

Resolution No. 08-08-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, DECLARING ITS SUPPORT FOR THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST AND THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT TO ACQUIRE LAND SOUTH OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF AMERICA'S EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA'S COASTAL ESTUARIES

WHEREAS, America's Everglades and the South Florida ecosystem is a unique expanse of habitats, whose environmental health is critical to the economy and quality of life of South Florida; and

WHEREAS, on June 24, 2008, Governor Charlie Crist unveiled a momentous strategy to bring about the largest environmental land acquisition in Florida's history and restore America's Everglades in a way never before anticipated; and

WHEREAS, the Governor announced that the South Florida Water Management District will begin negotiating an agreement with United States Sugar Corporation to purchase nearly 300 square miles of land spanning four counties in South Florida; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of as much as 187,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee can create an opportunity to provide a "missing link" needed to better protect the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries, and revive, restore and preserve one of America's greatest natural treasures – the Everglades; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District and United States Sugar Corporation signed a "Statement of Principles" that provides the framework for the potential acquisition of property and assets; and

WHEREAS, through successful negotiations and strategic land swaps, vast tracts could be used to reestablish a part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades through a managed system of storage and treatment; and

WHEREAS, dedicating significantly more land in the Everglades Agricultural Area to restoration will build upon and enhance the 30-year state-federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, offering the opportunity and flexibility to store and clean water on a scale never before contemplated; and

WHEREAS, benefits from the land acquisition include huge increases in the availability of water storage, significantly reducing the potential for harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida's coastal rivers and estuaries, including the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition is likely to prevent thousands of tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades every year and reduce or eliminate the need for "back-pumping" agricultural run-off water into Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition also provides the potential opportunity to sustain remaining agriculture in the region by eliminating environmental concerns; enhancing the availability of water supply; and fostering green energy production; and

WHEREAS, the Governor has identified the State of Florida's Rural Economic Development Initiative as a resource for working with United States Sugar Corporation, local governments, area businesses, state agencies and the South Florida Water Management District on an economic transition plan for the area; and

WHEREAS, saving the Everglades and protecting Florida's coastal estuaries is an environmental priority for Lee County and its residents; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida Water Management District's initiative to purchase 187,000 acres of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area is a watershed event for restoring a beloved national treasure – the Everglades;

WHEREAS, Lee County has repeatedly gone on record of being supportive of enhanced conveyance and treatment of Lake Okeechobee water south to the Everglades to help reduce the impacts to coastal estuaries;

WHEREAS, the Caloosahatchee River West Basin Storage Reservoir Project is also a critical component of achieving successful restoration and protection of the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Lee County Board of County Commissioners applauds and supports the landmark efforts of Governor Charlie Crist and the South Florida Water Management District to negotiate the acquisition of significant lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area for the purposes of restoring and protecting the northern and southern Everglades and Florida's coastal estuaries.

Additionally, Lee County reiterates its commitment to the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program and urges the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move expeditiously on completion of the Chief's Report and Project Implementation Report. Acquisition of the United States Sugar Corporation lands should in no way supplant or delay efforts to complete the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project.

The foregoing Resolution was offered by Commissioner Hall, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mann and, being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

ROBERT JANES	<u>Aye</u>
A. BRIAN BIGELOW	<u>Aye</u>
RAY JUDAH	<u>Aye</u>
TAMMARA HALL	<u>Aye</u>
FRANK MANN	<u>Aye</u>

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 5th DAY OF August, 2008.

ATTEST:
CHARLIE GREEN, CLERK

By: Marcia Wilson
Deputy Clerk



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: Ray Judah
Chairman

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

By: Andrea L. Frue
Office of the County Attorney