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EVERGLADES FOUNDATION

EVERGLADES TRUST

**FLORIDA WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

**NATIONAL PARKS
CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION**

PURRE WATER COALITION

SIERRA CLUB

January 26, 2009

United States Senator Bill Nelson
United States Senate
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

United States Senator Mel Martinez
United States Senate
317 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Nelson and Martinez:

We thank you for your strong support and leadership for Everglades restoration. You have been great friends of the Everglades.

Senator Nelson, we appreciated your remarks at this year's Everglades Coalition conference in Miami—especially your observation that we must “turn dirt” on authorized CERP projects. We also know you support moving ahead in the planning process for other elements of the CERP plan.

We understand that the pending Stimulus package, that will be marked up by Committees in the Senate this week, offers an opportunity to get funding to a number of Everglades projects.

The pending bill in the House, however, has a number of problems that might make such funding of Everglades projects more difficult than it should be. We ask that you work with those drafting the legislation to address those problems.

The House passed bill provides only \$4.5 billion for the Corps of Engineers, even though the Committee of Transportation and Infrastructure recommended that the Corps receive \$7 billion. We would also note that only \$2 billion of that \$4.5 billion is for construction of projects nationwide. We ask you to support increasing the Senate bill's allocation for the Corps to a more realistic amount.

As you know, the pending House legislation requires that a project must have received prior federal funding in order to receive stimulus money. This requirement does not take into consideration the unique situation of the Everglades restoration initiative. Congress authorized CERP as a whole, as well as a suite of initial projects, in 2000. In an effort to jumpstart some of the CERP projects, the South Florida Water Management District advanced construction on several projects in anticipation of future Federal matching funds. We strongly believe that the Stimulus legislation should be flexible enough to deem such advanced funding by the State as prior funding for the purpose of eligibility for funding under the Stimulus legislation.

Finally, we note that CERP is a component of the Central and Southern Florida Project that was authorized by Congress in 1948. Indeed authorized CERP projects are not new starts.

We understand that the local sponsor has prepared plans and specifications for CERP projects that are ready to be contracted for construction immediately. We urge you to support efforts that would allow projects to move forward expeditiously without duplicative efforts, including providing funding to the local sponsor in a manner agreeable to the Corps of Engineers.

After all, a major goal of the Stimulus package is to build important projects that will create jobs quickly. Moving ahead on Everglades projects that are ready for construction offers opportunities to both create badly needed jobs and to preserve the most unique ecosystem in the world—America's Everglades.

Senators, we will appreciate your working with your colleagues to make sure that the Senate version of the Stimulus legislation is flexible enough to address the problems we have outlined in the House bill. We also are hopeful the funding for the Corps can be increased to a more realistic level.

Sincerely,

(Signatures waived in order to expedite delivery.)

Copies to all Florida House Members

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