Student worksheet

Our environment

Save the Everglades !

America's unique wetlands are in serious difficulty

Among the most famous and visited national parks in America, the spectacular Florida "Everglades" are dying. To save their rich natural ecosystems, with their birds, reptiles and many other species, the US Congress has set up the biggest environmental program in American history. But the costs are enormous, and things are not advancing very fast.

Florida's "Everglades", the largest national park in the eastern USA, are in serious danger. One of the most significant areas of "wetland" in the world, and classified by UNESCO as a "World ***Heritage*** Site", the park has suffered dramatically over the last sixty years on account of ***encroaching*** agriculture and the vast expansion of Florida's population. If the decline is not stopped, the entire ecosystem of southern Florida could be irreparably damaged - and the sunshine state, one of the fastest growing states in the USA, could become an ***inhospitable*** wasteland.

Back in the year 2000, in order to prevent just such a catastrophe, and ensure the survival of America's most distinctive National Park, Congress approved a 30-year 8.2 billion dollar Everglades rescue plan, the largest concerted environmental project the world had ever known.

Estimated at 10,700 square miles (27,700 km2), the original Everglades area was home to a fantastically rich and diverse range of wildlife; but in recent decades, this wildlife has already been ***decimated***. It is estimated that the water-bird population of the Everglades has fallen by 93% in the last forty years.

As a "wetland" region, the whole environment of the Everglades depends on the flows of water into and out of its vast area of natural ***swampland***.

Before modern agriculture and drainage ***schemes*** began to change the hydrology of the whole of southern Florida, water that fell on the central part of the Florida Peninsula used to flow regularly and naturally into the great Lake Okeechobee, the large lake at the northern end of the Everglades region. From there, it would flow out slowly and regularly in a southerly direction, through the Everglades, and into the Gulf of Mexico.

Since the 1940's, this natural system has been radically modified. Over 1,700 miles of canals have been built, in order to control the risk of flooding, to provide water for Florida's growing population, and drain land for agriculture and house-building. Today a large amount of the water that flows into Lake Okeechobee is rapidly evacuated through man-made canals, out into the Atlantic Ocean.

The quality of the water entering the Everglades has also suffered, as a result of increasing use of phosphate fertilizers in the agricultural region to the north of Lake Okeechobee.

The Everglades restoration program is attempting to reverse the recent course of events, and undo some of the damage. It calls for the removal of some 240 miles of canals and ***levees***, and the creation of six enormous reservoirs to supply water for Southern Florida's growing cities. In south west Florida, more than 20 miles of Highway 41 will need to be rebuilt. At present, this road cuts right across the southern Everglades west of Miami, on a raised levee, effectively cutting the area in half. The plan calls for twenty miles of this levee to be replaced by bridges, allowing free flow of water from one side to the other.

The Everglades rescue program was ***prompted*** by the publication in 1998 of a 4000 page report, produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. According to the report, the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) water supply system was designed to serve 2 million people, but more than 6 million people now live in the area, and the population is expected to reach 12 to 15 million by 2050. This explosive growth has ***strained*** the system's ability to perform its intended functions, and the Everglades are seriously threatened.

In a review published ion 2012, the US national Research Council found that work to protect the Everglades was moving at a very slow pace. Unless more progress was made, the outlook for the future would not be good, and large parts of the Everglades' vital and remarkable ecosystems might be damaged beyond repair.

WORDS

heritage: *inheritance, patrimony* - **encroach:** *advance* - **inhospitable:** *uninhabitable* decimate *: massively reduce* - **swamp:** *very wet land* - **scheme:** *system, project* - **levee:** *dyke, bank* - **prompt:** *cause* - **strain:** *damage*

Interactive worksheet
Save the Everglades

Replace the missing prepositions in this extract from the article

As a "wetland" region, the whole environment _____ the Everglades depends _____ the flows _____ water _____ and _____ _____ its vast area _____ natural swampland. Before modern agriculture and drainage schemes began to change the hydrology _____ the whole _____ southern Florida, water that fell _____ the central part _____ the Florida Peninsula used to flow regularly and naturally _____ the great Lake Okeechobee, the large lake _____ the northern end _____ the Everglades region. _____ there, it would flow _____ slowly and regularly _____ a southerly direction, _____ the Everglades, and _____ the Gulf _____ Mexico.

Since the 1940's, this natural system has been radically modified. Some 1,700 miles _____ canals have been built, _____ order to control the risk _____ flooding, to provide water _____ Florida's growing population, and drain land _____ agriculture and house-building. Today a large amount _____ the water that flows _____ Lake Okeechobee is rapidly evacuated _____ man-made canals, _____ the Atlantic Ocean.