

RESOLUTION NO. 135-2016

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA IN SUPPORT OF EXPEDITING AUTHORIZATION, APPROPRIATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND COMPLETION OF EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ENHANCE WATER STORAGE AND CONVEYANCE TO RESTORE WATER FLOW TO THE FLORIDA BAY WHICH IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE FLORIDA BAY, A CRITICAL PART OF THE EVERGLADES ECOSYSTEM.

WHEREAS, Monroe County is part of the vast Everglades ecosystem that covers much of South Florida; and

WHEREAS, Monroe County's coastline encompasses Florida Bay, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary ("FKNMS") and Everglades National Park; and

WHEREAS, the waters of the Florida Keys are dependent on the health of the Everglades ecosystem as the primary source of fresh water and foundation for the nearshore estuarine environment and Florida Bay that provides a unique and critical habitat for numerous plants and animals, including 15 federally protected, endangered and threatened species and state special concern species, such as the bottlenose dolphin, Florida manatee, smalltooth sawfish, green sea turtle, hawksbill turtle, spoonbills, pelicans, egrets, piping plover, and the American crocodile; and

WHEREAS, Florida Bay comprises a large portion of Everglades National Park, and is a main receiving water body of flows from the central and northern Greater Everglades Ecosystem, heavily influenced by changes in quality, quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows into the southern end of the Everglades system; and

WHEREAS, the construction of water control structures and facilities within the Everglades throughout the 20th century has altered the natural hydrologic patterns of water in the region. Over time, this has resulted in a greater than 50% reduction in flows through the central Everglades and a dramatically altered distribution of flows into Taylor. The reduction and redistribution of freshwater into Florida Bay has reduced the critically needed flow of freshwater into Taylor Slough, a natural feature of the Everglades that flows southwest into numerous tributaries that eventually empty into Florida Bay, harmed the health of the Bay and other connected coastal regions; and

WHEREAS, Florida Bay is within the vitally important ecosystem located between the mainland and the Florida Keys, with approximately 20% of Florida Bay within the boundaries of the FKNMS and approximately 80% of Florida Bay within the boundaries of Everglades National Park both dependent on clean and adequate water flows; and

WHEREAS, Florida Bay is vital to the multi-billion dollar fishing and ecotourism industry of South Florida, including commercial and recreational fishing, snorkeling, diving, boat and equipment rentals, hospitality and other related businesses. Florida Bay comprises a significant portion of the coastal Everglades recreational fishing industry worth \$880 million annually and commercial shrimp and stone crab fisheries worth more than \$80 million annually; and

WHEREAS, the ecosystem of the Florida Keys including Florida Bay attracts over 4 million visitors and over \$4.5 billion in economic activity annually, generating \$200 million in sales tax revenue for the State of Florida each year; and

WHEREAS, current ecological conditions in Florida Bay are approaching the conditions of 1987-1990, when Florida Bay experienced an ecological collapse from hypersaline conditions that led to massive sea grass die off and devastating algal blooms that clouded the crystal waters of the Florida Bay. Due to lack of freshwater flow and drought conditions in 2015 Florida Bay is once again experiencing high salinity contributing to significant seagrass die-off zones currently estimated at 50,000 acres, approaching the levels of 1987-1990 when approximately 67,000 acres of Florida Bay experienced some degree of seagrass die off die off; and

WHEREAS, while recent rainfall has helped the hypersaline conditions, it does not ameliorate the recent seagrass die-off that has occurred or the harmful algal blooms that are likely to result from that die off this upcoming summer and fall ,further damaging the environment and economy requiring multi-year recovery. As an early indicator, nesting for Spoonbills and other species of birds has been poor this season due to adverse conditions in Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, this dire situation in Florida Bay is a symptom of a larger need to restore the Everglades ecosystem by constructing projects for conveyance, water quality treatment and storage of water as outlined in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP); and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners urges all of the responsible entities -- the Federal government, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the State of Florida (State), and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) -- to expedite the completion of CERP, including the authorization of and appropriations for all CERP projects, as well as the completion of foundational projects authorized prior to CERP ("pre-CERP"); and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners urges the expedited authorization, appropriation, and completion of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), a subset of CERP projects that includes both water quality treatment and conveyance projects that will significantly improve restoration of the Everglades by providing and conveying freshwater flows from Lake Okeechobee to the central Everglades estimated at 210,000 acre-feet per year and restoring sheet flow to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners requests that the Federal government, the Corps, the State, and SFWMD to prioritize and expedite the completion of CERP and pre-CERP projects in the southern end of the system that are already planned and authorized but have not yet been completed including Modified Water Deliveries, the C-111

