May 2, 2013

The Honorable Jack Reed, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
S 128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
S 128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski,

On behalf of the 57 organizations of the Everglades Coalition and our more than 6 million members nationwide, we appreciate your committee’s support for America’s Everglades. As you consider your FY 2014 appropriations for the Department of the Interior (DOI), we ask that you provide funding at the President’s budget request of $95.5 million for projects and initiatives that are vital for advancing Everglades restoration. This request includes $30 million for bridging Tamiami Trail, $5 million for advancing the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, and $1 million for combating invasive species such as the Burmese python. It will allow these and other key projects to move forward without costly delays, and it will continue to employ thousands of workers and return millions of dollars back to the local economy.

We are witnessing significant progress in Everglades restoration after years of research and planning. In March 2013, we celebrated the completion of the one-mile bridge on Tamiami Trail, a major Everglades restoration project that is part of the Modified Water Deliveries project. The bridge will help restore water flow to the heart of the Everglades that wildlife, fisheries, and nesting colonies of birds rely on, including the endangered Everglade Snail Kite and the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Other important projects are under construction today, and agencies within DOI are taking a lead role and working together to fulfill the goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). We are pleased to report that every project previously authorized under CERP is currently under construction, and we anxiously await passage of a Water Resources Development Act so that we can begin construction on the next generation of CERP projects.

Everglades restoration projects make economic sense and bring critically needed jobs to Florida. Over the last three years, Everglades restoration projects have generated 10,500 jobs. The Tamiami Trail one-mile bridge construction brought more than 1,200 jobs to South Florida. Thousands of workers are employed by projects now under construction, such as the Picayune Strand project with more than 2,100 jobs and the Kissimmee River Restoration project with more than 1,000 jobs between 2010 and 2012. According to the National Park Service, in
2011 alone, Everglades National Park created approximately 2,408 jobs and generated more than $146.8 million in visitor spending. A 2011 study by Mather Economics found that for every dollar invested in Everglades restoration, four dollars are returned to the economy as a conservative estimate. Sustained funding to keep restoration projects on schedule is critical to avoiding collapse of the ecosystem, economy, and water supply of 7.5 million South Floridians.

We appreciate your continued support and commitment to Everglades restoration as we move forward with this monumental restoration effort, fulfilling our promise to future generations.

Sincerely,

Dawn Shirreffs
National Co-Chair
954-961-1280 x 205
dshirreffs@npca.org

Jennifer Hecker
State Co-Chair
239-262-0304 x 250
jenniferh@conservancy.org