

FLORIDA KEYS AQUEDUCT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION No. 08-19

A RESOLUTION OF THE FLORIDA KEYS AQUEDUCT AUTHORITY SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST AND THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT TO ACQUIRE LAND SOUTH OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF AMERICA'S EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA'S COASTAL ESTUARIES

WHEREAS, America's Everglades and the South Florida ecosystem is a unique expanse of habitats, whose environmental health is critical to the economy and quality of life of South Florida; and

WHEREAS, on June 24, 2008, Governor Charlie Crist unveiled a momentous strategy to bring about the largest environmental land acquisition in Florida's history and restore America's Everglades in a way never before anticipated; and

WHEREAS, the Governor announced that the South Florida Water Management District will begin negotiating an agreement with United States Sugar Corporation to purchase nearly 300 square miles of land spanning four counties in South Florida; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of as much as 187,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee would provide the "missing link" needed to better protect the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries, and revive, restore and preserve one of America's greatest natural treasures - the Everglades; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District and United States Sugar Corporation signed a "Statement of Principles" that provides the framework for the potential acquisition of property and assets; and

WHEREAS, through successful negotiations and strategic land swaps, vast tracts would be used to reestablish a part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades through a managed system of storage and treatment; and

WHEREAS, dedicating significantly more land in the Everglades Agricultural Area to restoration will build upon and enhance the 30-year state-federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, offering the opportunity and flexibility to store and clean water on a scale never before contemplated; and

WHEREAS, benefits from the land acquisition include huge increases in the availability of water storage, significantly reducing the potential for harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida's coastal rivers and estuaries; and

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WHEREAS, the acquisition will prevent thousands of tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades every year and eliminate the need for "back-pumping" water into Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition also provides the potential opportunity to sustain remaining agriculture in the region by eliminating environmental concerns; enhancing the availability of water supply; and fostering green energy production; and

WHEREAS, the Governor has identified the State of Florida's Rural Economic Development Initiative as a resource for working with United States Sugar Corporation, local governments, area businesses, state agencies and the South Florida Water Management District on an economic transition plan for the area; and

WHEREAS, saving the Everglades and protecting Florida's coastal estuaries is an environmental priority for the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District's initiative to purchase 187,000 acres of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area is a watershed event for restoring a beloved national treasure - the Everglades;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority applauds and supports the landmark efforts of Governor Charlie Crist and the South Florida Water Management District to negotiate the acquisition of significant lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area for the purposes of restoring and protecting the northern and southern Everglades and Florida's coastal estuaries.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 21st day of August, 2008.

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BY: _____

J. Robert Dean, Chairman

(CORPORATE SEAL)

ATTEST:

Kathryn A. Ovide, Recording Clerk