

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you finalize your inaugural budget request for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), we respectfully urge you to request robust funding for Everglades restoration to support the expeditious completion of numerous projects that are integral to the success of restoration efforts. Specifically, we ask that you include \$725 million in the FY22 budget proposal under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) construction account for South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER).

The Everglades is central to Florida's ecological and economic health, and is the source of drinking water for 8 million Floridians. Restoration of this irreplaceable resource would ensure economic security and a reliable and clean water supply for communities for generations to come. Also, the greater Everglades system supports irreplaceable natural infrastructure that impedes storm surge, saltwater intrusion, and the impacts of sea level rise. As you seek to identify large-scale projects that support economic development and natural climate solutions, we urge you to consider Everglades restoration as a commonsense option for making major progress on such efforts.

Florida's environmental assets attracted 131 million visitors in 2019, directly infusing nearly \$100 billion into the state's economy. Environmental disasters in years prior, such as severe harmful algal blooms, undermined economic stability in communities whose economies are completely dependent on a clean environment. In 2018, environmental disasters related to harmful algal blooms caused tens of millions of dollars in economic losses in some communities, resulting in lost incomes for workers that threatened their ability to feed their families. Everglades restoration is viewed as a positive step to address the environmental ailments that frequently threaten to leave Floridians without work and aims to prevent such impacts. Of further note, based on a standard calculation utilized by the USACE, between 65,000-70,000 jobs could be created over the next four years should CERP receive full funding to fulfill authorized construction projects on the integrated delivery schedule. Direct employment as the result of federal investments, and stable employment in the long-term, from a clean environment, should be key considerations for your efforts to help Americans find employment in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the associated economic crisis.

In addition to the direct benefits to Florida's communities and economy, restoration and preservation of America's largest sub-tropical wilderness is vital to the health of the ecosystem, biodiversity, and mitigating climate impacts. Everglades restoration is an ideal model for

highlighting the benefits of investing in these restoration and green infrastructure projects. Lessons learned and best practices from advancing Everglades restoration now can be used elsewhere for future ecosystem restoration projects in other parts of the country.

Florida has successfully executed robust restoration of public lands and waters with bipartisan support. The state is a leader in such ecosystem restoration efforts. As of FY2020, the state has invested \$4.5 billion for SFER, which is mandated to be a 50/50 cost share between the federal government and the state by the *Water Resources Development Act of 2000*. To date, the federal government has invested \$1.7 billion for SFER. There is ample room for the federal government to catch up in delivering robust funds for this world-class ecosystem restoration project. Your commitment to supporting robust SFER funding at \$725 million for FY22 would help solidify and build upon our recent environmental infrastructure successes in Florida, and would indicate to the state that your administration fully stands by this ecosystem restoration project that is of central importance to Floridians.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for \$725 million for Everglades restoration in FY22. Florida is ready to continue to be a partner for the federal government to work on these shared priorities and deliver for our nation.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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Al Lawson
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Carlos Gimenez
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Charlie Crist
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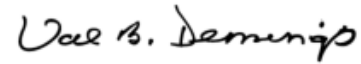
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