April 6, 2021

The Honorable Marco Rubio
State Senator - Florida

The Honorable Rick Scott
State Senator - Florida

The Honorable Brian Mast
U.S. Representative, 18th District

The Honorable Lois Frankel
U.S. Representative, 21st District

The Honorable Ted Deutch
U.S. Representative, 22nd District

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
U.S. Representative, 23rd District

The Honorable Rep. Frederica Wilson
U.S. Representative, 24th District

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
U.S. Representative, 25th District

The Honorable Carlos Gimenez
U.S. Representative, 26th District

The Honorable Maria Salazar
U.S. Representative, 27th District

Dear Senators and South Florida Members of Congress:

On March 19, 2021 the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils, representing the seven counties of Southeast Florida consisting of Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties and more than 6.8 million people, met in a Joint Workshop and discussed the serious potable water, sewer, and stormwater drainage issues facing the Southeast Florida region. A key component of the meeting was a conversation about the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project and Resilience Study (C&S) and the urgent need to address flooding and other related risks to vulnerable communities due to changed conditions, including sea level rise, weather patterns, land development, and population growth.

As you know, the C&S Project was authorized by Congress in 1948 – more than 70 years ago – and has served as an invaluable contributor to the economic success of south Florida, particularly Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. However, it was designed to deliver flood protection for 2 million residents, not the 11 million it currently serves nor the estimated 15 million people who will live in the region in 30 years.

Today, the C&S system is under substantial stress due to changes in the physical environment, especially increased rainfall intensity and rising sea levels. Stormwater severely strains the system and sea level rise significantly threatens project operations.
Extreme high tide events already preclude operation of many of the flood control gates in the system. In 2009, a study performed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) determined that 18 flood control structures of the C&SF system were within six inches of their design capacity, meaning that stormwater discharges to tide will be hindered by an additional six inches of sea level rise, which we may reach before 2030. Despite significant local investment in resilience from land use to design standards and infrastructure improvements, these local efforts remain dependent upon the effective functioning of the C&SF Project.

Significant progress has been made to support the C&SF restudy effort. First, the Governing Board of the SFWMD agreed in March 2020 to be the local sponsor of the feasibility study. Second, the USACE in March 2020 completed an Initial Appraisal Report (IAR) for the study, conducted under Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970, showing “there is Federal interest in proceeding to the feasibility phase of this study to further analyze and evaluate improvements to the C&SF project.” Third, in May 2020, the South Atlantic Division approved the IAR, thereby making the restudy eligible for federal funding.

Without a functioning flood control system, more of south Florida’s citizens, economy, and broader environment will be at risk. It is essential that the C&SF Project be reviewed to evaluate these external changes to the landscape and propose solutions to address the challenges. We urge Congress to fund the C&SF restudy in the FY 2022 Appropriations process and appreciate your attention to this issue.

Thank you for in advance for your consideration and continued support of the C&SF restudy and this funding request.

Sincerely,

Mario J. Bailey
Chair

encl. SFRPC / TCRPC Board Lists

cc Mr. Taylor N. Ferrell, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works
General Scott A. Spellmon, Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, USACE
Colonel Jason E. Kelly, Commander, South Atlantic District, USACE
Colonel Andrew Kelly, Commander, Jacksonville District, USACE
The Honorable Steve Geller, Mayor, Broward County
Mr. Chauncey Goss, Chairman, SFWMD
Mr. Drew Bartlett, Executive Director, SFWMD
SFRPC Council Members
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Sam Goren, Legal Counsel

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Laura Corry, South Florida Water Management District

Dat Huynh, Florida Department of Transportation, District Six
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February 2021

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Regina Bohlen, Commissioner, City of Pahokee - Alternate
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Abby Brennan, Mayor, Village of Tequesta
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February 2021

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Kathy LaMartina, South Florida Water Management District
Jason Andreotta, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Loraine Kelly-Cargill, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority