

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
And Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
And Related Agencies
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20151

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide sufficient funding levels for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Interior projects relating to the Everglades and South Florida ecosystem restoration programs. Adequately funding these programs and projects will continue the recent momentum we have seen in achieving the decades long goal of Everglades restoration.

The Everglades is the drinking water source for one in three Floridians and a source of jobs and economic livelihood for hundreds of thousands more. Restoring America's Everglades is not a choice between fiscal responsibility and environmental protection. In fact, it is both. Restoration encompasses exactly the kind of "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects that will help our economy. The chance to preserve this national treasure while putting in place the tools for long-term economic prosperity is an opportunity we should not let slip by.

With the recent passage of the *Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act* (P.L. 114-322), legislation passed to specifically address the country's water resource needs, funding for these projects could not come at a more critical time. Notably for Florida, the WIIN Act authorized the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), an ambitious plan comprised of multiple Everglades restoration projects. With the authorization of CEPP, along with the continued work on the overarching Central Everglades Restoration Project (CERP), adequate funding and authorizations for new project starts are needed to continue to build on this momentum.

There is little question that restoration of America's Everglades is necessary. The bridges and canals built decades ago to "tame" the River of Grass threaten a treasured ecosystem that impacts our way of life. Billions of gallons of water that help prevent salt water impingement are needed for the Everglades National Park, but instead are washed into the sea through discharges from Lake Okeechobee and an elaborate canal system that severely damages fragile coastal estuaries. This polluted water strains our fishing and tourism businesses, as well as poses a danger to public health.

As you know, this year's funding request is part of a multi-year effort to provide the necessary resources to preserve one of the great ecological treasures in our nation and to

specifically move forward on construction projects that will help alleviate decades old flawed engineering. We have a responsibility to preserve this unique gift for future generations. Therefore, we urge you to fund Everglades and ecosystem restoration projects at levels that will achieve this goal. Thank you for your time and consideration of our request.

Sincerely



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



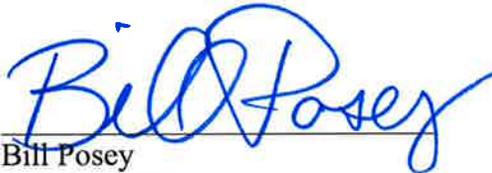
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Member of Congress



Francis Rooney
Member of Congress



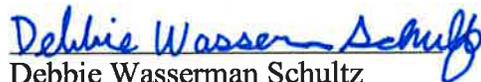
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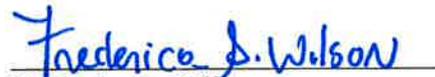
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