



Editorial: Sugar's ever-evolving deal

By Staff Reports

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This catches us by surprise.

Again and again.

The proposal for the state of Florida to step up its involvement in Everglades Restoration by purchasing a large part of the offending, polluting area takes yet further surprising turns.

The fact that a deal was even in the works surprised us in June. Even elected legislators who serve in and around the Clewiston area were caught off guard by the 300-square-mile, \$1.75 billion initiative by Gov. Charlie Crist.

A few weeks later we were surprised to learn of a compromise, for \$400 million less, for reduced holdings of U.S. Sugar Corp. and others in that area.

Then came word from U.S. Sugar that the company and a private partner from Illinois propose a biotech fuel plant in Clewiston would produce a gasoline substitute from sugar cane.

Surprised again.

At week's end we learned of a bid from yet another private firm to buy all of U.S. Sugar outright.

Our questions include:

Is there going to be a bidding war that could backfire on taxpayers?

How is a fuel plant better for the environment — air and water — than the Big Sugar operations that we have to today?

What does Clewiston have to say?

The answers have to make sense to justify the state's continued investor involvement.

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