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## TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

Compiled by: South Florida Water Management District  
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## Florida, Big Sugar in Everglades negotiations

06/23/2008

Associated Press (AP)

SKOLOFF, BRIAN

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Brian Skoloff - AP-Over 100 hits including International Herald, MSNMoney, CNBC, Forbes, LA Times, Seattle, NY Post, and Washington Post

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida\_The state of Florida and U.S. Sugar Corp., America's largest producer of cane sugar, are negotiating the sale of thousands of acres (hectares) of farmland in the Everglades to help restore the wetlands, three officials familiar with the potential deal said Monday.

The 187,000 acres (75,678 hectares) sit south of Lake Okeechobee, the virtual heart of the ecosystem.

The land would be used to help restore a more natural flow to the wetlands that has been stymied for years by agriculture and development.

Farming in the region has long been considered a hindrance to restoration, contributing fertilizers and pollutants to the wetlands, and blocking its natural flow patterns.

The officials work for various parties involved in the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks that began last year had not been announced.

They told The Associated Press that the potential deal would call for the state to pay about \$1.7 billion for the land. U.S Sugar would then still be allowed to continue farming for several years under leases.

The company and the South Florida Water Management District declined to comment. Gov. Charlie Crist's office also declined to comment.

However, Crist planned a news conference on Tuesday to make a "major Everglades announcement."

"It's like the Louisiana Purchase for the Everglades," John Marshall, of the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation, said of the potential deal. His group advocates for Everglades restoration.

Marshall said he was unaware of the negotiations.

"It would be a great deal," Marshall said. "This would finally be having our dream realized of being able to connect the entire system from the Kissimmee basin to Florida Bay."

Jeff Danter, The Nature Conservancy's state director, called the potential deal "an unprecedented opportunity to completely rewrite the course of Everglades restoration."

The entire restoration effort is the largest of its kind in the world, attempting to undo and reroute decades of flood control projects that have diverted water to make way for growth.

A key component was approved by Congress in 2000 and is formally known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

It was originally estimated to cost \$7.8 billion and take 30 years. The price tag has now ballooned to billions more because of rising construction and real estate costs, and it is unknown how long it could take.

The plan called for the state and federal government to be 50-50 partners, but to date, Florida has committed more than \$2 billion, while the federal government has spent only several hundred million dollars.

Last year, Congress authorized about \$1.8 billion for Everglades projects but the money has yet to be allocated and competition is stiff from other states.

If the U.S. Sugar deal goes through, the entire restoration plan may have to be reworked, taking into account the massive amount of new land that would be available for the effort.

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## **Crist discussing land purchase from Big Sugar**

06/23/2008

Miami Herald - Online

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By CURTIS MORGAN-Miami Herald

Florida is pursuing a blockbuster deal aimed at buying out the biggest chunk of Big Sugar, the powerful agricultural industry whose pollution of the Everglades has made the industry a target of environmentalists for decades.

Gov. Charlie Crist has scheduled a news conference Tuesday in Palm Beach County where sources familiar with the negotiations say he will outline a state proposal to purchase the U.S. Sugar Corporation's vast holdings between Lake Okeechobee and the marshes of the Everglades -- as much as 187,000 acres, including refineries, railroads and rock mines.

The opening bid could be near \$1.7 billion, though the figures could change during what promise to be lengthy and complex talks.

But the actual outlay of cash from a state in the grips of a serious economic slide and budget crisis could be significantly less, according to sources briefed on the potential deal, because U.S. Sugar would be allowed to lease the land and continue farming for five or six more years.

While difficult details remain unresolved and the proposal could face political and legal hurdles, a purchase of such a massive swath of farm land could recharge and dramatically reshape the stalled \$1.8 billion state-federal effort to restore the Everglades.

"If this were true, this would be a bold action that would ensure the sustainability of the Everglades and its estuaries for years to come," said Kirk Fordham, chief executive officer of the Everglades Foundation. "The magnitude of this deal, if it is true, is breathtaking and almost hard to comprehend."

The governor's office declined to confirm any details Monday night with Crist spokeswoman Eric Isaac saying only, "We look forward to making an announcement on the Everglades tomorrow." Judy Sanchez, a spokeswoman for U.S. Sugar, the nation's largest sugar grower, also declined comment. Eric Buermann, chairman of the South Florida Water Management District's governing board, which would have to approve and pay for the land under the proposal, did not return calls.

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## Florida, U.S. Sugar strike \$1.7 billion deal for farmland to restore Everglades

06/23/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

DARA KAM, BOB KING and DIANNA SMITH

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DARA KAM, BOB KING and DIANNA SMITH - Palm Beach Post

Officials from U.S. Sugar Corp. and the South Florida Water Management District are expected to announce a \$1.7 billion deal Tuesday that would give ownership of a vast swath of the historic Everglades on sugar cane land south of Lake Okeechobee to the state.

Sources knowledgeable about the deal confirmed today that the state and the South Florida Water Management District would purchase some assets of U.S. Sugar Corp., including more than 185,000 acres south of Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades.

Negotiations between the sugar giant, Gov. Charlie Crist's office and water management officials have been going on for about seven months, sources said.

The assumption is that U.S. Sugar will go out of business in Florida in the near future.

The cost to the state and water management district is expected to be about \$1.7 billion, although the transaction will probably take place in stages over at least the next five years, sources said.

A press conference will be held at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow at Stormwater Treatment Area 1-West on County Road 880. Crist's office declined to confirm the deal when asked today. 'We look forward to making a great announcement in the Everglades tomorrow,' Crist's spokesman Erin Isaac said.

