and future water supply needs for the region is an achievable goal. As our Technical Advisory Committee unanimously agreed in the enclosed water budget report, "It is likely that just a portion of increased flows to the Atlantic estuaries from Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties will be sufficient to meet natural systems needs and increased urban needs." The Committee found that, annually, we are wasting two million acre feet of water by drainage to tide during the typical five month wet season. The challenge is to find ways to retrieve and store that water. In addition to reviewing surface water storage options, we will soon receive and review recommendations from our Technical Advisory Committee on the potential of deep aquifer storage and recovery techniques for storing water supplies for periods of multi-year drought.

While the Commission has noted the serious decline of the Everglades, Florida Bay, the Keys, and other natural system components, it has also found significant urban decline and decay in the southeast counties. This degeneration is particularly evident in the area between the two railroad tracks which were constructed down either side of the coastal ridge by Henry Flagler and the Seaboard Railway. This is the only elevated land expanse in the region which is immune to storm surge. The Commission has earmarked this area for significant redevelopment and redesign. The Commission's vision is one of economically vibrant urban centers that provide a safe, quality, and liveable lifestyle for residents and visitors alike. The Commission's introduction of the "sustainable communities" concept, the "Eastward Ho!" initiative, and the strong emphasis on defining urban development boundaries are three means of rediscovering and re-energizing urban corridors and communities. This also assists in curtailing the sprawl which threatens the remaining integrity of the natural system. The focus on South Florida communities is one of the most creative segments of the Commission's work. The Commission's recommendations are designed to utilize de-regulatory and fiscal incentives rather than command and control techniques to contain sprawl and develop truly sustainable communities.

As a result of consultation with your office and to assist in the Restudy effort, our next immediate objective is to respond to the request of the Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force that the Commission develop its preferred conceptual alternative for Everglades restoration. This effort will enable the Corps to accelerate development of its conceptual restoration plan. This plan can then be submitted for Congressional authorization in advance of the completion of the entire Restudy. We believe that the Restudy must not only focus on Ecosystem restoration, but at the same time, should also focus on the provision of long-term urban and agricultural water supply needs for the future.

The entire membership of the Commission commends you for your foresight in creating a body that can look beyond discrete issues and begin a comprehensive region-wide examination of an interconnected natural system the recovery of which can only be achieved by an understanding of the entirety of its parts. Toward that end, we will continue to focus on fundamental ecosystem restoration issues, address outstanding concerns and serve as your sounding board in forging mechanisms that will move us to a sustainable South Florida. We are prepared to assist in implementing these report recommendations in any manner you deem appropriate.

Sincerely,

*Richard A. Pettigrew*  
*Chairman*

c: Lt. Governor MacKay

Cover Letter--Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida.

Commission Members

Members of the Florida Cabinet

Florida Growth Management Conflict Resolution Consortium

enclosure

# Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida

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## Initial Report

[Cover Letter](#)  
[Report Text](#)

Many of the documents published by this agency are available at libraries in Florida through the State Library's [Florida Public Documents Program](#). They are also available from the State Library of Florida, and are listed in the library's [online catalog](#).



last modified: 06/23/99 12:07:54

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# GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOUTH FLORIDA INITIAL REPORT

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Last updated *November 1, 1995*

Send comments to [info@mail.dos.state.fl.us](mailto:info@mail.dos.state.fl.us).

# PREFACE

## South Florida: A Sustainable Vision For 2020

Anyone who has lived in South Florida more than a decade, has experienced some decline in the quality of life. Whether it is periodic water shortages or flooding, increased urban congestion and traffic, fewer open spaces and natural areas, or increased pollution and crime, the trends are pointing in the wrong direction. Continuing our current course will result in more urban sprawl, dirtier air and water, more plant and animal kills, more overcrowded schools and housing, and growing social and economic disparity. What type of community would we want our children and grandchildren to inherit? The Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida has spent 17 months studying these challenges and trends and now recommends ways to improve the quality of life in South Florida. Vital to this effort is restoring a healthy Everglades system-the heart and soul of South Florida's ecosystem and water supply. We are confident that by working together to build on South Florida's tremendous assets-its human, natural, and economic resources-we can reverse the negative trends and create sustainable communities that are safe, prosperous, and beautiful. **Sustainable communities are those that believe today's growth must not be achieved at tomorrow's expense.**

