Resolution of Support for the Proposed Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative, including an Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, expansion of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and protection of the Fisheating Creek region

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’s ecosystem-based economies; and,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed the Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative (Initiative) to conserve land, water and wildlife resources of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem, creating a matrix of conservation lands and critical wildlife corridors (see: http://www.fws.gov/southeast/evergladesheadwaters/index.html); and,

WHEREAS, the Initiative consists of three study areas: the Everglades Headwaters area, the area around Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge/Caloosahatchee River, and the Fisheating Creek area, which each offer important and unique opportunities for wildlife conservation and benefits to Florida’s water resources; and,

WHEREAS, the Initiative emphasizes a new collaborative public conservation approach on willing landowner private ranches to achieve major habitat and watershed benefits through tools such as conservation easements, wetland restoration, and payment for ecological services agreements, as well as traditional acquisition; and,

WHEREAS, this collaborative Initiative offers opportunities for increasing both economic and ecological values of Florida’s agricultural and ranching landscape; and, as well as the range of uses consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge Organic Act;

WHEREAS, the FWS has completed the Land Protection Plan for the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area after receiving considerable favorable public comments, both written and in public hearings.

Therefore, be it resolved:

The Everglades Coalition, with 56 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America’s Everglades, hereby supports the FWS efforts with public and private partners to further the Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative, including Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and Fisheating Creek.

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