The water management district will be paying for the bulk of the purchase, sources said, using money from property tax collections, but the breakdown of the state and water district's share has not been determined.

John Marshall of the Marshall Foundation and the Everglades Coalition has been working with others to protect the Everglades agricultural area and preserving the flow way. 'It's the Louisiana Purchase,' Marshall said of the possible deal. 'It's the one thing that all organizations are unanimous on. We would be taking a giant step by restoring flow. It would mean Everglades restoration is underway.' David Guest, Florida director of the group Earthjustice, said such a deal would be 'amazing' though he'd be surprised if U.S. Sugar would agree to sell such a vast swath of land.

Guest, who has tangled with the sugar industry in a number of legal cases, said U.S. Sugar hasn't been acting like a company planning to retreat. Instead, it's been aggressively lobbying to mine for rock in western Palm Beach County and fighting against environmental groups that want to stop the pumping of polluted farm runoff into Lake Okeechobee. 'It's almost inconceivable that they would do a thing like that,' Guest said. 'They've been fighting us like lions on every front.' 'I would be pretty stunned,' Guest said. Environmental groups have argued for decades that the state should buy much or all of the farming region south of the lake to restore the historic flow of the Everglades' headwaters, which once moved in an unbroken stream from the Kissimmee River valley to Florida Bay.

They also have said the farmland would provide space to expand the water district's Everglades filter marshes, which have proven too small to handle the tons of polluting phosphorus and nitrogen washing south from the lake. Tuesday's announcement also comes about a month after the water district abruptly announced it was halting work on a 26-square-mile reservoir near South Bay that is supposed to be part of the

Everglades restoration.

While it would be the largest free-standing reservoir on Earth, critics say it wouldn't come close to providing the flow the Everglades needs to return to health.

But the purchase also comes just two months after U.S. Sugar won permission from Palm Beach County commissioners to massively expand its rock mining south of the lake.

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## **Sugar deal causes shock**

06/24/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

Salisbury, Susan

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Susan Salisbury - Palm Beach Post

BELLE GLADE Florida sugar industry officials reacted with shock and dismay Monday to news that U.S. Sugar Corp., the state's oldest sugar grower, had agreed to sell its land for Everglades restoration and go out of business. 'We're still trying to digest this information. We're reeling,' said Barbara Miedema, spokeswoman for the 48-member Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida, based in Belle Glade.

The \$1.7 billion buyout of the U.S. Sugar land, expected to be announced this morning, will cut the 400,000-acre Florida sugar industry almost in half. Observers said that could have a devastating effect on Clewiston, a town of 7,000 that serves as the company's headquarters, as well as other Lake Okeechobee towns such as Belle Glade and South Bay.

U.S. Sugar, which employs about 1,700 people, was founded in 1931 by Charles Stewart Mott, a multimillionaire philanthropist who died in 1973. His heirs are major shareholders of the privately held company.

Jeff Barwick, former executive director of the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce, said the news came as a blow to the town. 'In the short term, it is going to be terrible for Clewiston,' he said. 'When you take out the major employer in a community that has been there for so long, there's no question.' Robert Coker, U.S. Sugar's senior vice president, declined comment Monday.

Gaston Cantens, a spokesman for Florida's other major sugar company, Florida Crystals Corp. of West Palm Beach, said his company was withholding comment until after Gov. Charlie Crist's appearance this morning near Belle Glade.

Crist is to announce the deal for more than 185,000 acres of U.S. Sugar's land - which is virtually all of it - along with officials from the company, the state and the South Florida Water Management District. The state wants the land to improve water flow in the Everglades, which has been compromised by decades of draining and development.

Jack Roney, director of economics and policy analysis for the American Sugar Alliance in Arlington, Va., said U.S. Sugar's land amounts to 9 percent of the total U.S. cane and beet acreage of about 2 million acres, down from a peak of 2.5 million acres in the early 2000s. 'That amounts to a sizeable chunk,' Roney said. U.S. Sugar, Florida Crystals and the cooperative compose Florida's sugar industry, which this year produced about 1.5 million tons of sugar, down from its peak production of 2.15 million tons in 2003-04. For this year's harvest, U.S. Sugar used a brand-new high-tech mill, called the Clewiston Sugar Factory.

Yasir Khan, a partner in Big Lake Hotels LLC, which bought the historic Clewiston Inn from U.S. Sugar in June 2007 for \$2.2 million, said the company is the hotel and

restaurant's biggest client. The inn sits across from U.S. Sugar's headquarters. 'It will be devastating to the town. I am almost in disbelief,' Khan said Monday. Barwick, the retired chamber president, said that over the long term U.S. Sugar's departure could be a positive thing.

Without the sugar operations, the town will become more marketable for would-be home buyers who don't want to live near a massive industrial establishment, he said. 'All we can hope for now is that it is a drawn-out process, not an immediate thing,' he said. 'Five years would give time to cushion it and prepare other things,' Barwick said.

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## **SWEET DEAL State to pay U.S. Sugar \$1.7B for Everglades land COMMENTARY**

06/24/2008

Orlando Sentinel

Thomas, Mike

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Everglades deal's impact would be huge - for all of us  
Mike Thomas-OrlandoSentinel

### COMMENTARY

For the Everglades to survive, Big Sugar has to go.

That makes the massive buyout of sugar land one of the biggest environmental stories in Florida's history.

