



THE EVERGLADES COALITION

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CONTACTS: **Richard Grosso**, Co-Chair Everglades Coalition and Executive Director
of The Environmental & Land Use Law Center, 954-262-6140
Juanita Greene, Coalition EAA Team Leader and Conservation Chair of
the Friends Of the Everglades, 305-774-0253

Building Proposals Prompt Call for Moratorium on Development

Convinced by recent designs for large-scale intrusion of development into the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), the Everglades Coalition is calling on county commissioners in Palm Beach and Hendry counties to impose, and state officials to support, a moratorium on land use changes or development in the half-million acre agricultural area south of Lake Okeechobee.

“The Coalition believes that a moratorium is necessary,” said Richard Grosso, Co-Chair of the Everglades Coalition which is comprised of 45 environmental and civic organizations. “Development in the Everglades Agricultural Area would severely compromise Everglades restoration. The EAA needs a restoration plan right now – not a development plan.”

The Coalition believes that a moratorium should remain in existence until restoration needs are determined, restoration plans are in place, and it is known what level of development, if any, “will not hinder protection and restoration of the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee”.

“The State must have a plan in place for the EAA, with accurate public costs and with full scientific understanding of the consequence on the current restoration efforts taking place” continued Grosso.

The Coalition says several recent actions prompted the call for a moratorium including the proposal to locate the Scripps Research Institute in the EAA. The biomedical research company, with support from Governor Jeb Bush and county officials, has been looking for a home in Palm Beach County. Other actions raising concern include a proposal by Palm Beach Aggregates to significantly increase the density of land on the eastern border of the EAA, the Florida Crystals sugar corporation’s recently expressed desire to annex a portion of the EAA into the village of Wellington, and a proposal to locate a county employment complex on state-owned land in the EAA.

“We are particularly disturbed that development threatens to overwhelm long-range plans to restore and protect the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee,” said David Bogardus with World Wildlife Fund. “Development in the EAA was not anticipated in the long term restoration plan.”

The moratorium request, approved Wednesday at the Coalition’s quarterly meeting in West Palm Beach, will go to the Palm Beach and Hendry county commissions, which have control over land use decisions in the EAA. The coalition is also asking state officials with influence over the EAA to urge the counties to impose the moratorium, including Governor Jeb Bush and officials in the Florida Department of Community Affairs, and the Florida Cabinet acting as the Florida Administration Commission.

“This is an urgent matter for public officials,” said Juanita Greene, chair of the Coalition’s EAA Team. “Although they anticipated this, state and local officials have not reacted to the dilemma of development encroaching directly into lands that are clearly necessary to the future of the Everglades.”

The Coalition has been active on this issue for many years and has already called for designation of the EAA as an Area of Critical State Concern and urged a government buyout of lands in the EAA as they go out of agricultural production.

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