Everglades Invasive Species Special Issue: 
Introduction and Overview

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America’s Everglades is the largest subtropical wetland ecosystem in North America. The ~46,620-km² (18,000-mi²) landscape comprises a unique mix of low marshes, sloughs, and shrub-dominated vegetation, scattered tropical forests, and extensive cypress swamps. Following decades of ecosystem degradation caused by flood-control projects and sprawling development, the Everglades is now the site of the world’s largest ecosystem-restoration effort (WRDA 2000). While restoration efforts primarily emphasize improving the quantity, quality, and timing of water conveyance to the Everglades, curbing invasive exotic species has been widely recognized by partner agencies and other stakeholders as having an important role in restoration (NRC 2014, SFERTF 2015). These concerns are based in part on the remarkably high number of non-indigenous species established in southern Florida and the presumption that historical disturbance regimes (e.g., altered hydroperiods, nutrient enrichment) are not the sole mechanisms for biological invasions (Lake and Leishman 2004, Liu and Stiling 2006) in the Everglades.

Early management efforts focused on a handful of widely established, highly aggressive invasive plant species. Interagency efforts to reduce the impact of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Cav.) S.T. Blake (Melaleuca or Paperbark Tree) began in earnest in the early 1980s. At the time, Melaleuca was estimated to occupy a 165,516-ha range in southern Florida, with 16,308 ha as dense monotypic stands (Cost and Craver 1981). The concerted, 30-year effort, which integrated research, control efforts, public education, and regulatory tools, is considered a success story in invasive species management; Melaleuca is now controlled at low levels across much of its previous range in the Everglades. (Center et al. 2012, Rodgers et al. 2014).

Unfortunately, many other non-indigenous species did not receive comparable attention during the early years of Everglades restoration. Not until news of the Everglades’ infamous invasion by *Python bivittatus* Kuhl (Burmese Python) in the early 2000s did attention to invasive exotic animals gain significant momentum. The increasing awareness of Florida’s abundant non-indigenous fauna also coincided with greater appreciation among stakeholders of the benefits, both environmental and economic, of preventing new invasions and addressing newly established species rapidly.

To encourage new research into the natural history and management approaches for invasive exotic species, stakeholders have advocated for increased funding towards management-driven investigations (ELI 2004, Lodge et al. 2006, SFERTF 2015). Natural resource managers and decision makers rely on such investigations

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