For those of you fresh from Ohio, the Everglades is a massive network of lakes, creeks, swamps and rivers that begins in south Orange and extends to the southern tip of Florida. It brings in millions of dollars to Osceola County from fishing and eco-tourism.

It brings drinking water to the cities of South Florida.

During the past century, engineers have carved it up into a Frankenstein concoction of canals, dikes and dams.

Undoing this mess into something resembling nature has been Florida's greatest environmental challenge.

All seemed lost until the news broke Monday that U.S. Sugar was willing to sell its 187,000 acres to the state.

That land sits in the heart of the Everglades. You could no more save the Everglades and leave Big Sugar intact than you could save a cancer patient and leave the tumors intact.

There simply is not enough room in South Florida to accommodate the farms, 4 million people, 1 million alligators, one alleged skunk ape and an ecosystem so delicate that birds live or die by the smallest fluctuations in water levels.

Puzzle for engineers

The engineers could not design their way out of that reality no matter how many billions of tax dollars they burned trying.

The lack of room to store water has long been the 8,000-pound gorilla in the Everglades restoration project. For years water managers have compensated by piling more water into Lake Okeechobee, putting the lake's rickety dike at risk of catastrophic failure.

To relieve pressure on the dike, they dump water from the lake into canals draining out to the coast.

This is destroying brackish-water bays. It has been blamed for fueling devastating red-tide outbreaks in the Gulf of Mexico.

And it's why environmentalists in Martin County opposed a plan to restore Kissimmee's Lake Tohopekaliga back in 2003. Draining much of the lake, as planned, would send a huge slug of polluted fresh water flowing into their section of the Indian River.

You see, with the Everglades, what happens in one place affects other places hundreds of miles away.

And what is happening is crazy. We dump all this fresh water in the rainy months, only to go begging for it when the dry months arrive.

We are a hydrological basket case, bouncing back and forth from flood to drought.

The most likely solution always has been located south of Lake Okeechobee, where Big Sugar tills more than 400,000 acres.

But the demands of hydrology have always run into the reality of politics.

Big Sugar has given lavishly to both Republicans and Democrats, making it a potent power both in Tallahassee and Washington.

In return, the politicians have guaranteed the sugar growers healthy profits by propping up prices with protectionist policies and by subsidizing farming operations with taxpayer dollars. That has caused the growers to keep a death grip on their land, making them the state's most notorious environmental villains.

Sugar land always has been that which could not be named in the Everglades restoration plan.

And to get around that, engineers concocted a bizarre scheme to pump billions of gallons of dirty water from Lake Okeechobee into the underground aquifer for storage. As I once wrote, it would be the mother of all enemas. Even if it were feasible, the fuel costs would be staggering.

All this is why U.S. Sugar's impending sellout is so stunning. Making it more so, the growers just got their trade-crippling price supports re-upped by Congress.

I can't wait for the details on this deal.

Perhaps someone in state government finally acknowledged that the Everglades plan was a no-go without sugar land. Perhaps U.S. Sugar looked at the growing resentment against its subsidies, both here and abroad, and decided this was the time to bail.

U.S. Sugar does nothing that is not in its own best interest. It makes me wonder whether other growers may be knocking on the door next.

You might foot the bill

Will the cost of sugar go up? No. But the cost of living in Florida probably will, particularly if you live within the boundaries of the South Florida Water Management District.

In addition to the \$1.7 billion cost of the land, the cost to build reservoirs and marshes on it will be monstrosly huge. The land has subsided by several feet since being severed from the marshes, making the dream of naturally flowing water from Lake Okeechobee into the Everglades improbable.

So the engineers will have to design solutions to compensate.

This will add billions to the cost of a project already over budget by billions.

The River of Grass has become a River of Cash.

Mike Thomas can be reached at mthomas@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-5525.

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## **U.S. Sugar Corp. agrees to sell the state 185,000 acres in the Everglades**

06/23/2008

South Florida Sun-Sentinel - Online

Linda Kleindienst and Andy Reid

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Linda Kleindienst and Andy Reid-South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Orlando Sentinel and Stuart News

Gov. Charlie Crist on Tuesday is expected to announce a blockbuster land deal that could be a boon for Everglades restoration and the end of a sugar cane giant.

U.S. Sugar Corp. has agreed to sell the state all of its about 185,000 acres in the Everglades Agricultural Area for \$1.7 billion, according to two sources close to the deal. The land could be used as part of the multi-billion-dollar effort to construct pollution-filtering treatment marshes and reservoirs to restore flows of water to the Everglades.

Crist's office and U.S. Sugar declined comment on Monday.

The governor is scheduled to give a 'major Everglades announcement' in western Tuesday morning. The land deal revives a push by environmentalists to turn sugar cane fields into a 'flow way' that could carry water from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades, a move U.S. Sugar had long opposed and state water management officials called unfeasible. 'This is a major part of what was once the River of Grass,' said John Marshall, president of the environmental advocacy group Arthur R. Marshall Foundation. 'It is such a turnaround that everybody is just amazed.' Two sources close to the negotiations confirmed that U.S. Sugar plans to go out of business, phasing out over 5 years.

On Tuesday, Crist and Sugar execs will announce a \$1.7 billion deal for the state to purchase the corporation's assets - including the sugar mill, rock mining operation, railroad and about 185,000 acres of land. 'In 5 years, they'll run out the business,' said one source, adding it will probably be the most significant step in helping to restore the natural flow to the Everglades. 'It will allow for a free flow-way from Lake Okeechobee into the Everglades.' Talks began about 7 months ago, after the state Department of Environmental Protection started cracking down on back pumping being done by the sugar giant. One source said it was Crist who suggested the idea of selling out. 'The company approached the state and asked for the best way to handle the situation. The governor ultimately said, "Why not get out of the business?"'