Our vision for the future of South Florida is represented by the symbol shown below. These three interconnected circles represent the often competing interests of our environment, our people, and our economy. Together our task is to increase the shaded area of common interests until we are integrated into a sustainable circle where all our needs are perfectly balanced. To achieve our vision we are guided by 5 broad principles:

- **Restore Key Ecosystems - restore the Everglades and other ecosystems to provide adequate supplies of clean, safe water for the natural, human, and economic systems;**
- **Achieve a More Clean Healthy Environment - prevent and reverse pollution in South Florida's air, land and water, plants and animals;**
- **Limit Urban Sprawl - establish urban development boundaries to protect environmental resources and encourage urban redesign and redevelopment supported by good public transportation;**
- **Protect Wildlife and Natural Areas - provide for sufficient open space to protect wildlife, and provide natural and recreational areas for public use; and**
- **Create Quality Communities and Jobs - provide life-long education and training to ensure a better educated and higher paid workforce while improving quality of life through better health care, housing, safety, and cultural programs.**

If we continue down the current path of divided special interest groups fighting each other over scarce resources, South Florida's future is grim. That path leads to polluted waters; droughts and floods; fouled beaches; and loss of plants, animals, and reefs. It leads to an increasingly divided society with ethnic and racial tensions, economic disparity and crime. It also leads to overcrowded schools with students that cannot compete in a global economy.

If we come together, we can choose a different path that leads to a brighter vision for South Florida in 2020. We can see a thriving global and hemispheric business center with a happy, well educated, multi-cultural workforce. Our people, our environment, and our economy are operating in balance. We live in a clean, healthy environment supported by a sustainable ecosystem. Education, health care, housing, and public transportation are excellent. We share a sense of the common good with greater economic equity and appreciation for our multi-cultural diversity. We understand and support the concepts of sustainability. We are all inter-dependent with each other and our environment. Our symbol now looks like the one shown below, and we are proud to pass South Florida on to our children and grandchildren.

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Last updated *November 2, 1995*

# Executive Summary

The Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida was created by Executive Order 94-54 to make recommendations for achieving a healthy Everglades ecosystem that can coexist and be mutually supportive of a sustainable South Florida economy and quality communities. What follows is the Commission's Initial Report to the Governor and the Cabinet that presents its findings and recommendations pursuant to the tasks delineated in the executive order. The October 1, 1995 Initial Report was unanimously adopted at the Commission's September 1995 meeting. In addition, the 5 non-voting federal members of the Commission offered strong endorsement and support of the Initial Report.

South Florida, including the Everglades ecosystem, its densely populated coastal areas, and fertile agricultural lands, is widely recognized as a unique area of state, national, and international importance. The region is an international, commercial, agricultural, and tourist center, with a diverse population that reflects varied ethnic, economic, and social values. The desirability of South Florida's climate, geographic location, cultural and social setting, and thriving economic opportunities has contributed to a population explosion that is predicted to triple the region's population by the year 2050. The by-products of such growth, including sprawling development patterns, water management activities required to support human needs, and conversion of agricultural land to urban and suburban uses have had increasingly negative impacts on the Everglades ecosystem. This system, which is a world ecological treasure and the major source of fresh water for the citizens of South Florida, is showing alarming signs of stress.

The situation that faces the region today is not one where we can choose between having either a healthy environment or a strong economy in South Florida—the two are inseparable. Many people fail to realize the unavoidable link between the human community and the natural system surrounding it. The human community is dependent on the surrounding natural system for public health, safety, and welfare; continued economic viability; and enhanced quality of life. The natural environment is self-perpetuating, but it depends on the future wisdom of its human inhabitants for its continued survival.

