Marjory Stoneman Douglas and an Everglades Environmentalism

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Abstract

Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998) moved to Florida in 1915, and over the course of the next seven decades, would become one of the sharpest voices campaigning for the protection of the tropic jungle of south Florida and the Everglades. Her Everglades environmentalism was forged in the offices of *The Miami Herald* where she worked as a journalist, with colleagues she served with on the Tropic Everglades National Park Association, an advocacy group for a proposed Everglades National Park, in a landmark contribution to and now classic of Everglades literature, her 1947 work, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, and in the environmental nonprofit organization she founded in 1969, Friends of the Everglades. This chapter examines the environmentalism of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and connects the development of Douglas's bioregionalism ethic and support for Everglades protections with wider discourses of environmental sustainability.

Keywords C20th American literature, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, ecological restoration, environmental protest and activism, environmental policy, Everglades National Park, Friends of the Everglades, sustainability

Introduction

In an interview with the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in November 1982, 92-year-old Florida environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998) stated that, 'Conservation is now a dead word, [...] you can't conserve what you haven't got. That's why we are for restoration' (qtd. in Horton 1982: 3-B LS, cf. Davis 2003a). 'A dead word.' Redundant, obsolete, spare, retired. A grand, stark, provocative declaration on the myth of conservation, issued by the 'grande dame' of the Florida Everglades (Davis 2001, 2003a, 2009). By 1982, Douglas had spent close to seven decades in the Sunshine State—and almost as long as one of the sharpest voices campaigning for the protection of the Everglades. She would continue to lobby for Everglades protections until her death aged 108.

This chapter examines the environmentalism of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and connects the development of Douglas's bioregionalism ethic and support for Everglades protections with wider discourses of environmental sustainability. As with some of the other figures of the sustainability field included in this handbook, Douglas's ethics, politics, and activisms predate the emergence and formalization of the sustainability movement, and sustainable development theory, policy, and practice. Yet Douglas's environmental and social justice legacies can contribute in different sorts of ways to sustainability debates.

The chapter begins by considering Douglas's place amidst Miami conservation politics during the later years of the Progressive era (1890s-1920s), through both her journalism, and her appointment to an Everglades national park advisory group. Douglas moved to Florida in 1915, and worked as a journalist at *The Miami Herald*, where her father was editor-in-chief. She was also an ardent suffragist and social activist. Douglas joined the *Herald* as the society editor, later moving to share general assignment duties, but left after 17 months to serve in the U.S. Naval Reserve in Miami during the First World War, and then with the American Red Cross in Europe after the war ended. She returned to the newspaper in 1920 as assistant editor, with her own daily column, 'The Galley Proof.' It was during her tenure at the *Herald* that Douglas was first introduced to the Everglades problem. After leaving the *Herald* in 1924, Douglas worked as a freelance short story writer, and from the late-1920s was a member of an advisory committee campaigning for a national park in the Everglades (Douglas 1987).

Late in 1947, and one month before the dedication of Everglades National Park, Douglas's first book *The Everglades: River of Grass* (as Douglas 2017) was published. This chapter stays with this text, to examine in particular the quiet politics of environmentalism bound up in the text, and how this works to disrupt and recast ideas of the Everglades. *The Everglades: River of Grass*

(Douglas 2017) quickly positioned Douglas as a leading commentator and authority on the saw grass marshes, mangrove swamps, and forests and hammocks of the Everglades.

The chapter then moves on to discuss how Douglas's park boosterism and lobbying for Everglades protections was further amplified in 1969, when she established the environmental nonprofit organization Friends of the Everglades (FOE), to oppose industrial and commercial development on the northern boundary of Everglades National Park. Douglas and FOE (the 'we' mentioned in her above declaration) together would become leading protagonists in, and a clearinghouse for, Florida conservation politics and policy, environmental activism, and particularly Everglades restoration. The chapter closes by considering Douglas's environmental legacy within the question of Everglades restoration.

Miami conservation politics in the Roaring Twenties and beyond

Marjory Stoneman Douglas's tenure at *The Miami Herald* coincided with an important juncture in the early history of conservation politics in the new city. The city of Miami was founded in 1896, just 19 years before Douglas moved to Florida. Her work as a journalist would place her amidst some of the earliest conservation activisms in south Florida, and would become a primer to the problem of the Everglades.

