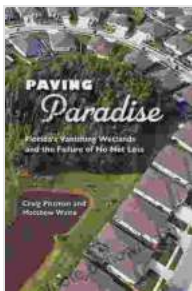


Florida's Vanishing Wetlands: The Failure of the "No Net Loss" Policy in the Sunshine State

Florida's wetlands are an ecologically rich and diverse ecosystem, providing valuable services to the state and its residents. They serve as flood control buffers, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and filter pollutants from water. However, these wetlands are under threat from development and other human activities. Despite the state's "no net loss" policy, which was designed to protect wetlands, many wetlands continue to be filled or drained.

This article explores the history of wetlands in Florida and the failure of the "no net loss" policy. It also discusses the consequences of wetlands loss and the need for stronger protection measures.



Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss (The Florida History and Culture Series) by Craig Pittman

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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Historical Background

Wetlands have been a part of Florida's landscape for thousands of years. They were formed by the gradual accumulation of sediment and organic matter in low-lying areas. Wetlands were once abundant in Florida, covering an estimated 20 million acres. However, wetlands have been disappearing at an alarming rate.

The first major wave of wetlands loss occurred in the 19th century, when large areas of wetlands were drained for agriculture. In the 20th century, wetlands loss accelerated as the state's population grew and development expanded. By the late 20th century, Florida had lost over half of its original wetlands.

The "No Net Loss" Policy

In 1984, the Florida Legislature passed the "no net loss" policy, which was designed to protect wetlands from further loss. The policy requires that any development that fills or drains wetlands must mitigate the loss by creating or restoring wetlands elsewhere.

The "no net loss" policy has been controversial since its inception. Critics argue that the policy is too weak and that it allows too many wetlands to be destroyed. Supporters of the policy argue that it is a necessary step to protect wetlands from further loss.

The Failure of "No Net Loss"

Despite the "no net loss" policy, wetlands continue to be lost in Florida. The policy has been criticized for being too lenient and for allowing too many wetlands to be destroyed. In addition, the policy has been poorly enforced.

A study conducted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection found that between 1996 and 2006, over 100,000 acres of wetlands were lost in the state. The study also found that the state's "no net loss" policy was not effectively protecting wetlands.

The Consequences of Wetlands Loss

The loss of wetlands has a number of negative consequences for Florida. Wetlands provide flood control buffers, which help to reduce flooding during storms. Wetlands also provide habitat for fish and wildlife. In addition, wetlands filter pollutants from water, which helps to improve water quality.

The loss of wetlands also has a negative impact on the state's economy. Wetlands provide a number of economic benefits, such as tourism, fishing, and hunting. The loss of wetlands can also lead to increased flooding, which can damage property and infrastructure.

The Need for Stronger Protection

The "no net loss" policy has failed to protect Florida's wetlands. Stronger protection measures are needed to reverse the trend of wetlands loss.

One way to protect wetlands is to increase the penalties for filling or draining wetlands. Another way to protect wetlands is to provide financial incentives for landowners to restore wetlands.

The Florida Legislature should also consider strengthening the "no net loss" policy. The policy should be made more specific and it should include stronger enforcement mechanisms.

Florida's wetlands are a valuable resource that provide a number of benefits to the state and its residents. However, these wetlands are under threat from development and other human activities. The "no net loss" policy has failed to protect wetlands from further loss.

Stronger protection measures are needed to reverse the trend of wetlands loss. The Florida Legislature should consider strengthening the "no net loss" policy and increasing the penalties for filling or draining wetlands.



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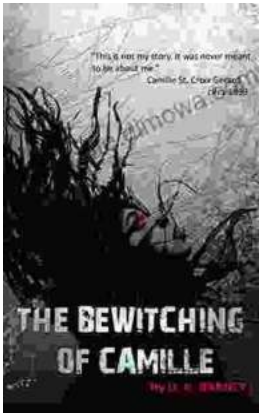
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