



A GROUNDSWELL OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

Nationally, collective public conscience persistently pushes environment into the political limelight. On April 22, 1970, the efforts reach full bloom with the declaration of the nation's first Earth Day. A groundswell of environmentalism gathers strength in Florida. Jetport construction in the Everglades and completion of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal are successfully halted by the environmental community. Major legislation is passed, and 1972 becomes a watershed year for Florida's water resources. Florida's population reaches 9.7 million in 1980; more than 3.8 million people are living in South Florida.



1970

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is signed into law by President Richard Nixon. The Act mandates federal agencies and the programs they fund to consider environmental impacts before taking any significant action.

1973

Federal government enacts Endangered Species Act. The Act is designed to protect threatened and endangered species through the conservation of ecosystems where they live.

1971

Governor Reubin Askew holds conference on water management. It marks "the beginning of a new design with nature for South Florida," according to the governor. Participants recommend development of a comprehensive water use plan for the state, underscoring the importance of establishing environmental and water quality controls, and ask for restoration of lakes and marshes.



The key deer was on the first list of endangered species protected by the 1973 federal legislation

1972

Florida Water Resources Act is passed. The state creates five regional water management districts responsible for all surface and underground waters within their boundaries. Responsibilities are broadened to include water supply, water quality, flood protection and natural systems management.



1976

The Flood Control District is renamed the South Florida Water Management District. The geographic boundary changes to reflect the hydrology of the region rather than political limits.

1976

The Kissimmee River Restoration Act is passed by Congress. The Act formally authorizes initiatives to restore the integrity of the river and to revive some of its lost ecological values. Drastically altered floodplains are no longer able to support the diverse array of plants or huge populations of fish and wildlife that once called the Kissimmee home.

1970

1971

1972

1973

1976

1981

1981

South Florida faces severe drought. Salt water encroaches into freshwater supplies, small lakes turn into puddles and the air fills with smoke from the burning Everglades.



An Everglades muck fire



1981

State passes Resource Rivers Act. The Save Our Rivers program is established, allowing water management districts to acquire environmentally sensitive land to manage, protect and conserve the state's water resources.