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Let state's sugar deal proceed

As we approach the final vote regarding the South Florida Water Management District's contract to purchase 180,000 acres of U.S. Sugar's land, those who do not want this deal to occur are trying to cloud the issues. In no way does this signal a corporate buyout of U.S. Sugar. Simply put, the state is buying land for Everglades restoration.

Independent, professional real-estate appraisals conducted for the SFWMD set the fair-market value of the purchase. Paying fair-market value for real estate is hardly a "bailout." U.S. Sugar will continue to operate within its communities and be a partner in developing economic opportunities. This agreement is an opportunity to effect real, meaningful restoration of the Everglades. Gov. Charlie Crist's bold vision and this historic acquisition will finally provide a real chance to preserve a national treasure for future generations.

U.S. Sugar has built a company that is the pillar of the agriculture community. Crist presented us with an opportunity to be part of something grander and more historic than we dreamed. We would not be doing this if we didn't believe that it was a fair deal for our shareholders. More important, this is a tremendous opportunity for Florida and its people to save the Everglades. After many months of negotiations, it is time to move forward with the decision to implement this bold initiative.

ROBERT COKER, senior vice president, U.S. Sugar Corp., Clewiston

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