



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR JOE NEGRON
President

December 14, 2017

Director Ernie Marks
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

Dear Director Marks,

First, let me thank you and your staff at the South Florida Water Management District for the efforts you have put into making the Everglades Agriculture Area (EAA) reservoir a reality. I am impressed by the commitment the District has made in planning the reservoir and the transparency the District has demonstrated by tracking its progress on its website and holding numerous public meetings. I was also heartened by your recent editorial in the TCPalm where you reiterated your commitment to see this project through completion.

I have a concern that the initial modeling may be unnecessarily constrained by using a limited footprint or that utilizing the A-1 parcel might trigger the need to renegotiate the restoration strategies consent decrees. The bill, now law, anticipates use of the A-2 and potentially the A-1 parcel and lands to the west of the two parcels. The law also emphasizes termination of leases, land swaps, and land acquisition if additional land is necessary for the EAA reservoir project. What I hope to see from the District is a proposal that is workable, that we can make a reality as expeditiously as possible to decrease the need for harmful discharges to the estuaries. If the District needs to be flexible with the footprint to put an effective reservoir plan into action, I hope it will consider using any additional land available, if necessary. It was our goal as the Legislature to give the District the tools it needs to develop a plan that is realistic and will ultimately receive approval from our partners in the federal government.

Because of the law's emphasis on meeting the necessary water quality requirements, I anticipate that an agreement with the federal government can be reached if the A-1 parcel is repurposed for the EAA reservoir including water quality treatment features. I know water

Marks, Ernie
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quality modeling has been an integral part of your planning work to date, and I commend you and your staff for that. If the consent decrees require any modification, I would urge the District to start those conversations early so that those revisions can be made contemporaneously with the development of the reservoir.

Again, I thank you and your staff for taking the first steps in undertaking this historic project. I look forward to your report on the status of the post-authorization change report in January. I am optimistic that with continuing efforts like those that have been put forward to date, we will make this project a reality and see an end to the catastrophic effects that excessive discharges from Lake Okeechobee have had on our estuaries and local communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Negron", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joe Negron

CC: Senator Rob Bradley, Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation