Everglades Coalition Resolution Urging the SFWMD Water Supply Plan Updates to Protect Water for the Environment and Encourage Water Conservation

WHEREAS, the Everglades ecosystem, spanning from the Kissimmee River Valley to Florida Bay, is a significant national resource and international treasure,

WHEREAS, restoration of the Everglades has commenced to return the abundance of wildlife once found in the Everglades, to recover thousands of acres of marshes and estuarine habitat, and to benefit Florida and National Parks and ecosystem-based economies,

WHEREAS, the National Research Council recently reported that many of the Everglades ecosystem attributes most directly influenced by hydrologic factors continue to decline,

WHEREAS, while we await progress from Everglades restoration, our ecosystems require adequate amounts of water to sustain habitats and temper further ecological deterioration,

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District 2012 water supply plan updates for the Lower East Coast and Lower West Coast articulate the agency’s strategy for the next twenty years to update rules, operations, and demand management to protect water for ecosystems in the Everglades,

WHEREAS, the purpose of the SFWMD water shortage management plan is to protect water resources from harm and to assure the equitable distribution of available water resources among all water users including natural systems during times of water shortage,

WHEREAS, the natural systems must be protected from harm under Florida law and should be acknowledged and accommodated as such.
Therefore, be it resolved:

1. The Everglades Coalition, with 57 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America’s Everglades, hereby urges the SFWMD to update the LEC and LWC Water Supply Plans to develop and update rules, plans, and operations to prioritize natural systems for restoration and protection from harm, including the establishment and updating of MFLs, MFL recovery and prevention strategies, water reservations, and Restricted Area Allocation Rules, to increase protections for Lake Okeechobee, Biscayne Bay, the Water Conservation Area, Everglades National Park, Florida Bay, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, the Loxahatchee River, and other waterbodies. These solutions must offer both immediate and long-term benefits.

2. The Water supply plans should be updated to improve water management during water shortages and protect water resources from harm. The SFWMD should focus on improving demand management, especially in agricultural areas, to cause no harm to water resources during droughts that exceed the severity of a one in ten year event, as mandated by law. Water conservation efforts should be prioritized.