

December 8, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



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Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

On behalf of The Everglades Foundation, I want to thank you and your colleagues for your hard work on the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (S. 1811). This critical piece of legislation marked by bipartisanship will provide meaningful results for America's Everglades – an ecological treasure, an important engine for Florida's economy, and the source of drinking water for the more than 8 million people who live in and around this one of a kind ecosystem.

We strongly support passage of S. 1811. Specifically, we appreciate the inclusion of:

SEC. 134. NON-FEDERAL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PILOT PROGRAM

Leveraging the non-federal sponsor's talent and resources in developing the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan projects makes sense, especially when the partnership has been tested and proven to succeed in projects like the EAA Reservoir where the state took the lead. This change will allow more flexibility and likely result in faster implementation of the program.

SEC. 210. LAKE OKEECHOBEE REGULATION SCHEDULE FLORIDA, FLORIDA

Additional study of Lake Okeechobee discharges and transparency will help protect coastal communities from the releases of toxic water. Under provisions in the bill, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is directed to provide monthly reports on water quality within the lake and the potential negative impact Lake discharges would have on Florida's east and west coasts.

SEC. 324. CENTRAL EVERGLADES, FLORIDA

Affirms that the EAA Reservoir as a component of the Central Everglades Project does not constitute a “new start” designation and is not affected by any prohibition related to using appropriated funds to initiate a new start. Restoring the historic north-to-south flow of water through the Everglades is at the heart of bringing the ecosystem back into balance and putting an end to the toxic algal bloom-to-seagrass die-off pendulum that fouls South Florida’s waterways year after year. Construction of the EAA Reservoir and the rest of the Central Everglades Project is paramount to achieving this goal and nothing should slow down its completion.

Once again, restoring America’s Everglades brings both political parties together. This unifying presence was demonstrated by the leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Understanding the importance of restoring freshwater flow to the Everglades and the Florida Keys, while reducing the toxic discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida’s coastal communities, your members placed party affiliation aside and placed Florida and America’s Everglades first.

Sincerely,



Eric Eikenberg
Chief Executive Officer