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners supports expediting the CERP planning project for additional EAA storage (“EAA Storage & ASR/Decomp Phase 2”) and combining this planning effort with the planning for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project; and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners requests that the Federal government, the State of Florida and SFWMD expedite the acquisition of all lands in the EAA south of Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River basins, and system-wide, which are determined to be necessary for the implementation of CERP projects; and

WHEREAS, to address the likelihood of additional water storage being necessary after the completion CEPP, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners asks that the State consider the options recommended by the University of Florida Water Institute providing land area for additional opportunities to store, convey and treat water south of Lake Okeechobee including “1) purchase of private land in the Everglades Agricultural Area (including the current U.S. Sugar land purchase option on land from other willing sellers) to use or trade for deep and/or shallow storage and treatment opportunities, 2) develop a cost sharing program for on-farm or sub-regional multi-farm shallow storage and treatment opportunities, and 3) use existing state owned wildlife management areas” (compatible with the restoration goals of those areas); and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners urges that the Corps and SFWMD aggressively study, identify and implement operational measures that will enhance water flows into Florida Bay, such as the emergency operations in 2015-2016, and supports the SFWMD’s current South Dade Investigation that is exploring the full range water management options south of Tamiami Trail. Monroe County strongly urges that options be evaluated to optimize restoration opportunities for Florida Bay and specifically to identify short-term operational measures and conveyance to specifically deliver freshwater to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners strongly requests that SFWMD expedite the development and implementation of a recovery strategy to address the exceedances and violation of the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) Rule for Florida Bay, outline and report to Monroe County its measures to prevent future exceedances and violations, and given the likelihood of another large algal bloom, outline contingency plans to protect Florida Bay from a complete collapse of the system or threat to human health, and that the SFWMD make compliance with the MFL Rule for Florida Bay a top priority; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners that:

1. The above recitals are hereby incorporated into this resolution as restated herein constitute the legislative findings and intent of the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County, Florida.

2. Monroe County strongly requests that South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers look for all opportunities to improve the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water flows into Florida Bay and immediately implement an MFL recovery strategy; and
3. The South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expedite the on-going Everglades restoration projects such as: Modified Water Deliveries, the C-111 South Dade Project, C-111 Spreader Canal Western project, Tamiami Trail Next Steps, Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), along with all operational actions that can be taken now to improve water flow to the Florida Bay; and
4. The South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expedite water storage planning south of Lake Okeechobee, such as the EAA Storage & ASR/Decomp Phase 2 (Component G, GG of the Integrated Delivery Schedule for CERP) in an effort to look for new water to add to the freshwater flow to Florida Bay; and
5. The County's federal and state lobbying teams advocate for acquisition of all lands in the EAA south of Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River basins, and system-wide, which are determined to be necessary for the implementation of CERP and CEPP projects; and
6. The Clerk for this Board shall furnish copies of this resolution to:
 - U.S. Senator Bill Nelson
 - U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
 - U.S. Representative Carlos Curbelo, District 26
 - Florida Governor Rick Scott
 - Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner
 - Florida Senate President-elect Joe Negron
 - Florida House Speaker Steve Crisafulli
 - Florida House Speaker-elect Richard Corcoran
 - State Senator Dwight Bullard, District 39
 - State Senator Anitere Flores, District 37
 - State Representative Holly Raschein, District 120
 - U.S. Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District Commander Col. Jason Kirk
 - U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell
 - Chair, South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, Daniel O'Keefe
 - Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District Peter Antonacci
 - Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Jon Steverson
7. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County Florida, at a regular meeting of said Board held on the 20th day of July, 2016.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Mayor Heather Carruthers | <u>Yes</u> |
| Mayor pro tem George Neugent | <u>Yes</u> |
| Commissioner Danny L. Kolhage | <u>Yes</u> |
| Commissioner David Rice | <u>Yes</u> |
| Commissioner Sylvia Murphy | <u>Yes</u> |



ATTEST: AMY HEAVILIN, CLERK

Amy Robertson
Deputy Clerk

7.22.16

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

By: *Heather Carruthers*
Mayor Heather Carruthers

**MONROE COUNTY ATTORNEY
APPROVED AS TO FORM:**
[Signature]
ROBERT B. SHILLINGER, JR.
COUNTY ATTORNEY
Date 7-5-16