The decade before Douglas arrived in the state, the murder of a ranger in the southern Everglades fractured the momentum of Progressive era conservation. Guy Morrell Bradley was Audubon Florida's first game warden, patrolling the Everglades, the Florida Keys, and the Ten Thousand Islands. He was killed by a plume hunter in 1905, three years into his post, as he tried to protect a rookery on the two small mangrove islands of Oyster Keys in Florida Bay (see McIver 2009). Audubon Florida was one of several state Audubon societies established at the turn of the

twentieth century, named after American ornithologist and artist John James Audubon, to protect wild birds (and their nests and eggs), and lobby against the plume trade and millinery industry. The state Audubon chapters, together with the American Ornithologists' Union, had earlier helped secure passage of the 1900 Lacey Act, the first federal bird protection legislation in the U.S. (Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009). The Plume Wars were one of the first issues to unfold in the troubled theater of Everglades conservation, and the south Florida peninsula would soon come under threat from land speculation, and dredging and draining infrastructure.

The same year Bradley was killed, the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC) began lobbying for Royal Palm Hammock (or Paradise Key) in the southern Everglades, southwest of Homestead, to be set aside as a state park, to protect the island hammock from the expansion of Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railroad down the state's eastern seaboard. Royal Palm State Park was eventually designated 11 years later in 1916, and was the only state park in the country managed by a women's club (for more Royal Palm State Park history, see Douglas 1987, also Davis 2003a, 2009, Davis and Frederickson 2003, Grunwald 2006, Poole 2015, Smith 2022). The women's club movement was often central to the social and political reform of the Progressive era (on the history of women in Florida conservation, see e.g. Davis and Frederickson 2003, Poole 2015). The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—women's right to vote—would not be passed by Congress until 1919, and was ratified the following year (but would not be ratified in Florida for almost a half-century, until 1969). And it was not until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that women of color secured the right to vote. Douglas's arrival in Florida and early tenure at the *Herald* coincided with the final year of the FFWC's state park campaign, and she used her society page column to report on the progress of FFWC lobbying. The state park campaign was a precursor to a larger Everglades National Park bid beginning in the mid-1920s.

Douglas's entanglements and activisms with the Everglades were a slow burn. In her daily Galley column at the *Herald*, that ran between 1920 and 1923, environmental concerns appeared alongside women's rights, racial justice, literacy and education, child welfare, public health, housing, convict labor leasing and prison reform, and more (echoing her campaigning for social reform, in Douglas 2002, also Douglas 1967, 1987, cf. Davis 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2009, Holmes 2004, Poole 2015, Smith 2022). The Everglades was the subject of some of her columns, and featured in some of her poems and verse that opened her columns. But infrastructure rather than natural history and ecology often framed these Everglades dispatches—as columns described, for example, excursions into the Everglades along the new Tamiami Trail (a Tampa-Miami highway, and the southernmost part of U.S. Highway 41), or commented on urban development projects (in Douglas 2002). Douglas ended her Galley column series on July 31, 1923 with a column about the Miami River and the Everglades—a place, and a motif, that would come to define Douglas's environmentalism ethic (Douglas 2002).

Outside of the newspaper, Douglas continued to curate an interest and education in what would become known as bioregionalism. Bioregionalism, as Doug Aberley (1999: 13) argues, 'is a body of thought and related practice that has evolved in response to the challenge of reconnecting socially-just human cultures in a sustainable manner to the region-scale ecosystems in which they are irrevocably embedded.' It is an environmental philosophy that aligns political boundaries with topographic, biological, and ecological features. Douglas met botanist and plant explorer David G. Fairchild in the early-1920s, and he provided instruction in local flora and fauna, and the biogeography of the Everglades. An early example of Douglas's regionalist sensibility is found in the gardening pamphlet she co-wrote with Mabel White Dorn, *The Book of Twelve for South Florida Gardens* (Dorn and Douglas 1928). Fairchild was chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, and led the Plant

Introduction Garden in Miami. Douglas and Fairchild, together with County Commissioner Charles Crandon, and landscape architect William Lyman Phillips, supported Colonel Robert H. Montgomery in establishing the 83-acre Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables in 1938 (Douglas 1987, cf. Davis 2009). Douglas wrote another pamphlet to promote the botanical garden, *An Argument for a Botanical Garden in South Florida to Be Called the Fairchild Tropical Garden* (Douglas 1937), gave the dedication speech, and also served on the board (Douglas later wrote a biography of Fairchild and his sponsor, benefactor Barbour Lathrop, see Douglas 1973). Douglas was also acquainted with other Everglades scientists, including naturalist Charles Torrey Simpson, botanist John Kunkel Small, and U.S. Geological Service (USGS) hydrologist Garald G. Parker.

