

**1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA \* AUDUBON \* AUDUBON OF FLORIDA \* AUDUBON  
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA \* CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER CITIZENS  
ASSOCIATION \* COLLIER COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY \* CONSERVANCY OF  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA \* DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE \* EVERGLADES  
FOUNDATION \* EVERGLADES LAW CENTER \* EVERGLADES TRUST \*  
FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION \* HENDRY-GLADES AUDUBON SOCIETY \*  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION \* OCEAN CONSERVANCY \* SANIBEL-  
CAPTIVA AUDUBON SOCIETY \* SANIBEL-CAPTIVA CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION \* WORLD WILDLIFE FUND**

January 28, 2009

The Honorable Charlie Crist, Governor  
Plaza Level 05  
The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Via email to [charlie.crist@myflorida.com](mailto:charlie.crist@myflorida.com)

Dear Governor Crist:

As conservation organizations dedicated to the recovery of the Everglades ecosystem, we have applauded and supported your foresight in helping to advance this effort through the U.S. Sugar purchase contract. We are very aware of the many considerations and additional efforts that will be required to ensure success, and we pledge you our continuing support.

This correspondence is sent in acknowledgment that the purchase of U.S. Sugar land will have a significant impact on the economic well-being of the Glades communities for the benefit of Everglades restoration, and we want you to know that we are committed to assisting in advancing economic development in the region that is consistent with restoration. At the Everglades Coalition Conference on January 10<sup>th</sup>, a panel was convened to discuss such potential opportunities.

We do not presume to have all the answers to determine how economic security and restoration can work together, but we do firmly believe that this is possible, and necessary. We are of the opinion however that new residential development above and beyond existing, platted areas already served by infrastructure, is not what is needed.

In addition, the siting of a major regional, growth-inducing facility, such as an inland port, at a location within the center of the EAA, could promote inefficient urban sprawl-type development, and the extension of infrastructure and urban services to an area that is far removed from the existing Glades communities. A hasty decision on such a facility draws attention to the serious pitfalls of poorly planned development, and

emphasizes the need for a strategic, coordinated, and environmentally conscious comprehensive plan to ensure that economic development in the Glades' communities is compatible with restoration of the Everglades.

An additional concern with economic development projects in this region is the risk of degrading the future viability of the EAA as a sustainable agricultural production zone. The EAA was designated by Congress because of its exceptional soils. The adoption of sustainable agricultural principles could promote the development of new crops to supplement or replace existing large-scale sugar farming.

To this end, and in summary of the discussion held at the Everglades Coalition conference, we offer several thoughts and considerations we believe would be helpful in bringing together several perspectives that must be part of consensus solutions for all stakeholders. We encourage you to support the following initiatives as a starting point:

- 1) Create an EAA Restoration task force consisting of federal, state, county, municipal, social service agency, academic and private-sector representatives to develop plans to address post-U.S. Sugar land transition issues in the lake communities;
- 2) Establish an economic development fund to incentivize appropriate economic development activities for the Glades communities;
- 3) Encourage the South Florida Water Management District to release 3,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land to local municipalities to jump-start their own economic initiatives consistent with long-term Everglades restoration goals;
- 4) Provide economic development education to local communities to promote sustainable job-creating industries, and prioritize education funding (both secondary and post-secondary) to train a future diverse workforce in the Glades communities;
- 5) Promote and expand ecotourism opportunities using Visit Florida and OTTED programs;
- 6) Provide a forum for all stakeholders, including the environmental community, for a comprehensive planning effort to explore opportunities for creation of an appropriate inland port, involving state agencies (OTTED, FDOT, DCA, DEP, SFWMD, Florida Ports Council) using consultants with proven inland port expertise;
- 7) Direct the awarding of contracts (District and State) where possible to businesses within the Glades communities to promote local job growth;
- 8) Explore carbon sequestration/carbon trading opportunities as a priority for this area as part of the charge to the newly formed Energy and Climate Commission;

- 9) Encourage corporate and environmental groups to host meetings and conferences in the lake communities to inject money into their economy and forge relationships with local residents;
- 10) Lend priority state economic development support for light-industrial job creation opportunities for local businesses; and
- 11) Host and sponsor a series of conferences in the Glades communities to explore additional land re-use options with consultants and experts; bring in representatives from other regions across the country who have reinvented their communities after losing a major employer.

It is our hope that you consider these suggestions in aggressively moving this important agenda forward. At your direction, we are ready to engage with your staff and agencies and other stakeholders in the vital economic and restoration dialogue that must take place in the Glades communities. We again thank you for your leadership on Everglades restoration.

Sincerely,

(Signatures waived in order to expedite delivery.)

Cc: Dr. Dale Brill, OTTED

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