

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 18, 2014

Chairman Barbara Boxer
410 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member David Vitter
456 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Bill Shuster
2165 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Nick J. Rahall, II
2163 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Boxer, Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member Vitter, and Ranking Member Rahall:

As Members of Congress from Florida, we write to express our strong support of the Everglades restoration projects included in the bipartisan House Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), as well as its companion legislation in the Senate. As this bill proceeds through the Conference Committee, we reiterate that these projects are critical for the environment of Florida, which has been negatively affected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' discharges of freshwater from Lake Okeechobee.

America's Everglades encompasses two million acres of wetland ecosystems and waterways, stretching from Central Florida to the tip of the Florida Peninsula. Our state's waterways are essential to both our economic health and to the environment. The beautiful Everglades boast one of a kind animal and plant diversity, support agriculture activities, improve water quality, provide drinking water supplies for 7.9 million Floridians, and reduce flooding.

Included in the Everglades system are the Indian River Lagoon and the Caloosahatchee Estuary. The Indian River Lagoon stretches 156 miles and contributes to Florida's economy by providing unique recreational and fishing opportunities to Floridians and tourists from across the country. Similarly, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, located approximately 25 miles from the headwaters of the Caloosahatchee River, serves important environmental and watershed functions to the Gulf of Mexico.

Despite their importance to Florida's environmental health and water supply, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to discharge excess water from Lake Okeechobee, which caused widespread environmental harm—particularly into the Indian River Lagoon and Caloosahatchee Estuary regions. The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), which anticipates a completed Chief's Report in -in the summer of 2014, would allow over 70 billion gallons of that water to be sent south to protect the ecology and economy of three major estuaries. Thus, we ask that the CEPP project also be authorized in the final WRRDA bill. Simply put, the Everglades cannot afford to wait another 7 years for the next WRRDA bill.

The State of Florida has already undertaken numerous measures to counteract the damage and restore the Everglades. However, restoration necessitates federal involvement and cannot wait for the uncertain next round of WRRDA legislation. The Everglades restoration projects encompassed in –WRRDA must be authorized to complement our state’s measures. We respectfully request that you preserve the inclusion of the projects in the final legislation and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Dennis A. Ross

Representative Patrick Murphy

Senator Marco Rubio

Senator Bill Nelson

Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Representative Joe Garcia

Representative Bill Posey

Representative Ted Deutch

Representative Frederica S. Wilson

Representative Jeff Miller

Representative Thomas J. Rooney

Representative Kathy Castor