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## **Major Everglades land purchase expected**

06/23/2008

Florida Today

BRUCE RITCHIE â?¢ FLORIDA CAPITAL BUREAU â?¢

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Bruce Ritchie - Florida Today

TALLAHASSEE -- Gov. Charlie Crist is likely to announce a major land purchase in the Everglades on Tuesday.

The Nature Conservancy issued a statement this afternoon applauding Crist and the South Florida Water Management District for a land deal with U.S. Sugar.

'The proposed purchase of 185,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land in the Everglades Agricultural Area turns a CERP (Everglades restoration) effort that was beginning to look stalled by inadequate financial and land capital into an unprecedented opportunity to completely rewrite the course of Everglades restoration,' said Jeff Danter, the group's state director.

The governor has scheduled a 10:30 a.m. news conference for Tuesday in Palm Beach County for a major Everglades announcement. An advisory from the governors press office today said no further information will be released about the event.

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## **U.S. Sugar reportedly selling 185,000 acres to help Everglades**

06/23/2008

South Florida Business Journal

South Florida Business Journal

U.S. Sugar has a \$1.7 billion deal to sell a huge portion of its sugar cane fields south of Lake Okeechobee to the state in a major move to enhance Everglades restoration, multiple news sources report on Monday.

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist will make a 'major announcement' about Everglades restoration in a press conference Tuesday morning, according to the South Florida Water Management District.

Water district spokesman Randy Smith confirmed Monday that Crist's pending announcement represents major progress for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

U.S. Sugar, which bills itself as the nation's largest sugar producer, would sell 185,000 acres as part of the new deal, said the Palm Beach Post, which broke news of the deal.

The 1,700-employee company is privately held and says it produces 10 percent of the nation's sugar. It is headquartered in Clewiston along Lake Okeechobee.

The \$8 billion comprehensive plan, approved in 2000, provides a framework and guide to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of central and southern Florida, including the Everglades. The goal of the plan is to capture fresh water that now flows unused to the ocean and the gulf and redirect it to areas that need it most.

Much of the sugar cane fields historically provided a way for water to flow south from Lake Okeechobee before canals were dredge and the Herbert Hoover dike was built around the lake.

Environmentalists have expressed concern that fertilizer runoff from sugar cane fields also affect water quality. Government support for the sugar industry is also controversial because detractors say it results in consumers paying higher prices.

The majority of the water in the restoration plan will be devoted to environmental

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restoration. The remaining water will be used for municipal water supplies and farmers.

The water district is charged with the responsibility of acquiring the real estate needed for the construction, monitoring and operation of the Everglades restoration projects.

A map showing land acquisition projects on the restoration project website was listed as unavailable Monday night.

U.S. Sugar has recently invested heavily in a new processing plant near Clewiston and won approvals for rock mining expansion in the Everglades Agricultural Area. U.S. Sugar owns 187,000 acres; it finished a harvest of about 163,000 acres in May.

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APX opens Washington, D.C. office [San Jose]

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## Florida to pay U.S. Sugar \$1.75-billion for 187,000 acres in Everglades

06/24/2008

St. Petersburg Times - Online

By Alex Leary and Jennifer Liberto, Times Staff Writers In print: Tuesday, June 24, 2008

In a surprise move environmentalists call 'breathtaking,' U.S. Sugar Corp. plans to announce today a deal to sell the state 187,000 acres in the Everglades for \$1.75-billion.

If approved, it would be the largest conservation purchase the state has ever made, helping restore the ecosystem's natural flow and providing a quantum leap to the effort to clean up the Everglades. 'It's like the Louisiana Purchase for the Everglades,' said John Marshall of the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation, an advocacy group.

The effect on U.S. Sugar is also profound. A force in Florida's economy and politics for decades, the Clewiston company could cease to exist in about five years.

The farmland, currently used for sugar cane and citrus production, is sprinkled around the south end of Lake Okeechobee. It would be converted into reservoirs and water-filtering areas. The state could trade parts to competing sugar interests for other property deemed vital to the restoration effort.

Company executives plan a 10:30 a.m. announcement in Loxahatchee along with the South Florida Water Management District and Gov. Charlie Crist. 'It would be breathtaking in its significance and priceless in value,' said Kirk Fordham, chief executive officer of the Everglades Foundation. 'It would be a once-in-a-generation opportunity that would move Everglades restoration beyond all expectations.' The deal, hashed out in secrecy over recent months, would be the state's largest land purchase, surpassing the 74,000-acre Babcock Ranch acquisition in Charlotte and Lee counties in 2006, then considered the biggest conservation feat.

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It towers over the last Everglades purchase, when the state paid \$133-million in 1999 to St. Joe Co. for the 50,000-acre Talisman Sugar Plantation.

Put another way, the 187,000 acres is larger than Pinellas County, which has a land mass of almost 180,000 acres. 'This is monumental, an unprecedented opportunity,' said Jennifer Conner, a senior policy adviser at the Nature Conservancy.

Eric Draper of Audubon of Florida called the purchase the 'missing link' in the restoration project, because it would connect the Everglades with Lake Okeechobee. The entire restoration effort is the largest of its kind in the world, attempting to undo and reroute decades of flood control projects that have diverted water to make way for growth. What's left of the ecosystem is about half the original size.

