A RESOLUTION OF THE EVERGLADES COALITION SUPPORTING INCLUSION OF A LARGE MAMMAL WILDLIFE CROSSING FEATURE UNDER US 41 IN CONJUNCTION WITH INSTALLATION OF WATER CONVEYANCE FEATURES FOR PICAYUNE STRAND RESTORATION PROJECT’S SOUTHWEST PROTECTION FEATURE

WHEREAS, Picayune Strand Restoration Project (PSRP) is the first Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) project that was initiated in 2007, with ultimate objectives to restore over 70,000 acres of drained wetlands, imperiled species habitats and downstream estuaries by 2023; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is permitting and planning the construction of the Southwest Protection Feature (SWPF) for the PSRP which includes flow conveyance features under US 41 near Collier-Seminole State Park; and

WHEREAS, PSRP serves, among other purposes, as the mitigation bank for all CERP project impacts to endangered Florida panthers; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team’s 2017 Southwest Florida Road Hot Spots Report identifies the section of US 41 slated to get several PSRP SWPF conveyance features as a significant Florida panther mortality hotspot between 1996 and 2016; and

WHEREAS, Florida Panther (FP) 193 has a home range that overlaps the PSRP SWPF project area and extends south of US 41; and

WHEREAS, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) have all recommended inclusion of large mammal crossing facilities in conjunction with conveyance features for the SWPF phase of PSRP; and

WHEREAS, FDOT engineering staff have estimated costs of collocating a large mammal crossing facility with conveyance features for PSRP SWPF to be roughly equivalent to only conveyance features; and
WHEREAS, roads significantly contribute to habitat loss and fragmentation; and these are the greatest threat to establishing and maintaining sustainable populations of the endangered Florida panther and many wildlife species including Florida black bear, Everglades mink, Osceola turkey, gopher tortoise, American alligator, and others; and

WHEREAS, vehicle strikes on roads are the leading human cause of mortality for panthers; and

WHEREAS, protection and recovery of imperiled wildlife, such as the Florida panther, is a major objective of CERP and the PSRP.

Therefore, the 61 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition hereby resolve that:

As part of the PSRP SWPF, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should include a large mammal wildlife crossing facility in conjunction with installation of flow conveyance features under US 41 near Collier-Seminole State Park.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of July, 2020.

Mark Perry
Co-Chair

Marisa Carrozzo
Co-Chair