After 17 months of work, the Commission reached the following conclusions about the present state of the region and recommendations for the future. This summary provides an overview of the major themes identified by the Commission and some of the specific actions it recommends.

## Section A. Manage Water to Achieve a Sustainable South Florida

Water resources have always been a defining factor in South Florida. Historically, the natural system was self-perpetuating but inhospitable to human habitation. The Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project (C&SF), one of the largest drainage systems in the world, was begun in the 1950s in order to accommodate urban and agricultural development. Approximately one half of the original Everglades have been drained and as a result, water is now being discharged to tide in unprecedented amounts and velocities.

The construction of the C&SF allowed increased urban and suburban development and augmented agricultural uses. At the same time, increases in demand resulting from this growth create stress on the remaining natural system. Population and agricultural distribution patterns, the former concentrated in coastal areas and the latter predominantly in the interior, continue to affect current and future water demands.

Currently there are approximately 200 water management-related plans which are largely uncoordinated and inconsistent. Most of South Florida has been designated a "Critical Water Supply Problem Area" and large capital investments over the next decades will be needed for restoration, protection, and the provision of increased water supply to the region.

### Commission Objectives

- To coordinate and integrate water management and restoration plans and ensure such plans incorporate principles of sustainability, full cost accounting, ecosystem management, and adaptive management.
- To restore and enhance regional ground water storage.
- To protect ground and surface water capacity through development of alternative sources of water and other operational and allocation schemes.
- To integrate land use with water management.
- To understand the limits of a "managed system" and set realistic flood control goals.

## **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- Assessing, exploring, and changing surface water management systems to allow more water to be stored at higher levels in the ground.
- Identification and development of alternative water sources and conservation activities to protect surface and ground water functions and capacity.
- Identification of South Florida's preferred alternative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Restudy."
- Requiring compatibility between local comprehensive plans and regional water supply plans of the South Florida Water Management District.
- Ensuring that new water demands do not adversely affect the sustainability of the ecosystem.
- Identification of flood prone areas and incorporating these limitations into local comprehensive plans.

## **Section B. Increase Focus on Pollution Prevention**

Pollution reduces the ability of the ecosystem to sustain itself, affecting animal and plant populations living within it (including humans). The cumulative effect of millions of individual decisions compounds the effects of large institutional polluters. Environmental agencies have been relying on traditional means of controlling pollution through permitting, compliance, monitoring and enforcement. Unfortunately, the area's growth has rendered these insufficient. A broader range of strategies is needed. Prevention is less expensive and easier to implement than restoration, mitigation, or cleanup. Education (individual and institutional) is one of the keys to reducing pollution.

### **Commission Objectives**

- To increase the use and effectiveness of pollution prevention measures.
- To improve regional air and water quality for wildlife, humans, and their surrounding environment.

## **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- Assessing the current health of the ecosystem and correcting the problems that are identified.
- Enhanced pollution prevention and control programs.
- Enforcement of water quality rules and standards.
- Improved regulation of construction/demolition debris and enhanced efforts to control illegal dumping.
- Correct septic tank, package plant, and stormwater runoff pollution in the Florida Keys.

## **Section C. Combat the Spread of Exotic Species**

Florida is particularly vulnerable to invasion by exotic (non-indigenous) plant and animal species. These are organisms that spread rapidly and harmfully within natural areas by out-competing native species, primarily due

to lack of natural controls. Existing regulatory programs and sources of funding are not adequate to curtail and control invasive exotics. These now expand over 1.5 million South Florida acres and are rapidly crowding out native species.

### **Commission Objectives**

- To limit the spread and reduce the presence of invasive non-indigenous species in South Florida.

### **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- Expanding the list of prohibited invasive non-native plants.
- Incentive/regulatory approaches to removal of exotics and good land stewardship practices.
- Assessment of extent of invasive non-indigenous animal populations.

