



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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District One

March 5, 2010

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District Two

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District Four

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County Manager

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County Attorney

Diana M. Parker
County Hearing Examiner

Mr. Eric Buermann, Chairman
SFWMD Governing Board
Post Office Box 24680
West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-4680

Dear Chairman Buermann:

On behalf of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners, I want to thank you and your colleagues on the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board for your continuing efforts to work towards acquiring the property owned by United States Sugar Corporation to revive the River of Grass. To further your effort to complete this acquisition, we urge the Governing Board to vote to extend the contractually agreed upon closing date of March 31, 2010.

Reviving the River of Grass through acquisition of the U.S. Sugar property is critical to not only restoring the original Everglades region, but is critical to help protect south Florida's coastal estuaries including our own Caloosahatchee. Providing additional lands to store and clean stormwater runoff are essential for true restoration to occur. Acquisition of these lands can provide this crucial storage. This storage can help to greatly curtail the devastating, pollutant laden discharges that are dumped to the Caloosahatchee during the wet season. Added storage will also help to provide the needed fresh water that the Caloosahatchee consistently needs during the dry season.

The Lee County Commission is acutely aware of the challenges that the District faces with completing an endeavor as visionary as this proposed acquisition. The due diligence performed by the State of Florida and the District to pare down the acquisition area should help to lesson the capital impact, but the cost is still immense. While the cost is high and the challenges numerous, the continued adverse impacts to the Everglades Ecosystem by forgoing this opportunity would be monumental.

We look forward to working with you and your staff in continuing to help design a plan that includes storage and treatment of water south of the Lake Okeechobee. This more natural solution will greatly benefit not only the Caloosahatchee, but will also help the St. Lucie Estuary, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.

The Lee County Commission once again pledges their support in any way that we can assist your Board in the continuing efforts to restore and protect our most valuable natural systems. We look forward to the challenge ahead and working with you to meet those challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Hall", written in a cursive style.

Tammy Hall, Chairwoman
Lee County Board of County Commissioners

- c: Jerry Montgomery, Vice Chair, SFWMD Governing Board
- Sandy Batchelor, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Joe Collins, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Charles Dauray, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Shannon Estenoz, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Kevin Powers, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Patrick J. Rooney, Esq., Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Glen J. Waldman, Member, SFWMD Governing Board
- Carol Wehle, SFWMD Executive Director
- Dist 1, 2, 3, 5
- Karen Hawes, County Manager
- Jim Lavender, Public Works Director
- Roland Ottolini, Natural Resources Director
- Kurt Harclerode, Natural Resources Operations Manager