



March 10, 2010

Eric Buermann
Chair, Governing Board
South Florida Water Management District
P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach FL 33416-4680

Dear Chair Buermann:

The Nature Conservancy, supportive of every practical means of advancing the comprehensive restoration of the Everglades ecosystem, urges the Governing Board to extend the “River of Grass” acquisition contract.

The Everglades is a unique ecosystem not only important biologically but for the well-being of the people of Florida. Over the last 50 years, The Nature Conservancy has helped acquire, with its partners, 355,000 acres in the Everglades watershed, from Orlando through Florida Bay to the Florida Keys. We believe that it is essential to create more opportunities for water storage in the Everglades and to reduce harmful discharges into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers.

The future health of the Everglades is a responsibility for all of us and all opportunities to restore this unique American landscape must be carefully considered. The District’s ambitious “River of Grass” purchase has the potential to reconnect Lake Okeechobee to the remnant Everglades system, bring much closer to reality the historic flow and advance the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in important ways. An opportunity such as this to purchase a key landscape from a willing seller must be thoroughly weighed and evaluated. Only by taking the time to analyze these opportunities and act appropriately can restoration progress be made.

The Conservancy urges the Board to pursue all viable alternatives for Everglades restoration. The rehabilitation of the world’s largest wetland system deserves no less.

Sincerely,

Jeff Danter
State Director
The Nature Conservancy of Florida