In 1999, state and federal officials unveiled a multibillion-dollar plan to return the Everglades to a semblance of its former self. The plan required capturing water before it reached the ocean and rerouting it through the Everglades.

Because of many delays, some of the restoration plan's crucial elements are already six years behind schedule, and the cost has ballooned, according to a Government Accountability Office report released in July. Through 2006, the federal government spent \$2.3-billion on Everglades restoration, while Florida spent \$4.8-billion.

Environmental groups and the state have long envied the U.S. Sugar property only to be rebuffed by the company. Now, for reasons that were still unclear Monday, the company has decided to change course.

Neither U.S. Sugar nor the governor's office would comment on the deal Monday. A few environmental leaders were still in pleasant disbelief it would happen, stunned such a major deal could be hatched in secret.

The \$1.75-billion price tag is tentative as the state will have to appraise the property, as is required by law. U.S. Sugar would lease it back for about five years, offsetting some of the cost.

Property taxes paid by people in 16 counties served by the South Florida Water Management District would be leveraged to issue bonds to help raise the money.

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## **Land buy sweet for Everglades, us**

06/24/2008

News-Press

Hiraki, Ryan

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Ryan Hiraki - News-Press

The state of Florida and U.S. Sugar Corp. are expected to announce a deal today that will give a huge chunk of Everglades farmland to the state and pave the way for the sugar company to close its business.

State Sen. Burt Saunders, R-Naples, said the \$1.75 billion deal is supposed to close in October and include a six-year buyout for the sugar giant, which has 1,800 employees and has been a subject of criticism for impeding an effort to restore the Everglades and prevent pollution in the Caloosahatchee River.

"U.S. Sugar will continue to operate all its facilities, then at the end of that six-year period, they will turn the keys over to the state," Saunders said. "It's the last piece of a big puzzle. And it's a big piece."

The purchase, which Gov. Charlie Crist is expected to announce at a 10:30 a.m. news conference today in western Palm Beach County, will put 185,000 acres in state ownership.

The land is expected to help cleanse southbound water as it flows to Everglades National Park - a major part of Florida's tourism industry - and allow state water managers to send more water south from Lake Okeechobee instead of down the Caloosahatchee River, which can cause the algal blooms that chase people from some of Lee County's biggest attractions: its beaches.

The Nature Conservancy in Tallahassee applauded Crist and the South Florida Water Management District.

"The proposed purchase of 185,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land in the Everglades Agricultural Area turns a CERP (Everglades restoration) effort that was beginning to look stalled by inadequate financial and land capital into an unprecedented opportunity to completely rewrite the course of Everglades restoration," said Jeff Danter, the group's state director.

The entire restoration effort is the largest of its kind in the world, attempting to undo and reroute decades of flood control projects that have diverted water to make way for growth.

A key component was approved by Congress in 2000 and is formally known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

It was originally estimated to cost \$7.8 billion and take 30 years. The price tag has now ballooned billions more because of rising construction and real estate costs, and it's unknown how long it could take.

The plan called for the state and federal government to be 50-50 partners, but to date, Florida has committed more than \$2 billion, while the federal government has spent only several hundred million dollars.

Last year, Congress authorized about \$1.8 billion for Everglades projects but the money has yet to be allocated and competition is stiff from other states.

If the U.S. Sugar deal goes through, the entire restoration plan may have to be reworked, taking into account the massive amount of new land that would be available for the effort.

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## **187-THOUSAND ACRES IN THE EVERGLADES AGRICULTURAL AREA. A**

06/23/2008

NewsChannel 5 at 11 PM - WPTV-TV

NewsChannel 5 at 11 PM - WPTV-TV

IN A MATTER OF HOURS GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST IS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE A NEARLY TWO BILLON DOLLAR REAL ESTATE DEAL. ACCORDING TO OUR NEWS PARTNERS AT THE "SUN SENTINEL", "U. SUGAR CORPORATION" HAS AGREED TO SELL THE STATE ALL OF ITS 187-THOUSAND ACRES IN THE EVERGLADES AGRICULTURAL AREA. A POSSIBLE WATERWAY LINKING LAKE OKEECHOBEE AND THE EVERGLADES COULD RESULT, MEANING BETTER WATER QUALITY ON THE TREASURE COAST. DETAILS WILL BE RELEASED IN A NEWS CONFERENCE NEAR BELLE GLADE TOMORROW.

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## **A SWEET DEAL IN THE DRUGS FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATIONS.**

06/23/2008

WPBF News 25 at 11 PM - WPBF-TV

WPBF News 25 at 11 PM - WPBF-TV

A SWEET DEAL IN THE DRUGS FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATIONS. CHARLIE CRIST TO MAKE A TO M BIG ANNOUNCEMENT. US SUGAR REACHED A \$1.7 BILLION DEAL TO BUY 75,000-ACRES OF FARMLAND FROM THE SUGAR GIANT. THE LAND WOULD BE USED FOR RESTORATION.

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## **ACHE ARES IN THE EVERGLADES. THE STATE WOULD**

06/23/2008

WINK News at 7 PM - WINK-TV

WINK News at 7 PM - WINK-TV

CHRIS: TONIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE ARE HEARING THAT FLORIDA AND THE US SUGAR CORPORATION ARE NEGOTIATING THE SALE OF THOUSANDS OF ACHE ARES IN THE EVERGLADES. THE STATE WOULD PAY \$1.7 BILLION FOR 187 ACRES. FARMING IN THE AREA HAS BEEN CONSIDERED A PROBLEM FOR RESTORING THE EVERGLADES.

