



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
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
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 Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
The Urban Environment League of
Greater Miami
Tropical Audubon Society

June 20, 2016

Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Daniel O’Keefe, Governing Board Chair
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Re: Immediate Need to Plan Water Storage, Treatment, and Conveyance South of Lake Okeechobee

Dear Secretary Darcy and Mr. O’Keefe:

On behalf of the 61 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition committed to the protection and restoration of America’s Everglades, we ask that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District immediately begin planning for additional projects to provide storage, treatment, and conveyance of Lake Okeechobee water south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Doing so will help alleviate harmful lake releases to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers.

Storage and treatment south of Lake Okeechobee (titled “EAA Storage, ASR, and Decom Phase 2”) is an element of the recently-updated Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) with a planning start date of 2020. Since the IDS was finalized last year, South Florida experienced unusually high rainfall during the dry season which caused devastating ecological conditions in three estuary communities and reinforced the urgent need for capacity to store, treat, and convey water south. The St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries were burdened by polluted and ill-timed releases from Lake Okeechobee, while seagrasses in Florida Bay died from chronic low freshwater flow, a potential prelude to a devastating collapse of the Bay. We believe these damaging ecological conditions warrant re-evaluation of the IDS timeline. Postponing EAA storage planning until 2020 is unacceptable.

We understand that Lake Okeechobee Watershed planning – including storage planning north of the lake – will begin this summer. We urge you to seize the opportunity to better integrate this effort with planning for comprehensive storage south of the Lake. The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) showed us that there is an efficient, effective way to expedite restoration progress by moving forward with interrelated CERP project components concurrently. We believe that doing so will more holistically and efficiently evaluate total water storage needs both north and south of Lake Okeechobee and thus benefit the entire region.

Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades

Planning and design are scheduled to span six years, and congressional authorization and Project Planning Agreement execution must then be attained before construction can begin. As a result, the ecological benefits of storage, treatment, and flow through the EAA will still not be realized for many years, thus reinforcing the need for an integrated planning effort to start now.

Floridians in struggling estuary communities are looking for leadership and action. These include anglers impacted by dead seagrasses, boat operators whose businesses are suffering, and waterfront property owners burdened with the smell and public health threat of severely impacted waters. Residents of South Florida are looking for comprehensive and urgent solutions.

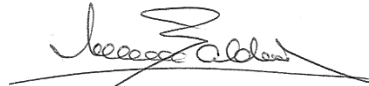
We urge you to respond to their call for action by initiating a comprehensive and coordinated planning process which addresses the need for storage, treatment and conveyance of water both south and north of the Lake. Doing so will send a message that our decision-makers are attentive to the needs of the community and prepared to respond. We stand ready to assist in the planning and design phases of a coordinated project that will reduce discharges to the estuaries and store, treat, and convey water south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

Thank you for your efforts to protect and restore America's Everglades. We look forward to continuing to work with your agencies toward our shared goal of ecosystem restoration.

Sincerely,

Cara Capp

Cara Capp
National Co-Chair



Michael J. Baldwin
State Co-Chair

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