Douglas's environmental sustainability ethic would evolve and shift as her understanding of the history and geography of the Everglades deepened. Her early support of 'wise use' conservation policies (popularized by U.S. Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot, a leader of Progressive conservation), to cultivate the 'Empire of the Everglades' (Douglas 1952, cf. Grunwald 2006) was replaced by a more restorationist approach to Everglades protections in the 1940s, as she learned more about the Everglades ecologies and the folly of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) program of engineered Everglades hydrology (see Grunwald 2006 on the history and politics of flood control and water supply programs in the Everglades). As Douglas became established and recognized as a regional writer, she sought to protect the tropic jungle of south Florida and the Everglades. Douglas's interest in bioregionalism fueled her support for the proposal for an Everglades National Park.

In the late-1920s, Douglas joined the Tropic Everglades National Park Association, an advocacy group for an Everglades National Park led by landscape architect and conservationist Ernest F. Coe (on Douglas's national park boosterism, see Douglas 1967, 1987, 2003, 2017, also

Davis and Arsenault 2005, Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009, Smith 2022). Coe was also chair of the Tropical Everglades National Park Commission, the state commission responsible for buying the land parcels. Extending across more than two million acres of the southern Everglades, Coe's proposed Tropic Everglades National Park boundary extended south from below Big Cypress Swamp to the Ten Thousand Islands island chain, Florida Bay and the Florida Keys archipelago, and the coral reefs of the Atlantic (in the 1920s, only Yellowstone National Park was larger). The FFWC also offered Royal Palm State Park for inclusion in Coe's national park bid (Davis 2003a, 2009).

Douglas would make several excursions into the Everglades as the group lobbied for the national park. Yet Douglas (1987) would later write in her autobiography, *Voice of the River*, that:

> Let me say right away that knowing the Everglades does not necessarily mean spending long periods of time walking around out there. Unlike other wilderness areas, where the naturalist is a hiker, camper, and explorer, the naturalist in the Everglades must usually appreciate it from a distance. [...] I know it's out there and I know its importance. I suppose you could say the Everglades and I have the kind of friendship that doesn't depend on constant physical contact. (Douglas 1987: 135, 233)

Her first major exposure to the Everglades came in February 1930, as she joined a tour Coe had organized for a congressional and National Park Service (NPS) delegation reviewing the group's proposal. The tour began with a flight over the Everglades in the Goodyear blimp, and was followed by a three-day bird-watching boat tour in Florida Bay and the southern Everglades (Douglas 1967, 1987, Davis 2003a, 2009, Grunwald 2006, Smith 2022). During the tour, Douglas experienced the immediacy of plume hunters and the feather trade, as egret poachers entered and

decimated some of the rookeries a day after the party departed (Douglas 1967). Several of the short stories that Douglas wrote for *The Saturday Evening Post* during this period were inspired by the February 1930 boat tour—including 'Plumes' in June 1930, 'Wings' in March 1931, and 'A Flight of Ibis' in December 1935 (included in Douglas 1990, 1998, cf. Davis 2003a, 2009).

As lobbying for the subtropical national park moved north to Washington, D.C. and the halls of Congress, Douglas collaborated with U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist Ralph Stoutamire on a Florida Department of Agriculture bulletin, *The Parks and Playgrounds of Florida* (Douglas and Stoutamire 1932), while her 1923 Galley poem 'I Am the Mangrove' was among the materials Coe distributed to members of Congress as part of his lobbying (Davis 2009). Meanwhile, a series of hearings and tours of the Everglades continued. The NPS assembled a special committee to review the national park proposal. A Tropic Everglades National Park bill would circulate in Congress for several years before President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the park authorization bill on May 30, 1934 (but minus the 'Tropic' descriptor).

