Resolution Opposing the Extension of State Road 7 adjacent to the Grassy Waters Preserve and the Pond Cypress Natural Area

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Transportation (“FDOT”) and Palm Beach County are proposing to widen 4.4 miles of State Road 7 from Okeechobee Boulevard to 60th Street and extend State Road 7 an additional 4.1 miles from 60th Street to Northlake Boulevard immediately adjacent to the Pond Cypress Natural Area and the Grassy Waters Preserve;

WHEREAS, the Pond Cypress Natural Area is 1700 acres acquired by Palm Beach County for the purpose of preserving the wet prairie mosaic, pine flatwoods, and the associated wildlife that once commonly surrounded the Loxahatchee Slough;

WHEREAS, Grassy Waters Preserve contains 12,800 acres of pristine wetlands and is a state-designated natural preserve providing significant regional ecological and environmental benefits including water recharge, water quality and wetland habitat for numerous federally listed species including the critically endangered Everglade Snail Kite and the Wood Stork while providing water supply for the City of West Palm Beach, the Town of Palm Beach and the Town of South Palm Beach;

WHEREAS, the project proposes to directly impact more than 57 acres of freshwater wetlands including 25 acres of hydric pine flatwoods and more than 17 acres of freshwater sawgrass marsh and other freshwater wetlands that have been designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as Aquatic Resources of National Importance;

WHEREAS, the project will indirectly impact the entire Grassy Waters Preserve and Pond Cypress Natural Area through light, noise, and contaminant pollution, roadkill and other disturbance to animal populations, and impacts to regional hydrology and ecosystem functions;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined the project will likely result in significant adverse effects to public conservation lands and fish and wildlife, including the critically imperiled Snail Kite within Grassy Waters Preserve and the Pond Cypress Natural Area;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have all urged FDOT and Palm Beach County to select an alternative alignment for the roadway with less impacts to fish and wildlife or to select the “no build” alternative;

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WHEREAS, the project could negatively impact the water supply of the City of West Palm Beach, the Town of Palm Beach, and the Town of South Palm Beach by roadway pollution or a toxic spill along the roadway extension;

WHEREAS, the City of West Palm Beach issued a notice of intent to sue FDOT over Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues on April 29, 2015; and

WHEREAS, alternatives to the proposed roadway extension with fewer impacts to wetlands, wildlife, natural areas, and water supply exist but have not been adequately evaluated or selected;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Everglades Coalition opposes the expansion and extension of State Road 7 into the Pond Cypress Natural Area and Grassy Waters Preserve and urges the Florida Department of Transportation and Palm Beach County to eliminate the selected alignment from consideration and to select the “no build” alternative or an alignment that eliminates impacts to the Pond Cypress Natural Area and Grassy Waters Preserve.

Adopted December 7th, 2015

Cara Capp
National Co-Chair

Jason Totoiu
State Co-Chair