Alt cause – sugar cane industry is largest cause of Everglade depletion

Frazier 7 (Bart Frazier is the Program Director at the Future of Freedom Foundation, September 24, 2007, Future of Freedom Foundation, “Destroying the Everglades,” http://www.fff.org/freedom/fd0706f.asp //nimo)

The U.S. sugar industry is one of the most heavily subsidized sectors of the U.S. economy. Sugarcane growers are protected from international competition by quotas and aided domestically by nonrecourse loans. In 1994, it was estimated that the top 10 sugar producers in Florida received approximately $174 million in federal benefits.¶ Most people would be surprised to learn that, south of Orlando, a large portion of the country’s sugar is grown below Lake Okeechobee. The sugar industry is largely responsible for the deterioration of the Everglades, and, in all likelihood, would be only a fraction of its current size if the government did not protect it.¶ Of the 1.7 million acres created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Central and South Florida Project, 1.2 million are currently being used for the cultivation of sugar cane.¶ Sugar cane is highly destructive to the Everglades. As discussed above, the most detrimental effect of the sugar industry is the disruption of the water cycle to which the wildlife has adapted. The entire Florida sugar industry hugs the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee like a giant tick, directly blocking the water source for the remaining Everglades. All water flow is now controlled through levees and canals, with a large portion of it being used for irrigating sugar cane, with more being diverted to both of Florida’s coasts.¶ The farming techniques that the sugar farms employ are not very Everglades-friendly. The largest pollutant of the Everglades is phosphorous, a primary component of fertilizer used to grow sugar cane. High levels of phosphorous cause algae blooms to multiply, which chokes off the oxygen supply in marine ecosystems, killing off vast quantities of wildlife. The primary source of phosphorous in the Everglades is fertilizer runoff from sugar-cane production. The soil of southern Florida is not ideal for sugar production, and the farms must use large doses fertilizer to get the results they are looking for.

Everglades biodiversity already destroyed

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The effects on the Everglades were devastating. According to the National Park Service (http://www.nps.gov/ever/historyculture/ developeverglades.htm), The numbers of wading birds, such as egrets, herons, and ibises, have been reduced by 90%. Entire populations of animals, including the manatee, the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, the Miami black-headed snake, the wood stork, and the Florida panther, are at risk of disappearing. Exotic pest plants such as melaleuca, Brazilian pepper, and Australian pine have invaded natural areas, choking out native plants and altering habitats. Massive die-offs of seagrass beds in Florida Bay have been followed by the extensive losses of wading birds, fish, shrimp, sponges, and mangroves. In other words, utter environmental ruin. Even though there were stipulations in the Central and South Florida Project to provide water for the remaining Everglades and to protect the wildlife within, they could not have done a more thorough job of destroying the ecosystem if that had been their goal.