

Focus on endangered bird harms Florida Bay

HIGHLIGHTS

Cape Sable seaside sparrow at the heart of the bay's crisis

Order to protect sparrow curtails needed flow of fresh water into the bay

Action fails to consider overall health of the Everglades and Florida Bay



BY SAM ACCURSIO

www.sfwmd.gov

The environmental crisis in Florida Bay this past year was well documented, but one of its causes is many miles to the north and not well publicized. During near-drought conditions last summer, Florida Bay became way too salty and low in oxygen, causing a yellow fog to cloud the water, killing seagrasses and fish and threatening the

entire ecosystem. The bay was crying out for more fresh water from its primary source: Everglades National Park.

Beginning in January, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) was delivering clean water to help rescue Florida Bay by altering canal and pump operations in south Miami-Dade County. But our efforts were hindered by an action, related to the U.S. Endangered Species Act and enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that focused water management on a single wildlife species while failing to consider the overall health of the Everglades and Florida Bay.

This federal restriction, based on preference for one animal — the Cape Sable seaside sparrow — significantly limited our ability to provide water and help the bay's ecosystem and all its wildlife.

More comprehensive, forward-looking strategies assure better outcomes for our environment, especially in water management. SFWMD strongly prefers a balanced approach in managing its 2,000 miles of canals, three vast conservation areas, Kissimmee chain of lakes and coastal estuaries. Decisions by this agency, and our water resource recommendations to federal interests, are formulated to help balance the overall system.

ADVERTISING

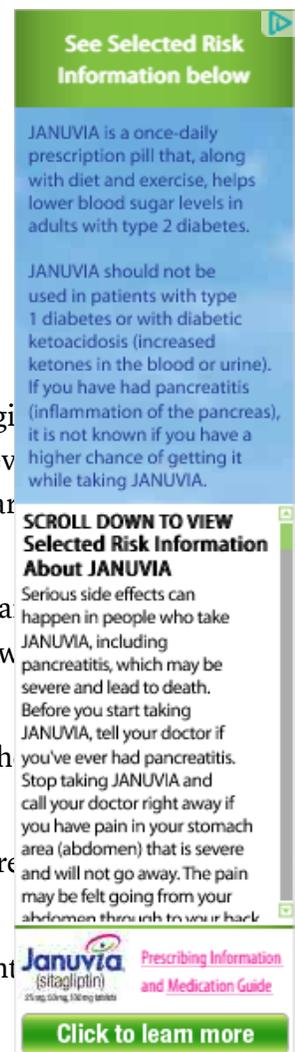
But since 1999, at the direction of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers closed very large water control gates along Tamiami Trail leading into Everglades National Park, preventing water from November to July every year supposedly to protect the sparrow. This has parched the park and deprived of much needed fresh water.

Further, the Center for Biological Diversity sued the federal government last year to prevent a closure of these gates. This group has long advanced its narrow agenda that does not benefit the sparrow or all the other species in Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

I agree that protection of the sparrow is important, as is protecting all species that reside in the bay. However, the data do not support the original purpose of keeping the gates closed.

Since the limitations on using the gates took effect, the number of sparrows in the affected area has continued to drop, from 28 adult birds in 2000 to only about 13 in 2015.

Closing the gates each year cuts in half the volume of clean water that can be moved south into the bay, eventually into Florida Bay.



See Selected Risk Information below

JANUVIA is a once-daily prescription pill that, along with diet and exercise, helps lower blood sugar levels in adults with type 2 diabetes.

JANUVIA should not be used in patients with type 1 diabetes or with diabetic ketoacidosis (increased ketones in the blood or urine). If you have had pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), it is not known if you have a higher chance of getting it while taking JANUVIA.

SCROLL DOWN TO VIEW Selected Risk Information About JANUVIA

Serious side effects can happen in people who take JANUVIA, including pancreatitis, which may be severe and lead to death. Before you start taking JANUVIA, tell your doctor if you've ever had pancreatitis. Stop taking JANUVIA and call your doctor right away if you have pain in your stomach area (abdomen) that is severe and will not go away. The pain may be felt going from your abdomen through to your back.

Januvia (sitagliptin) Prescribing Information and Medication Guide

Click to learn more

Closure also causes water to back up in the conservation areas north of the park, which endangers wildlife and prevents more water from being moved south out of Lake Okeechobee.

As we've seen this winter, a too-full system south of the lake leaves the Corps of Engineers with few other options after heavy rains than to release damaging water into the coastal estuaries, where it is destructive.

Clearly, it is time to focus on a much broader approach.

Allowing the gates to be opened year round on an as-needed basis to hydrate the Everglades National Park will better protect the many ecosystems surrounding the Everglades and Florida Bay. The time has come for management decisions that take into account South Florida's entire ecosystem and actions that will benefit *all* that we cherish here.

Sam Accursio is a member of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board.



MORE OP-ED

YOU MAY LIKE

Sponsored Links by Taboola

A new MMORPG where you can meet a dragon. Click Here to Try!

Stormfall: Free Online Game

Motel owner spied on couples having sex for decades

McClatchy Most Interesting

Octopus found lodged in boy's throat; mother's boyfriend arrested | Lexington Herald-Leader

McClatchy Most Interesting

17 facts about FOX News anchor Megyn Kelly

PoliticsChatter

COMMENTS

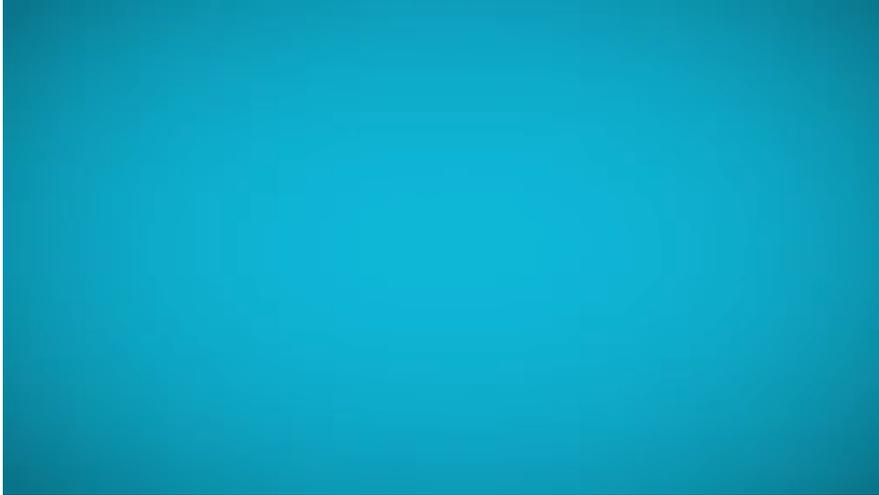
0 Comments

Sort by **Oldest**



Add a comment...

 Facebook Comments Plugin



NY Representative Peter King Will "Take Cyanide" If Cruz Gets Nomination

While appearing on MSNBC's 'Morning Joe,' New York Representative Peter King gave his unabashed opinion on Republican candidate Ted Cruz. When ...

SPONSORED CONTENT



SPONSORED CONTENT

How to Manage Your Money: 17 Myths Debunked

Here is a list of the top myths in finance.

By Huizenga College of Business & Entrepreneurship

