



PHOTOS BY PETER ANDREW BOSCH/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**A FIELD TRIP:** Republican presidential hopeful Rudy Giuliani, his wife Judith Nathan, and state Attorney General Bill McCollum, all in front row, glide through the Everglades bush on an airboat Saturday.

# Giuliani takes to the Glades

**■ Rudy Giuliani visited the Everglades to get an up-close view and learn about problems such as water management and lack of funding, then vowed to champion its restoration.**

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GOP presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani stepped gingerly onto an airboat in the Florida Everglades on Saturday and took a short tour of the "River of Grass."

Giuliani, accompanied by his wife Judith Nathan, made the short trip to make a political point: He promises to become a champion for the Everglades if elected to the White House.

Donning a camouflage baseball cap, Giuliani covered his ears with noise-blocking headphones to diminish the roar of the airplane-style engine at the back of the boat.

Giuliani's guide for the day: Everglades activist and engineering contractor Ronald Bergeron, who invited

Giuliani to his house nestled in the middle of the park, among sawgrass patches.

The house, built from cypress wood on a deer island originally filled in by Native Americans 10,000 years ago, is on state land but was handed down to Bergeron by his grandfather, who was an Everglades game warden in the 1940s.

Bergeron had set up poster boards with photographs juxtaposing healthy-looking habitats and areas devastated by floods and other problems.

After a quick meal inside, Giuliani sat on the wooden porch outside, near a fire pit, a cookhouse, an outhouse and a helicopter pad, and listened to Bergeron's explanation of the problems facing the Everglades and its 3 million acres.

He said the biggest problem was water management. Parts of the Everglades get too much water, drowning native species like deer and panthers, and other parts don't get enough.

The federal government has teamed up with the state

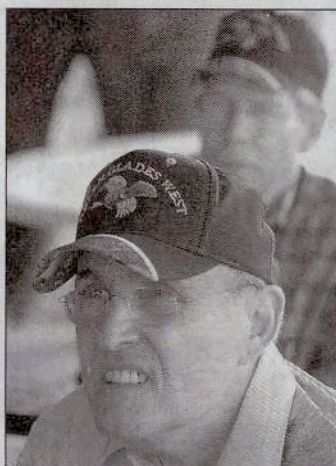
over the past several years to undertake a multibillion-dollar project to restore the Everglades. But the process has been rocky due to lack of funding and coordination.

"It's definitely possible to save the Everglades," Bergeron said. "But the only way we can buy time is by prioritizing several projects that would stop irreversible change."

Giuliani, who was dressed in penny loafers, khaki pants, and a blue, long-sleeve dress shirt, asked a few questions about Florida panthers and development in the Everglades.

After the 15-minute lesson, Giuliani's aides said the presidential candidate was pressed for time and led him back to the airboat. He thanked Bergeron, who was wearing a cowboy hat and munching on tobacco, for the session.

After returning to the boat ramp on mile marker 41 of I-75, Giuliani said it was important to see the issues for himself to get an idea of how to "properly change the Ever-



**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS:** Rudy Giuliani listens to Glades activist Robert Bergeron explain the park's problems.

glades so we can preserve it."

He promised to return with more time and vowed to champion the restoration of the Everglades.

"The faster we do it, the better off we are going to be; and probably the faster we do it, the cheaper it's going to be," Giuliani said.