



June 27, 2008

Governing Board
South Florida Water Management District
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Dear Governing Board Members,

Audubon of Florida is writing to thank Governor Charlie Crist and the Governing Board and staff of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for the courageous and smart proposal to acquire U.S. Sugar's holdings including 187,000 acres, much of it in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). We also write to urge the Governing Board to move forward on negotiations to reach final terms. We believe this acquisition will provide an unprecedented opportunity to store, treat and convey adequate water in a manner that more naturally mimics the historic Everglades.

For decades, the missing piece of the overall puzzle to comprehensively restore the Everglades, recover Lake Okeechobee, and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries has been sufficient availability of land for water storage, treatment and conveyance in the EAA. Management of land and water in this region profoundly affects the lake, coastal estuaries, the southern Everglades and Florida Bay, as well as the Glades communities. Acquisition of these lands provides an extraordinary opportunity to reestablish the historical connection that allowed water to flow from the lake through the Everglades to Florida Bay. We are confident that the land acquired in this deal and subsequent transactions along with planning and implementation of restoration projects will provide extraordinary benefits for Florida's environment, economy and the communities dependent on water from the Everglades. And someday the great colonies of wading birds will again define the Everglades landscape.

For the first time since the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was conceived, planned and subsequently approved in 2000 by Congress and the Governor of Florida, serious consideration and attention can be given to truly comprehensive restoration. A defining characteristic of the CERP is its foundation in adaptive management, which enables flexible decision making based upon learning and maximizing ecological benefits. Restoration in the EAA should be undertaken in this context and involve all stakeholders in a transparent process.

Again, we congratulate the South Florida Water Management District and Governor Charlie Crist for the vision and foresight to acquire these critical lands for truly comprehensive Everglades restoration. It is hard to overstate the value that 187,000 acres of land will have in the long run. It is safe to say that this one event could stand as the single most important step on the road to recovery and sustainability of the Everglades. As always, our staff and volunteer leadership stand ready to support your efforts and pledge to work toward common measures of success.

Sincerely,

David E. Anderson
Executive Director