

Letters to the Editor
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U.S. Sugar deal would hamper authorized projects

My colleague, Eric Buermann, pointed out last week in a letter to your newspaper that many environmentalists have called the purchase of U.S. Sugar's land "fresh hope" for the Everglades (Don't block historic chance to restore Everglades," Aug. 5). I find it extremely sad that hope if all we have after all the years of hard work to produce actual benefits to the Everglades and estuaries.

Last week, the district requested court approval for massive public debt to fill a bottomless environmental "hope" chest with no reasonable expectation of ever realizing any meaningful public benefit from it. It is likely, as the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office has opined, that the \$2.2 billion requested cannot be authorized under state law. That means that the district will not have the money for existing authorized projects.

Those of us who oppose the structure of the U.S. Sugar deal do not oppose Everglades restoration. Quite the opposite.

There is no denying the urgent need for storage and treatment. There is also no denying the district's admission in court that much of this land will be unavailable for 20 years and that other projects already authorized, funded and designed on land we already own will not go forward as a consequence of this purchase. Proponents of the deal constantly refer to their "vision." Visions are cheap, projects are expensive and delaying the restoration for obscure, undefined and illusive visions is irresponsible

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Editor's note: Michael Collins is a member of the South Florida water Management District Governing Board.