## **Section D. Transform Urban Sprawl Into Quality Development Patterns**

Rapid population growth in South Florida is causing the proliferation of urban sprawl—a development pattern characterized by scattered, decentralized, low density development that is not functionally related to adjacent land uses. This results in: the depletion of natural resources, an automobile-dependent society, lack of coordination between land use decisions and siting of mass transit facilities, over crowded schools, increased pollution, inefficient urban design, and rapid conversion of agricultural lands and other open spaces to urban uses. Current growth and development patterns are not sustainable either economically or environmentally.

### **Commission Objectives**

- To establish urban development boundaries and promote infill development and redevelopment.
- To increase the use of better, more compact, and functional urban design.
- To invest in the public transit system to ensure travel choices, mobility, and access. And to manage it to support sustainable development and curtail urban sprawl.
- To acquire, protect, and maintain open space outside of designated urban development boundaries to ensure adequate water storage, public recreation facilities and parks, and agriculture and natural systems support.

### **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- Creation of a "sustainable communities" program with regulatory and fiscal incentives.
- Development of criteria and a process for establishing urban development boundaries.
- Reducing urban sprawl through the local comprehensive planning process.
- Establishing streamlined, expedited permitting to promote infill/redevelopment.
- Launching an "Eastward Ho" initiative aimed at infill/redevelopment in the southeast corridor between and around the Florida East Coast and the CSX railroad tracks between Palm Beach and Dade Counties.
- Investing in public transit, mobility and access.
- Providing alternatives to hurricane evacuation.
- Promoting sustainable urban design and construction.

## **Section E. Toward Higher Employment and Greater Business**

## Opportunities

As South Florida prepares for the 21st century, significant quality of life and standard of living challenges face its residents. Continued enjoyment of the quality lifestyle that has historically attracted residents and visitors to South Florida will largely depend on how the region responds to continued growth and changing national and international economies.

Traditionally, the economy of South Florida has been dominated by construction, agriculture, tourism, and the service demands of a rapidly increasing resident base. Recently, the region has experienced rapid growth in the service sector and stagnation or overall decline in the manufacturing sector. While total employment has increased, per capita income has stalled. A coordinated regional economic development plan is necessary to ensure focus and balance in South Florida's growth.

### Commission Objectives

- To increase high wage employment in the region.
- To attract, support, protect, and retain industries critical to a balanced, quality economy such as: tourism, agriculture, and international trade.

### Recommendation Highlights

The Commission recommends:

- Creation of a regional economic development alliance.
- Expansion of air and seaport infrastructure development and linkages with other transportation modes through intermodal centers.
- Convening of a regional trade summit.
- Promotion of South Florida's natural assets as its underlying strength and uniqueness for tourism.
- Creation of incentives that encourage new technology, new food processing and production and new related businesses within agricultural production areas.
- Establishment of a uniform "green" labeling program that identifies products produced under environmentally sound practices.

## Section F. Improve Quality of Life

In addition to meeting the future needs of the region in terms of water management, environmental protection, urban form, and economic development, other key societal areas must improve to achieve a lasting and sustainable South Florida. These areas include education, housing, health care, safety, and recreational opportunities.

### Commission Objectives

- To create an education system, compatible with the principles of Blueprint 2000, to better address:
  - (1) the need to continually educate and retrain the region's workforce.
  - (2) the needs of business, research and development, and the global market.
- To increase funding of the school system to obviate the current financial shortfall and relieve overcrowded conditions.
- To physically site schools, according to principles of sustainability, and to promote more compact urban development patterns.
- To meet South Florida's residential needs by creating an adequate supply of affordable housing and addressing the requirements of populations with special needs.
- To create open, accessible health delivery systems at the state and national levels.

- To create safe communities in South Florida.
- To create an array of cultural and recreational opportunities that are affordable and available to all.

