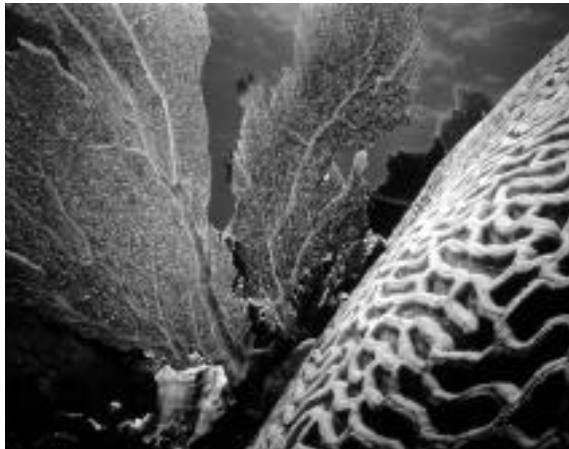


VISION AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The participants in the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force share a vision:

A healthy South Florida ecosystem that supports diverse and sustainable communities of plants, animals, and people

To this end, hundreds of different entities have been working for over a decade to restore and preserve more natural hydrology, to protect the spatial extent and quality of remaining habitat, to promote the return of abundant populations of native plants and animals, and to foster human development compatible with sustaining a healthy ecosystem. These efforts, which are described in detail in the "Work



Courtesy of SFWMD

Goals and Objectives" section of this report, will continue. The results will be continuously analyzed to provide restoration managers with increasingly comprehensive information about what remains to be done to achieve ecosystem restoration. This process, called *adaptive assessment* is described in the "Restoration Strategy" section of this report.

The task force members believe that the efforts described in this report, managed through an adaptive assessment process, will achieve the restoration of the ecosystem: The region's rich and varied habitats will be restored to health. Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee, St. Lucie, and other estuaries, the Everglades, the mangroves, the coastal marshes, and the sea-



Courtesy of SFWMD

grass beds and coral reefs of Florida and Biscayne Bays will become healthy feeding, nesting, and breeding grounds for diverse and abundant fish and wildlife. The American crocodile, manatee, snail kite, Cape Sable seaside sparrow, and other endangered species will recover. The large nesting rookeries of herons, egrets, ibis, and storks will return. Fishermen, farmers, tourism-dependent businesses, and associated economies will benefit from a viable, productive, and aesthetically beautiful resource base.

The appropriate agencies will track progress toward restoring the ecosystem through approximately 200 performance measures developed as part of the *Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan* plus additional measures for areas not covered by the CERP, such as the *South Florida Multi-Species Recovery Plan*. These measures, which range from the number of acres of periphyton in Everglades



Courtesy of Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

marshes to the frequency of water supply restrictions in urban and agricultural areas, represent the myriad physical, biological, and human elements that interrelate as parts of the ecosystem and are important to ecosystem health. The agencies will provide data to the task force, which will synthesize the information and report to Congress, the state legislature, and the councils of the tribes.

The following measures are a representative subset of a broader list of indicators for tracking success. Many of these represent end results that may take up to fifty years to realize. Interim targets, which focus on earlier indications of successional change, will allow assessment of incremental progress.

- Improved status for fourteen federally listed threatened or endangered species, and no decline in status for those additional species listed by the state, by 2020
- A 90 percent recovery of the acreage and number of tree islands existing in 1940, and a health index of 0.90 (where 0 = death is imminent, 1 = completely stress free) (Interim target: A 20 percent improvement in the general health index of the tree islands, and no further loss in the total number of tree islands by 2020)
- Healthy oyster beds in major estuaries, such as the St. Lucie Estuary and those in Biscayne Bay
- Four thousand nesting pairs of wood storks in the Everglades and Big Cypress basins (Interim target: Fifteen hundred nesting pairs by 2010)
- Water quality within the Everglades ecosystem that meets federal, state, and tribal water quality standards
- A lakewide average phosphorus concentration of 40 parts per billion (ppb) total in the open-water regions of Lake Okeechobee
- Water provided to all users during droughts up to the level of severity of a one-in-ten-year frequency of occurrence
- Nesting roseate spoonbills in the coastal zone of the southwestern Gulf Coast between Lostman's River and the Caloosahatchee River; and 1,000 nesting pairs in Florida Bay, including 250 nesting pairs in northeast Florida Bay
- A 65-75 percent coverage of Florida Bay with high-quality seagrass beds
- A long-term average rate of commercial harvest of pink shrimp on the Dry Tortugas fishing grounds that equals or exceeds the 600 pounds per vessel-day rate that occurred during the years 1961-1962 to 1982-1983; and an amount of large shrimp in the long-term average catch exceeding 500 pounds per vessel-day
- An average annual loading to the St. Lucie Estuary of no more than 400 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 acre-feet of discharge
- The capture and storage of most of the excess freshwater currently lost to the ocean and the gulf, and delivery of the water when and where it is needed

It is important to understand that the "restored" Everglades of the future will be different from any version of the Everglades that has existed in the past. While it is very likely to be more healthy than the current ecosystem, it will not completely match the predrainage system. The irreversible physical changes made to the ecosystem make a complete match impossible. The restored Everglades will be smaller and somewhat differently arranged than the historic ecosystem. However, it will have recovered those hydrological and biological characteristics that defined the original Everglades and made it unique among the world's wetland systems. It will evoke the wildness and richness of the former Everglades.