The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20560

April 13, 2011

Dear Administrator Jackson,

On behalf of the 53 organizations of the Everglades Coalition and our members and supporters in Florida, thank you for your commitment to improving water quality across the country. We write to ask you to prioritize a specific course of action in your plans for achieving clean water. We need to restore the Clean Water Act.

The Everglades is the hallmark of Florida – a unique ecosystem found nowhere else on earth – that provides our state with clean drinking water, incredible biodiversity, and countless recreational opportunities for Floridians and visitors alike. We need to do everything possible to protect the source waters of the Everglades and important rivers, lakes and streams across the United States.

The health of our waters is in crisis. Beginning in 1972, the Clean Water Act protected all the nation’s waters, from small, unnamed streams, to the Mississippi River. But now, because of two bitterly divided Supreme Court decisions (SWANCC in 2001 and Rapanos in 2006), legal uncertainty threatens countless critical resources with unregulated pollution, including headwater streams, lakes, tributaries, and wetlands.

The threat is enormous. Here in Florida, according to EPA data, 30% of streams in Florida could lose protection because they are headwater streams and no other streams flow into them, not to mention that Florida has more wetlands than any other state. Nationwide, an estimated 59% of the nation’s streams do not flow year-round, and 20% of the roughly 100 million acres of wetlands in the continental U.S. are “isolated.” These kinds of resources face the greatest risk of losing protections. Small and seasonal streams help feed the drinking water supplies for more than 117 million Americans.

To help Everglades restoration, we urge you to issue a rulemaking to end the confusion over which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act and help reaffirm the broad scope of the Clean Water Act that existed for more than three decades. By restoring the Clean Water Act to ensure pre-SWANCC and Rapanos protections, the EPA can put us back on track to becoming a country where all our waters will be safe for us to swim in and fish from, and all Americans will have access to safe drinking water.

Thank you again for your dedication to protecting our waterways.

Sincerely,

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