## **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- Increased funding for education.
- Increased housing availability for the low and very low income households.
- Support for specialized housing programs to keep elders at home or in independent living arrangements.
- Institutionalized and adequately funded community-based law enforcement efforts such as "community policing," equestrian and bike patrols, AmeriCorps, and Citizens on Patrol.
- Shared and extended use of public facilities for recreational purposes.

## **Section G. Regional Governance: Intergovernmental Coordination and Partnerships.**

Governance and planning in South Florida involve a very large number of agencies. In many cases the efforts of these agencies are not coordinated. Additionally, in many instances overlapping jurisdictions and the lack of consistent time frames further complicate planning in the region. A regional framework must be developed to ensure that plans are coordinated, get implemented, and provide long-term protection of public investments and natural values.

Some intergovernmental efforts are currently underway to coordinate South Florida ecosystem restoration efforts. Additionally, the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida can provide a coordinated planning framework critical to achieving sustainability in the region. To effect intergovernmental coordination in implementing regional planning, the Commission proposes the creation of an Everglades Charter and Everglades Partnership. The charter is conceptualized as eventually supplanting the present South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, which is principally made up of federal assistant secretary level officials. The charter would better represent state, regional, and local jurisdictions. The partnership is conceived as a consortium of public and private institutions and individuals working cooperatively to ensure that the Everglades ecosystem is restored and maintained through an objective, scientific peer-review process involving a "think tank" of federal, state, regional, local, and university resources. Furthermore, the Commission believes it should continue to act as a liaison among a variety of stakeholders, including all entities involved with planning and regulation in South Florida.

### **Commission Objectives**

- To improve regional governance and planning coordination, cooperation and effectiveness.

## **Recommendation Highlights**

The Commission recommends:

- The creation of an Everglades Charter and Partnership.
- Implementation and funding for the Monroe County 2010 Comprehensive Plan.
- Creation of countywide or greater water supply entities.

## **Section H. Improve Scientific Understanding and Information Coordination**

Adequate, accessible, and scientifically valid information is a critical tool in any management plan. The challenge in providing such information for ecosystem management in South Florida is the need to synthesize and unify data produced by a variety of governmental programs and environmental projects, dealing with a number of issue areas across diverse political boundaries. Increased coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and regional scientific research and management agencies will be essential.

## Commission Objectives

- To develop a common scientific data pool (GIS) to be used for implementing ecosystem management in South Florida.
- To establish and coordinate science and research priorities for the South Florida ecosystem.

## Recommendation Highlights

The Commission recommends:

- Identify science research priority needs for the South Florida ecosystem, inventory available data, and develop a GIS network for ecosystem managers.
- Development of modelling, monitoring, and special studies action plans for the South Florida ecosystem.

**Note to Readers:** While the report addresses numerous subject areas and makes 110 detailed recommendations, time constraints, the size of the task at hand, and the ongoing nature of the drafting process prevent it from being exhaustive. Important subject areas such as energy production and consumption, global population growth, and inclusion of additional sectors of the economy in the "Critical Industries in the Region" section, will be addressed in future deliberations of the Commission.

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Last updated *November 1, 1995*

Send comments to [locator@dlis.state.fl.us](mailto:locator@dlis.state.fl.us).

# MISSION STATEMENT

"There are no other Everglades in the world" (Douglas, 1947). All life in southern Florida is influenced by this vast ecosystem. It is the mission of the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, representing diverse interests, to develop recommendations and public support for regaining a healthy Everglades ecosystem with a sustainable economy and quality communities. The Commission will recommend a 5-year action plan containing strategies, actions, and measures of success to the Governor and the South Florida community for achieving positive change that enhances the ecological, economic, and social systems upon which South Florida and its communities depend. Once implemented, these strategies will bolster the regional economy, promote quality communities, secure healthy South Florida ecosystems, and assure today's progress is not achieved at tomorrow's expense.

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**It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there will be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.**

**- Gandhi**

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Last updated *November 2, 1995*

Send comments to [locator@dlis.state.fl.us](mailto:locator@dlis.state.fl.us).