But it would take more than 13-and-a-half years, and the dissolution and reinstatement of the state Tropical Everglades National Park Commission (although without Coe), several severe boundary revisions and renegotiations, and the completion of land purchases, as well as the dislocation and relocation of some Indigenous communities, amidst the tumult of the first years of the Second World War, before America's 28th national park was established. Less than a quarter the size of Coe's original proposal, the 450,000-acre Everglades National Park was established on December 6, 1947 by President Harry S. Truman in a dedication ceremony in Everglades City (on the legislative history of Everglades National Park, see Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009, Smith 2022). Douglas and Coe were guests at the ceremony. By 1989, the boundary of Everglades National Park had expanded three times, to 1.5 million acres, and today is the third largest national park in the lower 48 states (and the tenth largest in the U.S.). In December 1997,

on the 50th anniversary of Everglades National Park, Congress designated the 1.3-million-acre Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness Area within the national park (Davis 2009). Douglas is one of only 15 people to have their name included in a wilderness area title. Following Douglas's death six months later, park rangers scattered her ashes in the Everglades.

‹Figure 1. Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998). Douglas seated at her desk in her home at 3744 Stewart Avenue, Coconut Grove, Florida, 1985. Photograph courtesy of Florida Memory/State Archives of Florida.›

'There are no other Everglades in the world:' The quiet activisms in/of Douglas's 1947 *The Everglades: River of Grass*

Douglas's work on Coe's national park advisory group was not her only outlet for lobbying for Everglades protections. In the early-1940s, Douglas began work on a book about the Everglades. Douglas's (2017) *The Everglades: River of Grass*, her first book, was published on November 6, 1947, and was the thirty-third volume in Rinehart and Company's Rivers of America series. Everglades National Park was established exactly one month later. Aldo Leopold's (1968) *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*, an emotive and provocative treatise on ecology, aesthetics, and ethics, culminating in his 'The Land Ethic' essay, was published two years later, in 1949 (see Chap. 156, Aldo Leopold).

Douglas was originally approached by Hervey Allen, editor of the Rivers of America series, to write a volume about the Miami River. But Douglas succeeded in expanding the focus to the Everglades—with the hook, after consultation with USGS hydrologist Parker, that the Everglades could be described as *a river*, and as *a river of grass* (on the development of the 'river of grass' idea, see Douglas 1987, cf. 'Everglades River' in Douglas 1967). But Douglas was also acutely aware of

her knowledge of the Everglades at that time, and of the research task ahead: 'That it was there, that the birds were spectacular, that it should be a national park, and that it shouldn't be drained, that there were millions of acres of it. I'd been out in the Everglades no more than 20 times' (Douglas 1987: 190).

The Everglades: River of Grass (Douglas 2017) is a biography of place, of a river reconceptualized. In a commentary that envelops geology, hydrology, ecology, botany, zoology, anthropology, colonialism and slavery, cultural history, politics, and economics, Douglas (2017) examines the genealogy of the Florida Everglades—its histories and stories, people and places. *The Everglades: River of Grass* (Douglas 2017) also presents a politics of place. In introducing the idea of the Everglades as a river—an immense, wide, shallow, slow-moving river, replete with vegetation—Douglas (2017) changed the way Americans thought about the vast wetlands of the south Florida peninsula (Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009). Douglas rejects the idea of the Everglades as a swamp wilderness filled with dangerous reptiles and in need of dredging and draining, and recasts the Everglades as a 'superb monotony of saw grass under the world of air. But below that and before it, enclosing and causing it, is the water' (Douglas 2017: 14). Douglas's (2017) framing of the Everglades as a river of grass borrows from a Seminole translation of the Everglades as Pahayokee, or 'grassy water.' But this 'river of grass' idea, anchored to motifs of saw grass and water, also simplifies and evacuates the many ecologies of the pre-drainage Everglades (see critiques in McCally 2000, Grunwald 2006).

The 'river of grass' idea is politicized by Douglas (2017) in defense of the Everglades. This is at its sharpest in the book's subtitle, and in the first sentences of the book:

> There are no other Everglades in the world.

> They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth, remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them: their vast glittering openness, wider than the enormous visible round of the horizon, the racing free saltness and sweetness of their massive winds, under the dazzling blue heights of space. (Douglas 2017: 5)

In the last chapter of *The Everglades: River of Grass*, under the ominous title, 'The Eleventh Hour,' Douglas (2017) sets out the threats facing the Everglades from past and present dredging and draining operations, and from Florida politics and politicians. She begins the chapter with a stark insistence, 'The Everglades were dying' (Douglas 2017: 349). *The Everglades: River of Grass* (Douglas 2017) was the first study to profile and draw attention to the imperilment of the Everglades, and offers a literary provocation on, and intervention in, the conservation politics of the Everglades. More than seven decades after publication, *The Everglades: River of Grass* (Douglas 2017) still has much to offer Everglades environmentalists.

The landscapes of south Florida and the Everglades would continue to feature prominently in Douglas's works. In 1952, her first novel, *Road to the Sun* (Douglas 1952), was published, a fictional account of the 1920s real estate boom in southern Florida, set in part on the periphery of the Everglades. As with the Rivers of America series, Douglas was also invited to contribute regional fiction and nonfiction works to several other book series. Her historical novel, *Freedom River: Florida 1845* (Douglas 1953), was part of Scribner's Strength of the Union young adult series focusing on the years states were admitted to the Union, and powerfully confronts the historical problem of racism in the U.S. through three young protagonists—an abolitionist white settler, a Black slave, and a Miccosukee Indian. Her 1959 novel, *Alligator Crossing* (as Douglas 2003), was

part of another young adult series on U.S. national parks, and follows a teenage protagonist tracking an alligator poacher to Everglades National Park. Douglas's (1967) nonfiction volume, *Florida: The Long Frontier*, a state-wide environmental and cultural history, was for Harper and Row's Regions of America series. *Hurricane* (Douglas 1958) melds journalistic dispatches and scientific reporting from Florida, North Carolina, Jamaica, Martinique, and Cuba on hurricanes.

Enter Friends of the Everglades

The postwar period in America was one of great social, cultural, and political upheaval and readjustment, reflected back in the rise of a number of social justice movements—including the modern environmental movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the LGBTQ+ movement and the Stonewall riots, the Vietnam War and anti-nuclear protests, the countercultural movement, and more. By the mid-1960s, the environmental movement was gaining momentum in the U.S. This momentum was propelled, earlier in the decade, by the publication of marine biologist Rachel Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring*, which exposed the severe ecological and health effects of synthetic pesticide DDT, and challenged big industry and big agriculture (see Chap. 157, Rachel Carson). Rinehart and Company's final printing of Douglas's (2017) *The Everglades: River of Grass* was in 1959, but in the mid-1960s, Douglas set up her own publishing imprint, Hurricane House, and reissued *The Everglades: River of Grass* in 1965, keeping it in print as environmental interest in the Everglades intensified. Douglas's (2017) *The Everglades: River of Grass* was absorbed into the resurgence of interest in the works of environmental writers including Henry David Thoreau (see Chap. 155, Henry David Thoreau), John Muir, Leopold,

Carson, and others, and entered a maelstrom of new environmental activisms and sustainability politics.

With a successful, decades-long career as a journalist, short story writer, novelist, and writer of regional narrative nonfiction, Douglas was soon encouraged by other Florida environmentalists to revisit her earlier national park boosterism and activism to once more protect the Everglades. The touchpaper was Dade County Port Authority's 24,960-acre jetport project six miles upstream of Everglades National Park, in the Big Cypress Swamp. The Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) and other environmental organizations across the state were already lobbying to halt the jetport project. Joe Browder, TAS vice-president, organized the Everglades Coalition in April 1969 to consolidate opposition to the project. An impromptu meeting between Douglas and Browder's assistant and office manager, Judy Wilson, in a Coconut Grove grocery store near Douglas's home, introduced Douglas to the problem of the jetport. Soon after, Douglas met with Browder and visited the jetport site. Browder suggested that Douglas issue a statement opposing the jetport project, but Douglas was concerned that the voice of one 79-year-old woman would not resonate, and only organizations carried political legitimacy. Browder had a solution—Douglas should start just such an organization.

It was while she was attending the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Ramble a few months later in November 1969, and signing copies of her books, that Douglas acted on Browder's suggestion. After mentioning the idea of a 'Friends of the Everglades' organization to an acquaintance at the botanic garden, and receiving a dollar in return as membership dues, the environmental nonprofit organization Friends of the Everglades (FOE) was formed. Douglas served as FOE's president until 1990, her centenary year. FOE works to 'preserve, protect, and restore the only Everglades in the world' (FOE 2022a, and on Douglas's restoration advocacy, see Douglas 1987, also Davis 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2009, Holmes 2004, Poole 2015, Smith 2022).

