



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Joe Negron
President of the Senate
409 Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear President Negron:

Thank you for your letter regarding development of a Post Authorization Change Report for the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), also known as the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Storage Reservoir Feasibility Study. I appreciate your recognition of District staff's commitment to completing this important study on the expedited timeline established in Laws of Florida, Chapter 2017-10, commonly referred to as SB10. The District's professional engineers and scientists are true leaders in the field of restoration science, and they are equal to the task asked of them by Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature.

As you recognize, the ultimate success of this important undertaking has required the District to coordinate with a broad coalition, including state and federal agencies, tribal nations, environmental organizations and individual members of the public. Dialogue with interested parties has been comprehensive and memorialized in numerous public meetings and on the District's interactive project website.

At times, land acquisition has dominated the discussion. The District has not ignored this topic. The District has solicited landowners in the EAA with the goal of identifying willing sellers. As of this letter we have not heard back from all parties. The responses we have received, in general, have not identified willing sellers relevant to this project. However, as we continue forward, the District will take advantage of opportunities such as purchases or swaps of state lands should those opportunities present themselves through the District's solicitation or otherwise. In order to address this uncertainty and achieve the state's ambitious schedule, the District has used its planning period to model four options that maximize use of District-owned land and the land of adjacent sellers who have not rejected overtures to acquire their land. I am pleased to report that the results of the District's technical work are very encouraging.

In conjunction with other authorized Everglades Restoration projects, the EAA Reservoir could reduce harmful discharges to the northern estuaries upwards of 54% in comparison with existing conditions. Equally important is that each alternative is expected to achieve the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan goal of an average of 98 billion gallons per year of clean water being delivered south to the Everglades.

With regard to the A-1 Flow Equalization Basin, I would suggest that the process for acquiring regulatory authorization is now a well-worn path. The tools and methods used during Restoration Strategies and CEPP are the same as those being applied here. To be sure, Restoration Strategies endured scrutiny from the public and regulatory agencies, but also has borne real-world results and water quality improvement. I am certain that any proposal put forward by the District will achieve water quality standards, reduce harmful discharges to the estuaries and result in the flow of additional clean water to the Everglades.

I assure you that the District is focused on the successful planning and implementation of this next increment of storage south of Lake Okeechobee. This effort complements that of existing efforts to the north, east, and west of the Lake, and we are pleased to be a part of this important project.

The District appreciates your continued support as we develop the remaining information necessary for the January 9th report to the Legislature. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Ernie Marks
Executive Director

EM/mbh

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



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
Page 2

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