

Professional mediation can help Everglades restoration

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A broker could be the key to saving the Florida Everglades.

That is one of the recommendations put forth by a team of FIU

researchers to improve wetland restoration in South Florida.

Independent mediators – what the researchers call "[wetland restoration brokers](#)" – could help navigate the economic and political pressures that make restoring wetlands and other natural resources challenging. A broker could help settle conflicts among stakeholders, and even conflicts between stakeholders and the environment, said Luca Marazzi, author of the paper.

"Wetland restoration needs to benefit people and nature in a balanced way," said Marazzi, a postdoctoral researcher in FIU's School of Environment, Arts and Society. "To effectively restore wetlands, conflicts between stakeholder interests need to be solved and the Everglades' environmental complexity needs to be managed."

The research team analyzed [restoration](#) progress in the Everglades, the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia and other wetlands throughout the world. In addition to hiring a broker, they also recommend:

- Researching what environmental conditions were like before people impacted the wetlands
- Forecasting future environmental and social conditions
- Securing more input from social science researchers
- Developing wetland management plans that address the needs of people and the environment

The Everglades is home to threatened plants and animals, it absorbs flood waters from storms, and it feeds into the water supplies of [33 percent of Floridians](#). Since 1945, it has been drained to half of what it was for agriculture and urban development. In 2000, Congress developed the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan to increase freshwater flow throughout the wetland. The more than 60 projects proposed were expected to be completed by 2030. But, because of South Florida's

booming population growth, economic development and environmental complexity, they will likely not be completed before 2060. Wetland degradation is not limited to South Florida: people have destroyed nearly 87 percent of the world's [wetlands](#), according to the paper.

More information: Balancing Wetland Restoration Benefits to People and Nature. *The Solutions Journal*. www.thesolutionsjournal.com/articles/balancing-wetland-restoration-benefits-people-nature/

Provided by Florida International University

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