



U.S. Sugar Program: The Cost to the Environment

Not only is the U.S. sugar program one of the most egregious examples of government intrusion and wasteful spending, it is also contributing to the destruction of the Everglades ecosystem and the marine life it supports. Decades of unchecked pollution from sugar-producing areas have poisoned the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. The massive efforts to clean up the pollution and protect South Florida’s environment have been largely borne by the taxpayers and not the primary polluter: the sugar-producing industry.

According to a 2012 report by RTI International, commissioned by The Everglades Foundation, about 76 percent of the phosphorus entering and polluting the Everglades is from agriculture, primarily sugar production. Meanwhile, only 24 percent of phosphorus cleanup costs are paid by agriculture — sugar producers included.

Who Is Polluting America’s Everglades?



Based on phosphorus produced by each sector (260 metric tons/year).

Who Is Paying for Cleanup?



Based on funding sources for nutrient removal in the Everglades (\$106 million/year).

“Phosphorus from the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), as well as sugar demanding water be wasted to sea, continues to be the biggest impediments to a healthy Everglades. Well over half of the EAA’s 700,000 acres is owned by Big Sugar. ... While our state is in court over pollution of the Everglades, Big Sugar stays put in the EAA, raking in profits and forcing the Army Corps of Engineers along with other state and federal agencies to try to save the Everglades by working around their massive operations and forcing Florida and American taxpayers to foot the bill to clean up its pollution.”

**- Mary Barley, Founder,
Everglades Trust**

Only Congress Can Reform the U.S. Sugar Program.