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## **CHARLIE CRIST SAYS HE WILL MAKE A MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT**

06/23/2008

12 News at 11PM - WWBT-TV

12 News at 11PM - WWBT-TV-Richmond, VA

CHARLIE CRIST SAYS HE WILL MAKE A MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE EVERGLADES. THERE ARE REPORTS OUT AT THIS HOUR THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE ABOUT FLORIDA AND THE USSUGAR CORPORATION NERVEDING THE SALE OF THOUSANDS OF HEADACHERS OF LAND IN THE EVERGLADES,

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## **EVER TO HAPPEN TO EVERGLADES RESTORATION. I'M JEFF**

06/23/2008

NBC 6 News at 6 PM - WTVJ-TV

NBC 6 News at 6 PM - WTVJ-TV

ALSO DEVELOPING RIGHT NOW, IT COULD BE THE BIGGEST THING EVER TO HAPPEN TO EVERGLADES RESTORATION. I'M JEFF BURNSIDE LIVE AT THE UPDATE DESK. TOMORROW, THE GOVERNOR IS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE A \$1.7 BILLION PURCHASE OF KEY LAND FROM US SUGAR AT THE VERY HEART OF THE EVERGLADES ECOSYSTEM, BEING CONFIRMED BY ASSOCIATED PRESS TONIGHT. IT'S ESSENTIALLY THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE FOR THE EVERGLADES. IF TRUE, THAT LAND WILL EVENTUALLY BE TAKEN OUT OF FARMING AND CONVERTED BACK INTO A NATURAL EVERGLADES SYSTEM. AS YOU KNOW, US SUGAR IS BEING ACCUSED OF BEING ONE THE CHIEF POLLUTERS OF THE EVERGLADES. TAKING THIS KEY CHUNK OF 187,000 ACRES SOUTH OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE OUT OF SUGAR PRODUCTION WILL DO GREAT THINGS FOR RESTORATION OF THE EVERGLADES. US SUGAR HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES IN RECENT YEARS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF POLLUTION, BUT CONSERVATIONISTS SAY NOTHING CAN COMPLETELY BE DONE UNLESS MUCH OF THAT LAND IS BEING TAKEN OUT OF FARMING FROM SUGAR. AGAIN, THE GOVERNOR EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE TOMORROW THE \$1.7 BILLION PURCHASE OF 187,000 ACRES, KEY ACRES, FROM USSUGAR. WE'LL HAVE DETAILS TONIGHT ON NBC 6 NEWS AND SOUTH FLORIDA TONIGHT. THANKS.

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## **STATE OFFICIALS COULD BE BUYING A HUGE CHUNK OF THE EVERGLADES.**

06/23/2008

Fox 4 News at 10 PM - WFTX-TV

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Fox 4 News at 10 PM - WFTX-TV

STATE OFFICIALS COULD BE BUYING A HUGE CHUNK OF THE EVERGLADES. GOVERNOR CRIST IS HOLDING A NEWS CONFERENCE TOMORROW. SOURCES SAY AT THE CONFERENCE THE GOVERNOR WILL ANNOUNCE THAT THE STATE WILL BUY 187 THOUSAND ACRES FROM US SUGAR CORPORATION. THE LAND WILL BE USED TO HELP MOVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION FORWARD. SOURCES ALSO SAY THE STATE WILL PAY ALMOST TWO BILLION DOLLARS FOR THE LAND.

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## Wellington water rules stay the same for now

06/24/2008

South Florida Sun-Sentinel - West Palm Beach Bureau  
Horvath, Stephanie

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By Stephanie Horvath | South Florida Sun-Sentinel

WELLINGTON - Residents can keep watering their lawns between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. for at least a little bit longer.

The Village Council was supposed to consider a rule that would permanently limit sprinkler watering to two days a week between midnight and 8 a.m., 20 hours a week less than they can water under the current rules.

But Village Manager Paul Schofield said Monday that he's planning to ask the council to postpone making a decision. The reason? The South Florida Water Management District is expected to implement permanent restrictions by the end of the year.

The new rules would have made Wellington the first Palm Beach County city to impose permanent Water restrictions.

The district allows folks to water two days a week between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m.

Schofield said the proposed rules would have made it easier for Wellington to enforce Water restrictions. He said the district's rules can be confusing because they offer both evening and overnight times when people can water.

As a result, some folks are watering twice a day, which is not allowed. But the village's smaller time window would make it easier to catch violators.

He said he didn't know if the district would restrict its watering hours.

"If you water at 4 p.m. we have no way of knowing if you watered two times that day," he said. "We want the rule to be enforceable. As long as you're watering at the right time of day, we're not going to bother you."

Schofield said the proposed rules would not restrict hand watering to nighttime hours, just sprinklers.

Schofield said all of the e-mails he's gotten from residents have opposed the permanent restrictions.

"This was driven by complaints from residents saying, 'My neighbor is watering two times a day,'" he said.

Stephanie Horvath can be reached at smhorvath@sun-sentinel.com or 561-243-6643.

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## **Lake Worth Lagoon sediment study approved**

06/23/2008

Boca Raton News

Johnston, John

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John Johnston - Boca Raton News

Palm Beach County commissioners will use \$80,000 from the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), together with \$60,000 from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, to finance a sediment sourcing study by Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) of the Lake Worth Lagoon and the drainage canals of the C-51 and L-8 Basins

Commissioners said the contract with FIT would assess sediment sources that are discharged into the lagoon through the C-51 Canal. This study is anticipated as part of monitoring efforts described in the revised Lake Worth Lagoon Management Plan, approved by commissioners earlier this year.

