

WATER



Tamiami Trail | Photo by Dawn Shirreffs

6.5

miles of road will be elevated or bridged along Tamiami Trail

70%

of the historic water flow of the Everglades has been lost



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America's Everglades: Bridging Tamiami Trail

Everglades was the first national park dedicated for its unique ecology. However, the biological integrity of the ecosystem is increasingly jeopardized due to altered water flows stemming from years of development in South Florida. Elevating Tamiami Trail is a vital step for restoring water sheet flow to the Southern Everglades to preserve the remaining natural landscape of the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay.

Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41/SR 90) is a National Scenic Byway that connects Tampa to Miami. It forms a portion of the northern boundary of Everglades National Park (ENP) and provides access to one of the most popular areas of the park – Shark Valley and the iconic observation tower. The road is the only way to access the Big Cypress National Preserve Visitor Center and Headquarters.

Since the 1920s, Tamiami Trail has acted as a dam, impeding the natural north-south flow of water through the Everglades ecosystem. As a result, ENP is starved of vital water, causing deterioration of the park's wading bird and wildlife habitat and its unique ridge and slough landscape.

Meanwhile, while areas north of the road are drowning with too much flow. This includes the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) that are home to deer and other terrestrial wildlife on tree island habitat.

In 1989, Congress recognized the need for restorative action and authorized the Modified Water Deliveries project, which included bridging one mile of Tamiami Trail.

Construction of the first one-mile section of the Tamiami Trail bridge was completed in March 2013!

The first mile of bridging is a success — freshwater is able to flow underneath the bridge, rehydrating ENP and Florida Bay.

2.6 miles of bridging is currently under construction! Thanks to the great leadership and partnership of the federal and state governments, the next 2.6 mile section of Tamiami Trail bridging is under construction. Once complete, and in combination with interrelated restoration efforts, the bridge will allow even more freshwater to flow south. Now, NPCA is looking ahead to the next project element to bring even more benefits to ENP.

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Next Steps: Bridging and Beyond

Once both the one-mile and 2.6-mile bridge sections are complete, the next project component will be road raising along a one-mile section west of the 2.6-mile bridge. This road elevation project will help with the dispersion of water in a more ecologically beneficial path to bring the best ecosystem benefits to Everglades National Park. National Parks Service staff is currently conducting cost assessments and early modeling for the next increment of road raising. NPCA will continue to advocate for this critical restoration project with our federal and state leaders.

At the same time, a suite of projects in South Maimi-Dade will compliment and enhance the ecological benefits delivered by the current and future bridging. Completion and operation of the long-awaited Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park (ModWaters) Project, C-111 Spreader Canal, and C-111 South Dade will be critical. Agencies are now beginning the process of developing Combined Operational Plan (COP) that will dictate how these infrastructure investments will be used, ideally to deliver maximum benefits of freshwater to Everglades National Park. Funding to initiate construction of the Central Everglades Plan (CEP) — especially those projects in the CEP South phase — is also needed to ensure that new water is available to flow under the completed bridge.

Bridging and elevating Tamiami Trail is critical to restoring historic freshwater flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay



Tamiami Trail 2.6 mile bridge construction, June 2017. Photo: Cara Capp, NPCA

