



Everglades Coalition

1000 Friends of Florida
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Society of the Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Bullsugar Alliance
Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association/
Riverwatch
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund
Florida Defenders of the Environment
Florida Keys Environmental Fund
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Oceanographic Society
Florida Wildlife Federation
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Everglades
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society
International Dark-Sky Association,
FL Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League Florida Division
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
Loxahatchee River Coalition
Martin County Conservation Alliance
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition
Miami Waterkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Outward Bound School
Ocean Research & Conservation Association
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Save It Now, Glades!
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
Sierra Club Broward Group
Sierra Club Calusa Group
Sierra Club Central Florida Group
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group
Sierra Club Miami Group
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership
Tropical Audubon Society
Urban Environment League of
Greater Miami

February 20, 2018

Mr. Ryan A. Fisher
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20314

Re: Leadership to Restore America's Everglades

Dear Mr. Fisher and General Semonite:

On behalf of the 62 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition, we write to thank you for emphasizing your agency's commitment to Everglades restoration by attending the 33rd Annual Everglades Coalition Conference last month in Stuart, Florida. Your respective remarks at the opening reception and "Southern Everglades" plenary panel complement the ongoing dialogue that we enjoy with your team in Jacksonville and West Palm Beach throughout the year. We hope you found the conference to be a welcoming and beneficial experience, and that you will plan to join us again in the years to come.

A significant focus of the conference and of our community's effort has been construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee, one of the project components authorized in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in 2000. The goal of the reservoir is to reduce high-volume damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee that currently inundate the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries, causing algal blooms that threaten public health and the economy of those coastal communities. At the same time, the project will store and treat water from Lake Okeechobee to deliver to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, where it is desperately needed. The restoration of Everglades and Biscayne National Parks is at the heart of the federal government's interest and investment in CERP.

Last year, after tremendous outpouring by the environmental and fishing communities and Florida's public, Governor Scott signed state legislation to jumpstart planning of the EAA Reservoir. The South Florida Water

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

Management District (SFWMD) initiated planning of the reservoir in October 2017. We understand that the process by which the Corps can participate when a local sponsor chooses to expedite a project is new territory for your agency, and protocol for doing so is still in development. Mr. Fisher, we urge you to provide guidance that allows your expert team to provide technical review of the reservoir alternatives under consideration as quickly as possible.

We appreciate the tremendous workload undertaken by the leadership and technical staff at the SFWMD. The Everglades Coalition adamantly wants to see this project succeed, as indicated in the Coalition's letter to Governor Scott on January 16, 2018. In furtherance of that desire, we have urged the SFWMD to develop a project footprint that represents the optimal configuration for a project that will maximize the reduction of harmful estuary discharges and provide adequate water quality treatment for conveyance south in a cost-effective manner.

Likewise, the Everglades Coalition has encouraged the SFWMD to analyze a broad range of alternatives to meet the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and to consider lands outside the current project footprint. Doing so would allow for additional water quality treatment which we believe will be necessary in order to adequately clean the water so that the benefits that have been described by the alternatives under consideration can be achieved.

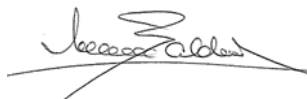
Some of the options under consideration by the SFWMD include repurposing the A-1 Flow Equalization Basin (FEB) lands into deep-water storage. The A-1 FEB is effectively treating water today as part of the Restoration Strategies agreed to by the State of Florida and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Converting the use from water treatment to deep storage would require additional lands be made available elsewhere, outside of the A-1 and A-2 parcels, to perform the necessary water quality treatment lost by the conversion to deep water reservoir. Maintaining water quality standards per the consent decree is critical for the reservoir, for Restoration Strategies, and for overall restoration efforts. Moving forward, we believe ensuring maximum performance water quality features associated with Restoration Strategies is critical to meet the project's stated goals.

As we hope you experienced at the Everglades Coalition Conference, the various agencies and stakeholders passionate about the Everglades have long worked together to advance our shared goals for this special ecosystem. We are seeking collaborative dialogue between the SFWMD, Corps, and stakeholders to evaluate a complete array of alternatives that deliver the best possible EAA Reservoir. The Everglades Coalition is committed to supporting the best possible project to move forward quickly to fruition and deliver the on-the-ground ecosystem benefits that are desperately needed.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair
Everglades Coalition



Michael Baldwin
Co-Chair
Everglades Coalition