Whereas Palm Beach County and the State of Florida have undertaken to site a branch of the Scripps Research Institute in northwestern Palm Beach County as part of a large scale biotechnical research park which is proposed to include 10.5 million square feet of industrial development, 430,000 square feet of commercial development, and 2000 or more residential units; and

Whereas the proposed site, Mecca Farms, is located in an extremely remote area within Palm Beach County's rural tier, surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands; and

Whereas the Mecca Farms location lacks virtually all necessary infrastructure, including roads, public transit, and water and sewer services to support the intense level of development which has been proposed; and

Whereas Mecca Farms has been identified in previous planning efforts by Palm Beach County and other governmental entities as being a very important location for regional water storage to restore the Loxahatchee River, due to its location within the River's watershed on the western leg of the C-18 canal; and

Whereas significant related development has also been proposed on 2000 acres of the Vavrus Ranch, directly east of Mecca Farms, which includes 7500 residential units and several million square feet of industrial and commercial use to support the Scripps Research Park.

Now therefore, because the urbanization of this area would create serious adverse environmental impacts, and would compromise the restoration of the Loxahatchee River, as well as decades worth of planning for western Palm Beach County, the Everglades Coalition strongly opposes siting of the Scripps Research Institute and related development on Mecca Farms, in the Everglades Agricultural Area, or any other location that would compromise restoration of the Northern Everglades watershed.

The Everglades Coalition strongly supports siting the Scripps Research Institute and related development in an existing urban location that promotes infill and redevelopment, such as Riviera Beach.