

Interactive comment on “On the spatial organization of the ridge slough patterned landscape” by S. T. Casey et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

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The analyses presented in this manuscript are well done and the science is largely sound. The manuscript is well written, but is overly rich in very discipline-specific jargon that makes it difficult to read and interpret even for this reviewer who knows the Everglades system very well. I fear that the paper will be largely inaccessible for most readers in its current, highly technical format. There are some very important conclusions being made in this manuscript, albeit in very subtle and hidden ways. If the authors could find a way to repackage their findings in clear, easily understood conclusions, the paper would have much more impact.

One more issue that may be more philosophical than can be addressed in this paper. This analysis and most others before it all assume that we can learn deep things and make broad conclusions about the Everglades landscape of 150 years ago (i.e. pre-

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drainage) based on analyzing places in the landscape today that we deem to be similar to that prior condition. This is an unrealistic assumption and it can lead to misinterpretation of the conclusions, which is particularly dangerous when those misinterpretations are being made by decision-makers. It is true that most environmental restoration is not that at all—we are not taking existing ecosystems back to their pre-impact conditions. Rehabilitation is a much better term for this. And this semantic problem is big in the Everglades, where I constantly worry that the public's perception of "restoration" is far from what the reality will be. But in analyses such as this, it is critical that the [obviously talented] scientists writing up their data make it VERY CLEAR that their analysis is relative to the current condition of the landscape, and has little or no bearing on the way the landscape originally formed a millenia ago. I encourage these authors to caveat their findings and conclusions with this in mind.

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