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AUDUBON	DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE	NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
AUDUBON OF FLORIDA	EVERGLADES FOUNDATION	SANIBEL CAPTIVA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
CLEAN WATER ACTION	EVERGLADES LAW CENTER	SIERRA CLUB
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September 12, 2008

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

Dear Senator Martinez:

Thank you for your continued leadership and support for Everglades restoration.

We are writing to encourage and enlist your support for the State of Florida's proposed acquisition of U.S. Sugar Corporation's land in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and full funding for federally authorized Everglades restoration projects.

The State's exciting plan to acquire up to 187,000 acres of US Sugar Corporation lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area presents an unprecedented opportunity to store flood waters and treat pollution to restore the Everglades and protect the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries.

Recent events prove the urgency and necessity of the pending purchase. Stormwater from Tropical Storm Fay has filled Lake Okeechobee and is of such poor quality that legally it cannot be released into the Everglades, necessitating damaging releases of this phosphorous and nitrogen rich water to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries. These problems could be solved if more land in the EAA is used to address, not cause, South Florida's water challenges.

When Governor Crist and water managers announced the proposed purchase they were clear about the benefits:

- Increases in water storage to reduce harmful freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida's coastal rivers and estuaries.
- Improvements in the delivery of cleaner water to the Everglades.
- Preventing thousands of tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades.
- Eliminating the need for "back-pumping" water into Lake Okeechobee.
- Sustainability of agriculture and green energy production.

To fully realize the benefits of the acquisition, the Tamiami Trail component of Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park Project (Modified Waters Project) must be fully funded and completed. While many components of Modified Waters are nearing completion, the modifications to the Tamiami Trail have

languished, preventing increased sheet flows for the River of Grass. It is critical for Congress to send the message that we are finally ready to begin construction of this component of the plan and fully fund the project until it is completed. This project will provide important ecological benefits to Everglades National Park and allow broader restoration projects to begin.

Next, with the passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, three new projects are now authorized and can begin with a commitment of federal expenditures. The Indian River Lagoon South project will provide protection to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon estuaries from the periodic surges from areas other than Lake Okeechobee that race downstream from tropical storms like Fay.

This is an unprecedented opportunity. We urge you to publicly support this important acquisition for the benefit of the Everglades and to fully fund the Tamiami Trail component of the Modified Waters Project and the authorized CERP projects.

Sincerely,

(Signatures waived in order to expedite delivery.)

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