Stormwater runoff is a major source of sediment into the lagoon; this in turn negatively impacts water quality and estuarine habitats, said commissioners, adding that data from this study will be used to develop specific best management practices to reduce pollution.

The Lake Worth Lagoon is defined as such because it is a body of water cut off from a larger body by a reef of sand or coral, according to the dictionary.

The lagoon is approximately 21 miles long and in some places is up to a mile wide. The Intracoastal Waterway runs the entire length of the lagoon, with the lagoon separated from the Atlantic Ocean by Palm Beach Island and other barrier beaches.

In turn, the lagoon is connected to the Atlantic Ocean by two permanent, man-made inlets:

The Lake Worth Inlet -- 800 feet wide by 35 feet deep.

The Boynton Inlet -- 130 feet wide, and ranging from 6 to 12 feet deep.

Other Business

In other recent business commissioners:

Amended an agreement with the City of Riviera Beach, increase the funding amount from \$238,115 to \$416,115 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Commissioners said the amendment provides an additional \$178,000 in funding for the construction of street improvements on West 32nd Street in the City of Riviera Beach. The improvements include storm water drainage, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, paving, landscaping, relocation of water and sewer lines, adjustment of sewer laterals/water meters/valves, retaining walls, resetting of chain link fences and other incidental work associated with these improvements. The city has executed a construction contract for \$564,503, commissioner said, and with approval of this amendment, county funding will be \$416,115, and the City will fund the shortfall of \$144,388, together with engineering design fees.

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## **Free program on drinking water is July 1**

06/24/2008

Stuart News

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staff report-Stuart News

STUART — The Martin County Health Department in partnership with the Martin County Utilities Division, the Martin County Office of Water Quality, the University of Florida/IFAS, the South Florida Water Management District and the Martin County Library System will present a free program about drinking water.

The seminar at the Blake Library in Stuart at 6 p.m. July 1 will tell about where local water comes from, how the public impacts it, how it affects health and what can be done to protect it. This program will be of interest to residents who obtain their drinking water from either a well or county utility source.

Additional agencies that will be on hand to provide information to the public include: the city of Stuart Utility Division, Martin County Solid Waste Division and the Department of Environmental Protection.

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## Security grant agreements extended

06/23/2008

Boca Raton News

By John Johnston- Boca Raton News

Palm Beach County commissioners have extended funding agreements affecting \$698,600 in Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants.

In 2006 Palm Beach County was awarded \$698,600 by the USAI to fund specific fire, health, emergency managements and anti-terrorist activities. Commissioners have approved extension of agreements subsequently approved for expenditure of those funds, and affecting the following: City of Miramar. City of Riviera Beach. Village of Wellington. City of Greenacres Palm Beach Medical The agreements are now approved through June 30, 2009, commissioners said. Other In other recent business commissioners:

Approved a \$373,290 task order agreement with AKA Services, Inc. for construction of the Coconut Road area water main special assessment project. Commissioners said the work would include construction of new water mains and service lines as well as asphalt road overlay in the Coconut Road area. The project will serve 42 residential properties currently on private wells. This area is located within Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Countywide Community Revitalization Team (CCRT) target areas. The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will provide \$241,374 in funding and the Office of Community Revitalization will provide CCRT funding in the amount of \$131,916, said commissioners.

Approved change order No. 7 in a contract with Poole and Kent Company, Inc. for the Lake Region Water Treatment Plant, increasing the contract price by \$425,836. The work includes various civil, mechanical and electrical changes, said commissioners. Total change orders to date, excluding the \$7,549,033 sales tax recovery program and the \$500,000 South Florida Water Management District Acceleration change order equals \$1,051,961 an 8.43 percent increase, commissioners said. Received and filed two standard development agreements and one standard development renewal agreement as follows: The Whiteside Group, Inc., (District Community of Hope, a United Methodist Congregation, (District and a renewal agreement with Town Commons, LLC, (District 3). Approved change order No. 5 to a contract with John J. Kirlin Construction, Inc. for the Northern Region Pump Station, increasing the contract price by \$21,189, and increasing the contract time by 124 days. Commissioners said the increase and delay were caused by an FPL delay. Total change orders to date, excluding the \$1,445,412 sales tax recovery program change order, equals \$192,798 a 2.4 percent increase. Business Society Boca Raton News

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## **Fiscal responsibility is touted by McCain**

06/24/2008

Belleville News-Democrat

The Orlando Sentinel

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. --

Two days after his opponent locked up the Democratic nomination, Republican John McCain came to Orlando to raise more money and keep his name and face in front of Florida voters.

McCain spent part of Thursday afternoon talking to newspaper editors from around the state. Earlier, he attended an I-Drive area fundraiser that had a minimum entry fee of \$2,300 per person. One organizer said McCain could rake in upward of \$3 million during his three-day trip.

To the editors, he defended his decision to oppose a \$2 billion Everglades restoration project, saying the plan was lumped into a massive spending plan riddled with projects he could not support.

Had the Everglades proposal been a stand-alone bill, he said, he would have voted for it.

'I am committed to the preservation of the Everglades,' said McCain, who's scheduled to visit the Everglades today. 'I will do whatever is necessary to do so.'

The longtime Arizona senator has made controlling spending a major part of his presidential bid. He has promised to put an end to 'earmarks,' the local, often expensive, projects that federal lawmakers slip into bills to please the folks back home. McCain said he would veto those bills and embarrass the lawmakers behind them.

