

Bill Leary  
EVG-17

Bill Leary, Council on Environmental Quality, opens the interview with his interpretation of the factors that led to present problems in the Everglades (page 1). He details the watershed events that led to more restoration efforts and CERP while outlining his work history on pages 2-3. In response to the Dexter Lehtinen lawsuit against the state of Florida, Leary discusses the legislature's involvement and the ineffective attempt to solve the problems through the formation of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Everglades Protection Act (pages 4-5).

To continue he mentions the Gore Plan—the legislation he wrote for Bruce Babbitt after returning to work on Everglades issues from Washington (pages 6-7). Next Leary reacts to the Everglades Forever Act and gives the Department of Interior's reaction. He also details the misgivings the Miccosukee tribe and environmental groups had against the lenient treatment of sugar growers and the tension between the Department of Interior and environmental groups (pages 8-9).

Then Leary details his involvement in the South Florida Restoration Task force. He notes the effectiveness of it before and after it was expanded to include non-federal agencies, the reasons for the expansion, its leadership, and its shortcomings (pages 10-13). He discusses the Task Force's involvement in the Corps restudy process and the importance that the Governor's Commission and the conceptual plan provided in building a consensus on pages 13-14.

Leary explains the Babbitt Plan for Everglades restoration (which was designed for budget decisions) and the government's response to it (pages 15-16). He also discusses the 1996 Farm Bill. On page 17 he goes over the provisions of the bill and how the Department of Interior chose lands for acquisition. Leary gives his opinion of why the Talisman landholding was necessary to acquire and the process of and people involved in reaching a final settlement on pages 18-19.

From the Talisman issue Leary moves on to evaluate the restudy process by the Corps of Engineers. He specifically discusses the issues the Department of Interior was concerned with during the study and the Park Service's reaction to the initial study draft (pages 20-22). Leary also covers the controversy and possible justifications of the paragraph in the Chief's Report that addressed the Department of Interior's request for additional water (pages 22-23).

On pages 24-26 Leary covers the process of developing what became the Water Development Act of 2000 and of gaining the assurance that state government would reserve enough water for restoring the natural system. Then Leary outlines the importance of the Everglades as a driver for the passage of the bill and all the people who cooperated to make it happen (pages 26-28).

Next Leary gives criteria for evaluating the Comprehensive Plan's successes and failures (pages 28-30). One major issue that could affect restoration is the Eight-and-a-Half-Square-Mile-Area (pages 30-31). Inter-agency conflicts, especially between the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, is another concern (pages 32-33). Leary discusses the practicality of using the methods of success in the Everglades in other ecosystem management initiatives on pages 33-34. Leary concludes with his take on the most important goal of the restoration project (page 35).