

[The Constantly Changing Florida Environment: Invasive Species Are One More Complication in Land Development vs Conservation](#)

Posted on April 19, 2011 by [Rosa Schechter](#)

First, the general rule: Florida land development has always been at odds with those who want to conserve and protect the natural environment of our beautiful state. Developers, like all of us, marvel at how truly magnificent this area can be: those involved in planning, designing, surveying, building, financing - all the facets of corralling the wilds for the use of people - also appreciate the beauties of our beaches, sunsets, glades, not to mention all the wildlife which enriches our state (e.g., [our earlier post on the Florida Panther](#)).

It's not that developers are blind to beauty: it's just that they are dedicated to serving the needs of the human population in transportation, economic growth, living standards, and the like. Land development, at its best, accommodates the beauty of nature along with the needs of the population. Conservationists may not always trust this to be true, however.

Everglades - Prime Example of the Longstanding Dispute Between Development and Conservation

The [Florida Everglades](#) are positioned in an area prime for development, and they have been for decades. Fights over [land use of Everglades territory go back to the 1800s](#), when the first fights to drain the Everglades were unsuccessfully instituted by territorial representatives from the U.S. Government back in Washington, D.C.

For a humorous, witty take on the Everglades fight, check out the series of books written by [Carl Hiassen](#) - particularly the one man war against development undertaken by former Governor Clinton Tyree, [now known simply as "Skink."](#) Probably best to read them in the order they were written, fyi.

Today's Miami Herald Article Spotlights Another Twist: Nature Is Always Changing

In an article entitled "[Exotic Animals and Plants Threaten South Florida Ecosystem,](#)" reporter Christina Veiga of the *Miami Herald* provides an excellent overview of how here in Florida, the only thing that you can really rely upon is that things will change. Florida's natural state isn't just sitting there, a foe to the development of lands into roadways, schools, shops, and homes. Nope. Nature is always changing, evolving. Sometimes it's something new.

Sometimes, Development and Conservation Face the Same Fight Against Nature

For Florida, this means that species are guaranteed to pop up among the plant and animal life, and sometimes these are not good things. Alligators and other exotic animals have been released into the wilds and now serve to threaten other animals (including pets) as well as humans.

Invasive species are the exception to the General Rule of Conservation vs Development

A growing concern: the [Python](#), which shares the top of the food chain with the well known Florida Alligator - in fact, the python may consider even the alligator its prey. [National Geographic labels this a "Nightmare"](#) as these 20 foot long snakes, native to Africa, seem to be right at home here in South Florida (particularly near Miami).

Moreover, as the [Miami Herald article discusses](#), there are also invasions of plant and fish life that are at the minimum a nuisance and at most, a danger. Things like [the Mile-a-Minute Weed](#), a fast growing intrusive, non-native plant that is a serious headache for conservationists and developers alike. Or the [blue tilapia fish](#), considered an [invasive species](#) that has proven to be a serious problem in Florida waterways.

Faced With Invasions, We're On the Same Team

Faced with 20 foot long snakes, or weeds that grow 2 feet overnight, environmentalists and developers can find common ground. The constant change in Florida natural habitat sometimes means we're all in this together.