FOE soon joined with other organizations and groups in lobbying to halt the construction of the jetport in the Everglades. The jetport project was canceled early in January 1970 by President Richard M. Nixon (on the history, politics, and activisms of the jetport project, see Douglas 1987, Davis and Arsenault 2005, Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009, Smith 2022), and three-and-a-half months later, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord A. Nelson organized the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. As federal commitment to environmental protections was realized in the passage of a number of environmental acts and the introduction of new environmental legislation and regulation throughout the 1970s, FOE published a book that celebrated the subtropical ecologies of the Everglades—Leonard Pardue et al.'s (1982) *Who Knows the Rain?: Nature and Origin of Rainfall in South Florida*. The text, with a Foreword by Douglas, was the first volume in FOE's South Florida Regional Studies Series (Davis 2009).

After the cancelation of the jetport project, FOE picked up an historical (and hugely complex and contested) Everglades issue—water politics. For more than a century, draining and dredging infrastructure had been 'replumbing' the Everglades. Beginning in the 1970s, Douglas and FOE worked to rally support for land purchases and reflooding programs in the Everglades, including securing increased water flow into and through Everglades National Park to Florida Bay (Douglas 1987). In 1972, Douglas was a delegate at the Governor's Conference on Water Management in South Florida (Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009).

But for Douglas, one water issue would supersede all others to secure the long-term health of the Everglades—the dechannelization of the Kissimmee River and removal of the 56-mile-long, 30-foot-deep C-38 Canal. As Douglas (1987: 231) attests, 'Until we get the Kissimmee River valley restored, we'll never get all the water in the Everglades we need.' In 1976, Douglas, together with University of Miami ecologist Arthur R. Marshall, Jr., and Johnny Jones of the Florida Wildlife Federation, addressed the Senate Appropriations Committee in the state capital, Tallahassee,

requesting funding to restore the Kissimmee River. The request was unsuccessful, but a bill largely drafted by Marshall and Jones—the Kissimmee River Restoration Act of 1976—was passed, requiring the USACE to study the dismantling of the C-38 Canal (Douglas 1987, Davis 2003a, 2009, Grunwald 2006, Smith 2022). In the early-1980s, FOE (1982) published a pamphlet, *For the Future of Florida, Repair the Everglades*, advocating for the restoration of the Everglades. A couple of years later, in 1984, Douglas joined Florida Governor Bob Graham in a tree-planting ceremony beside the C-38 Canal to launch the Kissimmee River Demonstration Project, and the following year, Douglas and Graham took a boat tour along a restored oxbow on the river (Douglas 1987, Davis 2003a, 2009, Smith 2022).

In the 1990s, the George H.W. Bush administration popularized the legislative rhetoric of 'no net loss' of wetlands (see e.g. Robertson 2000)—mitigating or offsetting wetland loss with the restoration of existing (or creation of new) wetlands within the same watershed. Douglas spoke out against the Bush administration's proposal to redefine wetlands along a much narrower rubric in a January 1992 press conference outside her Coconut Grove cottage (Davis 2009, cf. Pittman and Waite 2009). The same decade, FOE joined other environmental organizations to lobby for the cleanup of toxic agricultural pollution in the Everglades waterways—particularly phosphorous contamination and pollution from Big Sugar agribusiness (Grunwald 2006, Davis 2009). For Douglas (1987), pollution cleanup is second only to the restoration of the Kissimmee River in securing the ecological and hydrological health of the Everglades. Douglas was a prominent anti-sugar activist, and FOE contributed to discussions on water quality legislation.

On November 30, 1993, Douglas was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor given to civilians, by President Bill Clinton. In his remarks, President Clinton (1993, qtd. in The American Presidency Project 2022) describes Douglas's (2017) *The Everglades: River of Grass* as 'a monumental work on Florida's unique ecosystem, one of our Nation's greatest natural

resources,' and goes on to note of Douglas, 'Her advocacy on behalf of the Everglades in Florida long before there was ever an Earth Day is legendary. It has been an inspiration to generations of conservationists, environmentalists, and preservationists throughout our Nation and especially to my administration.'

