Everglades Coalition Resolution advocating the Valuation of Ecosystem Services as decision-support for Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) implementation.

WHEREAS, The White House Council on Environmental Quality’s draft revised version of Principles and Guidelines on national water and land resources policy will consider both monetary and non-monetary benefits to justify and select a project that has the greatest net benefits, in which case the monetary benefits can capture reduced damages measured in dollars while the non-monetary benefits can capture the increased economic benefits associated with protected or enhanced ecosystem services and biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, In a 2005 Study titled Valuing Ecosystem Services – Toward Better Environmental Decision Making, the National Research Council recommends that policymakers use economic valuation as a means of evaluating the trade-offs in environmental policy choices, further that an assessment of benefits and costs should be a part of the information set available to policy makers in choosing among alternatives; and

WHEREAS, In the 2005 Study, the National Research Council notes that when the economic benefits of ecosystem services are not estimated, they are de facto given a value of zero, and this in turn appears to result in a political process that undermines the national policy of no net loss of wetlands; and

WHEREAS, The National Research Council 2010 Biennial Report notes that the concept of valuing ecosystem services is promising, and Everglades restoration planners should be alert to specific opportunities to improve the methods for economic valuation of ecosystem services and adapt them to the Everglades; and

WHEREAS, The 2010 Plan for Coordinating Science update to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force includes Ecosystem Services as an emerging theme; and

WHEREAS, Government and non-government time and expense is being put into “A Conference on Ecosystem Services” - a biennial conference known as ACES, whose 2008 and 2010 sponsorship includes virtually all CERP federal government partners, including U.S. Geological Survey employees as Co-Chairs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Environmental Markets and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who is the first to implement a protocol of valuing ecosystem services as part of their CERP implementation approach; and

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WHEREAS, When restoration benefits for Everglades restoration are calculated using the total economic valuation framework recommended by the 2005 National Research Council Study, the benefit-to-cost ratios appear to exceed 6:1, with the results that dollar benefits defined provide the significant basis for supporting Everglades restoration; and

WHEREAS, Existing and restored ecosystem services have significant economic value, with the overarching challenge to calculate the public and private benefits in terms of total economic value as a means of achieving an optimal approach of maximizing benefits at the least cost over a long term,

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Everglades Coalition requests the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force establish a policy of applying Valuing Ecosystem Services to aid in the analysis of alternatives, decision-support and economic benefits synthesis for Everglades Restoration, and that the Science Coordination Group and Working Group should facilitate the execution of this policy as a means of providing a case study for the nation to follow.

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