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FGCU Wetland Expert to Discuss Everglades Restoration
And Gulf of Mexico Pollution, Jan. 24

FORT MYERS, Fla. – Dr. William J. Mitsch, director of FGCU’s Everglades Wetland Research Park (EWRP), will discuss Florida Everglades restoration, Gulf of Mexico pollution and long-term plans for the Naples research park during a public lecture at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24.

“Ecological Engineering of the Best Kind: Restoring Rivers, Wetlands and the Florida Everglades” is part of the free “Moonlight on the Marsh” lecture series at the Harvey Kapnick Education and Research Center at the Naples Botanical Garden, 4940 Bayshore Drive. The series features distinguished scientists from around the world sharing their expertise on renewable energy, nature conservation and other environmental topics of interest to Southwest Floridians.

A prize-winning wetland scientist with an international reputation in ecological engineering and wetland ecology, Mitsch holds the Juliet C. Sproul Chair for Southwest Florida Habitat Restoration and Management at Florida Gulf Coast University. His presentation will address how ecological engineering can enhance wetlands along the Mississippi River Basin, in the Gulf of Mexico/Florida Everglades and throughout the planet.

Studies suggest that 5 million acres of new wetlands are needed in the Mississippi basin to mitigate nitrogen fertilizer runoff and improve water quality in the river and especially in the Gulf of Mexico, according to Mitsch. He headed a federal panel charged with assessing solutions to a persistent 5 million-acre “dead zone” in the Gulf off Louisiana.
Mitsch also will discuss studies by FGCU and the South Florida Water Management District into the effectiveness of 40,000-plus acres of wetlands created upstream of the Everglades as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project. The wetlands filter out phosphorus, the fertilizer component that is changing the ecology of the northern Everglades. They also remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which reduces global warming and climate change, according to Mitsch.

“On a global scale, created and natural wetlands are among the most effective natural carbon sinks in the world,” Mitsch says. “Models show that wetlands’ methane emission rates are low enough to be of little concern and that, overall, wetlands could collect as much as 12 percent of the total released carbon emissions in the world.”

To reserve a seat for the lecture, call the FGCU Foundation at 590-1088.

For more information about the series or the research park, go to www.fgcu.edu/swamp.

For further information, contact Dr. Mitsch at (614) 946-6715 (cell).