'I'd make them famous,' McCain said. 'You would know their names, you would know their projects. That's the great strength of the presidency of the United States.'

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## **Western Palm Beach County road projects facing delays to aid mass transit**

06/23/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

McGinness, Chuck

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## Chuck mcGinness - Palm Beach Post

Three road projects, including the northern extension of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, will likely be delayed because of the Palm Beach County commission's decision to divert nearly \$8 million in gas tax money to Tri-Rail and Palm Tran.

The cash that was plucked from the road program was earmarked to buy right-of-way and environmental mitigation for the 7-mile Seminole Pratt extension from Northlake Boulevard to the Beeline Highway and to widen sections of Northlake and Seminole Pratt.

None of the three projects were scheduled to begin construction in the next five years, making them easy marks when the commission last week was looking for \$47 million to hold the tax rate steady. In past years, the commission has taken its annual Tri-Rail subsidy from property tax revenue.

Construction now depends on when the right-of-way and mitigation money can be replenished, Webb said. 'I think it will delay them. Whether it will be one year or two years, I don't know,' he said. 'If we try to do them in year six or seven (fiscal year 2013 and 2014), we will have to come up with the construction money and this money.' A bigger concern for Webb, who oversees the county's roadway network, is whether the raid on the gas tax fund becomes a yearly habit to keep the tax rate down and help balance the budget. The county is already predicting a \$50 million shortfall for the 2009-10 budget year.

Two main sources of road construction money - impact fees and gas taxes - are shrinking because of the slowdown in home construction and higher gas prices. A \$100 million shortfall is projected over the next five years.

A closer look shows road impact fees are expected to drop from \$42.8 million this year to \$7.1 million in fiscal year 2012, while gas tax revenue may decrease from \$35.3 million this year to \$33.2 million in fiscal year 2012.

On the other hand, people are driving less, so roads are not as congested. Traffic counts on some usually-busy county roads are down more than 2.5 percent.

But the question is whether the roadway system will be ready to handle the next growth spurt in a few years. 'We're still trying to catch up and fix our overcapacity problems,' Webb said. Using the gas tax money for Tri-Rail is a one-time deal, Commissioner Burt Aaronson said. Aaronson and other commissioners said they're not contributing toward the commuter rail's operations after 2009.

About \$1 million in gas tax revenue went to Palm Tran to keep some of the weekend routes that were going to be cut and to eliminate an increase in the cost of the monthly pass for low-income and disabled riders.

Commissioner Jeff Koons said the county may have to come up with a 'new model' on distributing money between roads and transit to make sure the most pressing needs are met. One sure thing is that everyone who rides the bus is going to have to pay their fair share to help carry the burden, he said.

Seminole Pratt Whitney Road was envisioned as a key access to The Scripps Research Institute when it was going to be built at Mecca Farms. After Scripps was moved to Florida Atlantic University's Jupiter campus, it became less of a priority.

The extension would cut through Unit 11, a rural area with 1,730 acres of swamps and woods west of the Hungryland Slough Natural Area. It would allow motorists to travel Seminole Pratt from Southern Boulevard north to State Road 76 in Martin County.

At least three other road projects may be delayed and three more deleted from the road program during the mid-year adjustment, which was postponed last week until

August or September.

The five-year program costs are currently estimated at \$459.8 million, down from \$491.9 million last November.

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## **Collier water, sewer rates could increase**

06/23/2008

Naples Daily News

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Just as summer arrives, Collier County residents may see an increase in water and sewer rates.

When Collier commissioners meet this morning, they will be asked to approve hikes due to take effect on Oct. 1.

Water rates would increase anywhere from 56 cents to \$9.56 for individually metered residential water customers, and wastewater service from 86 cents to \$2.66 for individually metered residential customers.

Increases are not per gallon, but per 1,000 gallons.

According to a memo by Bala M. Sridhar, a senior budget analyst for the Public Utilities Division, costs have not increased since 2006. The water-sewer department hired a consultant, Public Resources Management Group, Inc., which recommended the increases.

Monday, Public Utilities spokeswoman Margie Hapke said the rates are conservative compared with those on the rise in, say, California, as a result of drought.

According to a memo by Bala M. Sridhar, a senior budget analyst for the Public Utilities Division, water, sewer, fire meter and surcharge rates are used to cover costs for system operation, maintenance, renewal, enhancement, replacement, and debt service from both residential and non-residential property owner systems.

A late -payment charge would increase from \$55 to \$60.

A new account, or change of ownership of that account, would increase from \$25 to \$28.

Meter turn-off at owner's request would increase from \$38 to \$50

However, the convenience fee of using a credit card to pay one's bill will remain the same: \$5.

Before the rates are discussed Public Utilities Director Jim DeLony, will present 2008 Collier County Water and Wastewater Master Plan updates, a time-certain item set for 4:30 p.m.

The county will also take up the following.

A resolution opposing any leasing out of Alligator Alley.

Bestow honors on all residents, business owners, and emergency responders who contributed to containing and extinguishing the 800-acre Golden Gate Estates fire on May 29 and 30. That includes all those who contributed to restoring services, and aiding in fundraising operations after the fire.

A recommendation to award a \$1,176 million bid to Bentley Electric for the installation of Immokalee Beautification Phase IV Street Light Renovation Project.

Affirm that money from surplus goods sold off by Community Development and Environmental Services be placed in the appropriate county fund.

Recommendation to award a \$371,980 bid to Environmental Products of Florida for a single engine street sweeper truck.

Numerous requests by various parties for deferral of impact fees.

