People have been using and living in wetland environments for tens of thousands of years. The remains left behind in archeological sites include plant and animal remains that can tell us about the past environments. In general archeologists are most often interested in knowing about who people in the past eat and how they lived, as well as the past environments that help explain earlier cultures. The remains in archeological sites include bones from animals hunted for food which reflect both the availability of the animals and their abundance. In addition the animals hunted and interred brought to the site other animals, like mice and voles, are attracted to the sites and become part of the archeological record. Plant remains can be recovered from silica plant remains) can also be recovered from the archeological soils or adhering to artifacts. Archeological sites in the form of charcoal from fires along with carbonized food remains; all coming from the local environment. In some cases pollen and phytoliths (microscopic silica plant remains) can also be recovered from the archeological soils or adhering to artifacts. Archeological sites in the greater Everglades have been occupied for more than 5,000 years. As such they have the potential to contain extensive information about the prehistoric Everglades environment.

The archeological evidence indicates that the Everglades tree islands have been continuously used by people for more than 5,000 years. Testing of the sites on the3 tree islands have resulted in archeological materials extending from the surface to the limestone bedrock. On some sites there is no discernible layer to occupation. Often the occupation is related to the development of local resources. The earliest description we have of the Greater Everglades is from Florida's 1976 Bienniel which described the Everglades as a broad water land with some lakes, layers of clay, boggy fenlands growing in many places. Over time the oldest assemblage at each site can be seen in the upper half of the archeological deposits. The state wide Late Archaic period is associated with the stabilization of sea level about 8,000 years ago resulting in the development of distinctive regional cultures like the Glades. This is illustrated by the presence of potsherds and construction of large recent features. Pottery manufacturing started about 4000 years ago. This early pottery is typically more tempered than later Florida and tobacco potteries in other floridian site relationships with the fiber tempered. The fiber tempered pottery is not found in the later archaeology. Archeological evidence indicates that the Everglades tree islands have been continually inhabited since this time. The lower components of the Everglades sites may date to the Middle and Early Archaic, however, very few sites have been tested to this depth and minimal datable material has been recovered.

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