



Clean Water Act Rule Protects Florida's Water, Wetlands, and Economy

Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency have proposed a new rule clarifying Clean Water Act protections for many streams, wetlands, and other waters critical to Florida's and the nation's water resources, wildlife and economy.

Because of confusion created by two Supreme Court cases in 2001 and 2006 over what waters are protected or not, many have been at increased risk of pollution and destruction for more than a decade. The sad result is a significant increase in wetland losses nationwide, the first increase since the 1980s.

Florida Is Especially Vulnerable to Wetland and Water Resource Impacts

Florida has already lost almost half of its historic wetlands – more acres than any other state except Alaska. Without the proposed rule clarification, Florida could lose many thousands more acres. All this while taxpayers are spending billions of dollars to restore the Everglades' wetlands. Recent science reports indicate two acres of coastal wetlands are destroyed for every one restored.

Audubon and other scientists have documented the 90% decline in nesting of imperiled wood storks and wading birds at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and throughout the Everglades. This is largely due to the historic and still ongoing destruction of wetlands.

Florida's 1,300 miles of coastline also make it susceptible to sea level rise's flooding and saltwater ruining public water supplies – while the state's population will nearly double in coming years. Stopping wetland destruction in all these watersheds is critical to mitigating these problems and for Florida's future. See map on page 2.

What the Rule Does:

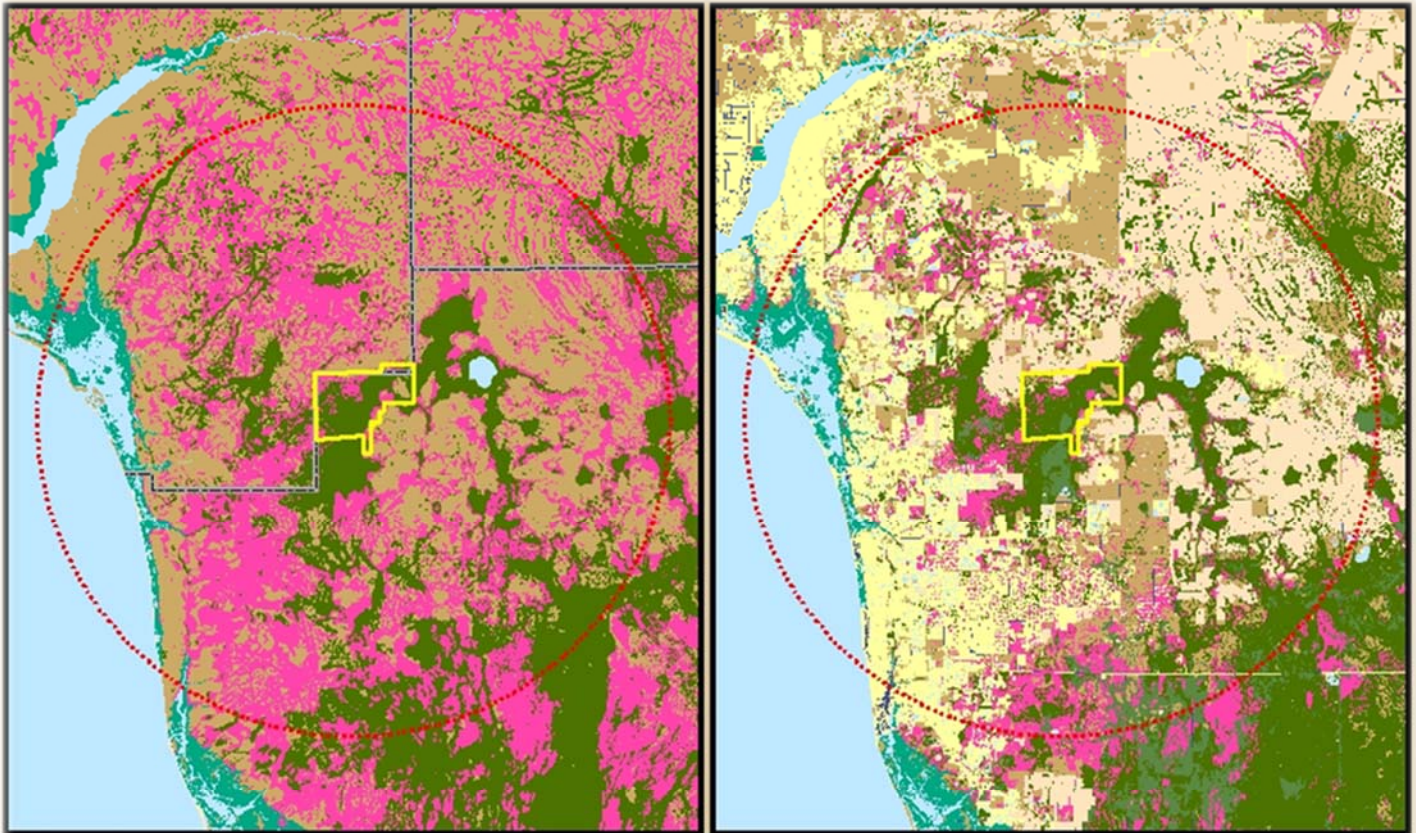
- Restores Clean Water Act protection to most streams and wetlands, always historically protected, in two main types of waters: 1) Tributaries to waters already protected; and 2) Wetlands, lakes and other waters adjacent or within the floodplain of these tributaries.
- Gives clarity and certainty in permits, saving applicants, agencies and the public time and money. Economic analysis shows twice the benefits as the costs: an estimated \$390 million to \$510 million annually of economic benefits to the public, more than double the costs of about \$160 million to \$278 million per year.

