

Summary: Taking Care of Florida

People and the Environment

At the beginning of the 1900s, Florida's leaders believed that more people, roads, farms, and industries would help Florida grow. But, Florida was hard to develop. Large areas were wetlands. It was hard to build roads and houses on the wetlands. They also flooded during storms. People started to drain the wetlands to make building on them easier. They also tried to stop the flooding by building levees, spillways, canals, and pumping stations.

At first, the plan to make Florida grow seemed like a good one. The state had fewer floods and workers used the wetlands for buildings and roads. Then, environmentalists noticed some problems. Many plants, fish, and water birds died after workers drained the wetlands. They needed the wetlands' water to live. Florida's fresh water supply was also affected. Usually, water collected in the wetlands. Then, the water soaked into the ground and refilled the underground water supply. However, less water soaked into the ground after Floridians changed the environment. This meant Floridians had less water for drinking, cleaning, and bathing.

Preserving Florida

Many animals were affected by the changes Floridians made to the environment. Some animals were in danger of dying out. Buildings and roads destroyed the woodland homes of animals like the Florida panther. Boats killed many manatees. Environmentalists such as Marjory Stoneman Douglas helped people understand how pollution could hurt the environment. The government began to protect the environment. It passed laws to protect Florida's water, land, and animals. It also started programs to fix the damaged environments. Finally, the government bought and preserved more than two million acres of land that was at risk.

Citizens can also help protect Florida's environment. Floridians can use less water when bathing or washing dishes. Adults can also build driveways and sidewalks with materials that let rainwater soak into the ground. This helps refill the fresh water supply. Recycling aluminum cans, paper, and plastic saves resources and helps prevent pollution.



Before You Read

Find and underline the vocabulary word.

environmentalist *noun*, a person who works to protect the water, land, and air



After You Read

REVIEW Why did Floridians build levees, spillways, canals, and pumping stations? Highlight the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW What actions can the government take to protect the environment? What did the government do to protect Florida's environment? Underline three sentences that tell the answer.