A few months later, in February 1994, Florida Governor Lawton Chiles introduced a phosphorous cleanup bill, called the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act. But Douglas's anti-sugar activism vibrated starkly against the interests of the Big Sugar lobbyists who had helped write the bill (in 1991, Chiles had also proposed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Everglades Protection Act, see Davis 2009). Douglas, aged 103, requested that Governor Chiles immediately remove her name from the bill, and the renamed 1994 Douglas Act—the Everglades Forever Act—was passed by the Florida legislature in May 1994 (Davis 2001, 2009, Grunwald 2006, Smith 2022). FOE, and other environmental organizations, opposed the bill, which delayed final phosphorous standards.

Douglas's death in May 1998 came a few months before the USACE announced its Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Douglas's environmentalism legacy and *The Everglades: River of Grass* (Douglas 2017) featured in House and Senate hearings on the CERP (for a detailed history of the CERP, see Grunwald 2006). As the CERP bill was debated in Congress, FOE's grassroots advocacy continued, as the nonprofit joined with Everglades National Park scientists in opposing the legislation, and lobbying for increased provision and protections for the national park in the bill, frequently coming up against urban and agricultural interests.

The Everglades restoration problem

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan was authorized under Title IV of the Water Resources Development Act, signed by President Clinton on December 11, 2000. The largest and

most ambitious ecological restoration project of its time—to restore historical freshwater sheet flows from Lake Okeechobee through the Everglades to Florida Bay—the four-decade, 68-project restoration program had an estimated cost of at least $7.8 billion (Grunwald 2006). But halfway through that timeframe, costs have escalated to more than $20 billion, and not one of the 68 project components is completed.

In the two-and-a-half decades since Douglas's death, FOE has shifted away from activism toward litigation. In December 2019, FOE merged with the Bullsugar Alliance, the nonpolitical group of Bullsugar.org. FOE's grassroots advocacy in Everglades water politics continues, addressing Everglades water quality issues including preventing toxic algae blooms, fighting toxic Lake Okeechobee discharges, improving the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir, and regulating methyl-mercury runoff and pollution from the EAA. FOE has also organized campaigns focusing on increasing health protections from pre-harvest sugarcane burning, canceling oil drilling in the Big Cypress National Preserve, protecting the endangered Florida panther and its habitat, limiting the expansion of the Urban Development Boundary into the Everglades, and advocacy on climate action (FOE 2022b, Smith 2022).

Douglas's social activism legacy was reorganized in the aftermath of a school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, that killed 14 students and three faculty members. Douglas's social justice ethic continues in Never Again MSD, a coalition of 20 student survivors advocating for stricter gun control legislation. Never Again MSD organized the March for Our Lives movement, and Douglas's (1980: 13) appeal to 'Be a nuisance where it counts; […] Do your part to inform and stimulate the public to join your action. […] Be depressed, discouraged, and disappointed at failure, and the disheartening effects of ignorance, greed, corruption, and bad politics—but never give up' resounds in walkouts and rallies.

Summary

The Everglades environmentalism of Marjory Stoneman Douglas is not one easily replicated. Her status as the matriarch of Everglades restoration is a culmination of her many avatars as journalist, suffragist, Red Cross worker, social justice commentator and slum housing reformer, short story writer, novelist, regionalist, Florida historian, Everglades expert, and unrelenting, outspoken, elderly provocateur. And, too, her age—of being amidst the theater of Everglades conservation from her arrival in the state in September 1915, to her death in May 1998. Douglas is irreplaceable to, and thoroughly entangled with, the Everglades restoration cause, from her journalism at *The Miami Herald*, and her membership of the Tropic Everglades National Park Association, to her major text on the geology, hydrology, ecology, and anthropology of the Everglades, *The Everglades: River of Grass* (Douglas 2017), and her leadership of Friends of the Everglades. In the decades since her death, FOE has continued Douglas's grassroots advocacy for the protection and restoration of the Florida Everglades.

Douglas's environmentalism—her ethics, politics, and activisms—is fascinating to situate within the wider history of the sustainability movement, and contributes in many different ways to environmental sustainability debates. What comes through perhaps most strongly in Douglas's legacy, alongside environmental issues, is the importance of including and amplifying social justice issues such as anti-racism and Indigenous histories in sustainability thinking.

Cross-references

Chap. 155, Henry David Thoreau.

Chap. 156, Aldo Leopold.

Chap. 157, Rachel Carson.

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