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Exploring Citizen Involvement in the Restoration of the Florida Everglades

Abstract: Faced with land use and natural resource management pressures, it is essential that Extension educators, scientists, land managers, decision-makers and others understand the role that local citizens can play in environmental protection and ecosystem restoration activities. This poster highlights a study of local citizen perceptions, attitudes, and actions, in relation to restoration and protection of the Florida Everglades. Conducted in 2006, the study reflects input from 15 key informants and 388 randomly selected citizens in the southeast Florida counties of Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade. The citizen mail survey questionnaire addressed opinions about the use of natural resources, environmental protection, and restoration efforts in the Everglades, community involvement, pro-environmental behavior, length of residence, and sociodemographic characteristics. A battery of eight items assessed citizen activeness in relation to Everglades restoration and protection. Dillman's Tailored Design Methodology was used in the design and distribution of citizen survey questionnaires. A sampling frame of 1,200 households was compiled from property and telephone records. A total of 388 completed questionnaires were obtained, representing a response rate of 39% (excluding 97 undeliverable cases and 98 refusals.) Bivariate and multivariate analyses provided insight into the attitudes, behaviors, and opinions of residents in the region. The findings of this research suggest that sources of information and views towards restoration activities were the major predictors of citizen involvement. The mixed methods research design used in this project, while developed and applied in one location, will provide important insights that can guide the environmental restorations activities in similar settings.

Everglades, Social Science, Survey, Civic Engagement

Challenges: Public health, wildlife health, ecosystem health and water resource sustainability

Issues: Socioeconomic impacts of water resources decisions / Public perceptions, values and attitudes toward water issues