Subject: U.S. Sugar Stories for December 23

SFWMD

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Letter We're finally on the road to restoring Everglades ecosystem

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12/23/2008
Jupiter Courier

At its meeting last week, the governing board of the South Florida Water Management District voted to counter-offer the purchase agreement to buy 180,000 acres of U.S. Sugar farm land for $1.34 billion. The offer was accepted by U.S. Sugar and we now move forward to closing, which is set for Sept. 25, 2009.

The purchase is comprehensive and contains many challenges in the details, but presents the greatest once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in our history for Everglades restoration.

This purchase can give us a way to revive the River of Grass and make the reconnection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. Conveyance, storage and treatment of water south from the lake will not only benefit Americas Everglades, but also Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie River and Caloosahatchee River estuaries.

We may finally stop the discharges to the estuaries, which waste 1.7 billion gallons of fresh water each day while polluting the coastal ecosystems with phosphorus, nitrogen and 7.9 million cubic yards of muck.

Florida Oceanographic has supported this position since 2001. Today we may finally be on the road to truly restoring the greater Everglades ecosystem and saving the coastal estuaries. Thank you, governing board, for taking this bold step forward. Now lets all work together to make it happen.

Mark D. Perry

executive director

Florida Oceanographic Society

Florida knows her competence

12/23/2008
Leaf-Chronicle, The
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When President-elect Barack Obama last week named Carol Browner, one of Florida's environmental heroines, as a top adviser on energy, both praise and concern were expressed.

Concerns came primarily from trade organizations such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

It predicts that policies Obama supports, such as energy independence from foreign oil, will hurt domestic oil production and that creating millions of green jobs will force consumers to pay more for their green energy meaning less money for general spending.

Here in Florida, though, Browner's rise to the top energy-advisory post (along with Steven Chu of the Berkeley National Laboratory in California) is being enthusiastically received.

Her reputation nationally was already strong after she headed the Environmental Protection Agency from 1993 to 2001 during the Clinton administration.

Born in Miami, she earned degrees in English and law at the University of Florida and entered public service in the early 1980s as general counsel in the Florida House of Representatives. She went on to work with then-U.S. Sen. Lawton Chiles' staff in Washington, returning to Florida in 1991 as head of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for two years.

Overseeing the nation's third-largest such state agency, with 1,500 employees at the time, she developed the then-innovative regulatory approach of viewing economic development and environmental protection as compatible.

This harmony troubled some staunch environmentalists, but Browner was later widely praised for helping negotiate a federal lawsuit over damage to the Everglades National Park that ended with the state's sugar industry bearing much of the $1 billion cleanup cost.

Last week, it would have been helpful to have Browner's expertise when the South Florida Water Management District agreed to buy 180,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land for part of the Everglades restoration plan.

It is a very generous $1.34 billion deal that includes more land than is actually needed for the restoration project.

The price tag is more than the market value of the land, which will be leased back to U.S. Sugar for six years at about one-third market rates.

However, now that the water district has agreed to the purchase (by selling bonds backed by property taxes), the challenge is to move forward with due diligence, and to make the restoration process cheaper, more efficient and in the end a good thing for Florida taxpayers, not primarily for U.S. Sugar.

This controversial decision here in Florida is a perfect illustration of why energy and environmental policy is so layered and complex and rarely executed perfectly.

It is a microcosm of the world in which Browner will operate as Obama's energy coordinator, promoting cooperation among energy and climate entities, business and government agencies. We wish her every success in this vital mission.

Tallahassee Democrat, Dec. 18

Coskata, Sapphire, Amyris Ranked Top 10 Biofuel Firms

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Biofuel Digest released a list of top 50 biofuel companies, which are mostly developing refining processes to convert cellulosic materials, algae and trash into transportation fuels.

Which company has the most innovative biofuel technology of 2008? Coskata, says Biofuels Digest in listing of top 50 bioenergy companies Monday.

Coskata, in Warrenville, Ill., is developing a process to make ethanol from agricultural wastes or non-food crops. The company, which recently raised $40 million, is building a 40,000-gallon-per-year plant near Pittsburgh to demonstrate its technology, which shreds the feedstock into pieces and heat them at a high temperature to turn them into synthesis gas, which is then converted into fuel.

Other biofuel startups also are developing similar processes, but Coskata is closer to commercial production than most. It plans to develop a commercial refinery in Clewiston, Fla., with U.S. Sugar Corp. (see Coskata Lining Up Sugary Deal).

Biofuel Digest, an online news site in Miami, ranked the biofuel companies based on innovations and how far along the companies are in commercializing their technologies.

Many companies on the list are familiar names to those tracking the emerging biofuel industry. Biofuels promise to be a renewable and cleaner source of transportation fuels, though critics say biofuels particularly cellulosic ethanol are hardly better for the

environment than mining and burning fossil fuels (see Report: Wind the Best Energy; Nuclear, Coal and Ethanol the Worst).

The U.S. government has been a big biofuel booster, passing a legislation in 2007 that requires the country's refineries to blend 36 billion gallons of bi ofuels by 2022. Whether the country can meet the mandate remains a big question (see U.S. Won't Meet Its Own Biofuel Mandate).

Algal biofuel startup Sapphire Energy in San Diego took the No. 2 spot on the biofuel ranking, followed by Madison, Wis.-based Virent Energy Systems, which says it's developing all sorts of biofuels using food and non-food feedstocks. Virent is even working with Royal Dutch Shell to convert sugar in plants into a fuel that resembles gasoline rather than ethanol.

Of the 50 companies on the list, 17 are developing cellulosic ethanol while nine are into algal biofuels. Another nine companies are working on other types of biofuel technologies, including converting trash from landfills to fuels.

Solazyme, another algal biofuel startup, made the top 10. The South San Francisco company has figured out a way to grow algae without sunlight by using natural algae that thrives in the dark, as well as engineering its own strains. The company expects to commercialize its algal oil first as an ingredient in cosmetics, such as anti-wrinkle products (see Solazyme Explores Jet-Fuel Market).

Range Fuels, another cellulosic ethanol company, also ranked among the top 10. The Broomfield, Colo.-based company just got a new CEO, David Aldous, who previously worked at Shell. Range Fuels is building its first commercial refinery in Soperton, Ga.

Meanwhile, companies such as Cobalt Biofuels, Bluefire Ethanol, Iogen, Qteros (formerly SunEthanol) and Origin Oil made the top 50 list.

Here are the top 10 companies:

Coskata

Sapphire Energy

Virent Energy Systems

Poet

Range Fuels

Solazyme

Amyris Biotechnologies

Mascoma

DuPont Danisco

UOP

You can check out the rest on the top-50 list at the Biofuels Digest Website.