



EVERGLADES COALITION

May 6, 2025

Mayor Maria Marino
Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
301 North Olive Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Southland Water Resource Project

Dear Mayor Marino and Commissioners,

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of nearly 60 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America's Everglades with a 12.2-million-constituent network of followers. Our members have been deeply engaged for decades in the planning, development, approval, and implementation of every major component of Everglades restoration, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA), which are currently under construction and directly adjacent to the proposed "Southland Water Resource Project" (Southland project).

We are writing to express our concerns, which are twofold. First, the Southland project is being erroneously portrayed as a component of CERP or another authorized Everglades restoration effort. Second, potential impacts on the operation of the EAA Reservoir and STA project have not been sufficiently analyzed. Because of these concerns we request your **DENIAL** of this project.

While the Southland project has self-identified as a "water resource" project, and has been submitted to the South Florida Water Management District as an unsolicited proposal, it has not ever been approved, evaluated, or formally considered such by either the South Florida Water Management District or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The proposed project has not been discussed as part of an agenda at any public meeting at either of the referenced agencies and does not appear in any restoration planning or other official restoration documents. To the contrary, the South Florida Water Management District has made clear on numerous occasions that its evaluation of Southland as a water resources project has not officially begun, and the project has similarly never been considered by the Army Corps of Engineers. Our concerns are heightened due to Southland's direct adjacency to the EAA Reservoir and STA project, a \$4 billion dollar above-ground reservoir and stormwater treatment area component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

We are concerned about the potential impacts of the Southland project's proposed deep-rock mining and blasting less than 1,000 feet from the EAA Reservoir footprint, as such an operation was never analyzed during the planning or modeling of the EAA Reservoir and STA project. With water slated to be stored

The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.

evergladescoalition.org

approximately 23 feet above grade in the EAA Reservoir, far above the elevation of the nearby below-grade Southland project, we are additionally concerned about seepage, groundwater impacts, and potential impacts to the structural integrity of the EAA Reservoir and STA project. Moreover, the risk that mining activities could mobilize pollutants such as phosphorus, sulfate, and chloride, threatening the water quality required for downstream restoration success, must also be considered. Without the required thorough technical review by the South Florida Water Management District and/or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, allowing this project to move forward jeopardizes not only the effectiveness of the EAA Reservoir but the future of Everglades restoration itself.

Because of the potential significant and unanswered risks the Southland project could have to Everglades restoration, we urge you to **DENY** this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent than the last name "Perry".

Mark Perry
Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kelly" being more prominent than the last name "Cox".

Kelly Cox
Co-Chair