Challenge: EPA and the Corps have received volumes of letters from land development interests and the farm industry in opposition to this proposed clarifying rule and may abandon it unless there is more public support. Floridians have a particular interest in supporting the proposed Clean Water Act rule.

Audubon's Recommendations:

- Florida and the nation must first stop destroying and polluting its wealth of wetlands and water resources. That will require implementing and enforcing better rules, such as this proposal by the Corps and EPA. Only then can we all fulfill the promise of essential ecosystem restoration in the greater Everglades and iconic wetlands and waters across the nation.
- Floridians and Americans are urged to send their comments to EPA and the Army Corps in support of this proposed Clean Water Act rule clarification. It is more than ten years overdue. All sides on clean water and wetlands, including Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, asked for this rule clarification. Participating in that rulemaking process is how everyone's views can be considered. The deadline is November 14, 2014.

Clean Water Act Rule Protects Florida's Water, Wetlands, and Economy



Shallow wetland losses: Predevelopment to 2004 Land Cover

SWFFS PDVM dataset:
2004 LULC dataset SFWMD

- ⋯ Core Foraging Area
- Shallow wetlands
- Deep wetlands
- other wetlands
- Tidal wetlands
- Water
- Corkscrew Swamp
- Uplands
- Agriculture
- Urban/Built-up
- Canals



Corkscrew
Swamp
Sanctuary

Miles
0 1.5 3 6 9 12

Note: The South Florida Water Management District Predevelopment Map, & 2004 Land Use Land Cover map for 2004 were used to create this map. Land Cover categories are based on FLUCCS.

Wood Stork Nesting at Corkscrew (1958- 2013)

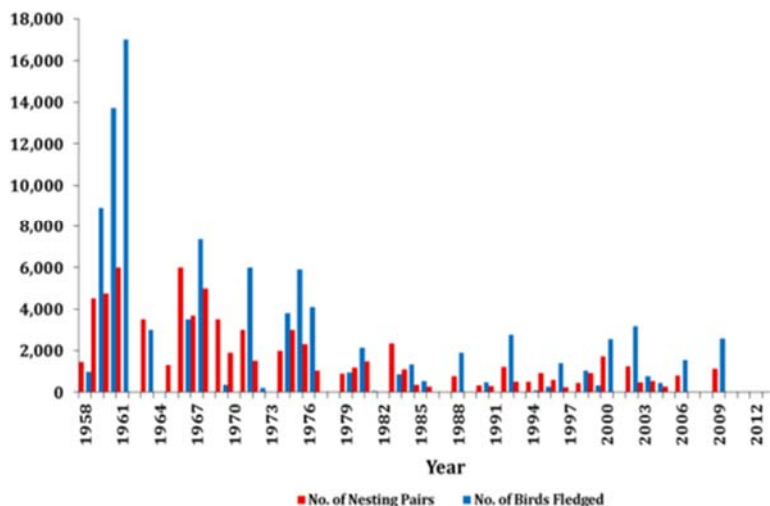


Figure 1. (above) Pink on maps are shallow wetlands—critical for stork nesting success. Note huge decline from historic (left map) to 2004.

Figure 2. (left) This graph shows the corresponding 90% decline in storks nesting at Corkscrew Swamp. This is happening across the Everglades for wading birds.