



MARTIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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August 19, 2013

The Honorable Senator Joe Negron, Chair
The Florida Senate
Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Chair Negron:

Thank you for joining us in Martin County, where you are witnesses to two estuaries in full decline. This panel was convened in order to save these estuaries.

Fortunately, solutions exist that can reverse the demise of the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon. Much of the science has already been done.

Now, the real decisions must be made. They are all political. Politicians in Tallahassee and Washington DC must choose between 2 starkly different options. They can continue the policies that are killing our ecosystems or they can advance policies and funding that will save them.

The Indian River Lagoon South Plan (IRL South Plan) was authorized into federal law in the Water Resource Development Act in 2007. Martin County citizens have taxed themselves eight of the past ten years, generating \$75 million to buy land to implement the IRL South Plan.

We acquired 45,000 acres for IRL South projects that will restore upland and wetland ecosystems. Since 2000, Martin County has invested over \$50 million for water quality improvement in 25 stormwater projects covering over 6,000 acres. We have restored 28 acres of oyster habitat in the St. Lucie River. We have adopted a strong fertilizer ordinance.

No county in Florida has invested as much as Martin County has in our part of Everglades Restoration. Reward us. Help us fix these problems. Use our generosity as a model to encourage other counties in Florida to participate in restoring our Everglades.

The most critical action you must take is to fund and complete the projects of the IRL South Plan. All of them: the C-23, C-24, C-25, and C-44 reservoirs and their attendant stormwater treatment areas and the natural lands restoration.

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The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) is a new plan that was tentatively advanced for further consideration by the state last week. We support CEPP. However, if we don't complete the IRL South first, CEPP will not produce significant benefits for our estuaries.

All of the promises, conclusions, and scientific modeling for CEPP were predicated on completing IRL South FIRST.

Wetlands are vital natural resources. They store and clean water in drought and flood conditions. They filter harmful nutrients. Don't allow any state preemptions to restrict wetland protections.

One of the reasons why our estuaries are losing their abilities to recover from the Lake Okeechobee discharges is that the discharges are dirtier than ever before. Get serious about water quality standards. Urban fertilizer runoff is a contributor to this pollution. Don't allow any state preemptions that would prohibit counties to implement strict fertilizer ordinances.

Use state-owned land that was purchased for Everglades Restoration in the Everglades Agricultural Area for shallow storage of water, not growing cane. Do it now to create less water demand and less drainage demand.

Change the Lake storage schedule to minimize discharges, not to protect existing water users.

Find practical and immediate ways to slow down water coming into Lake Okeechobee from the North.

These are all things that the State of Florida can do. DO THEM NOW.

Sincerely,



Sarah Heard, Chair
Martin County Board of County Commissioners

SH/sh/jh

C: Honorable Members of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners
Taryn Kryzda, County Administrator