



# Everglades Coalition

1000 Friends of Florida  
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation  
Audubon of Florida  
Audubon Society of the Everglades  
Broward County Audubon Society  
Caloosahatchee River Citizens  
Association  
Clean Water Action  
Clean Water Network  
Collier County Audubon Society  
Conservancy of Southwest Florida  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Ding Darling Wildlife Society  
Earthjustice  
Environment Florida  
The Environmental Coalition  
Everglades Coordinating Council  
Everglades Foundation  
Everglades Law Center  
Florida Defenders of the  
Environment  
Florida Keys Environmental Fund  
The Florida Native Plant Society  
Florida Oceanographic Society  
Florida Sierra Club  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Friends of Arthur R. Marshall  
Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge  
Friends of the Everglades  
Izaak Walton League  
Florida Keys Chapter  
Florida Division  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Mangrove Chapter  
Last Stand  
League of Women  
Voters of Florida  
Loxahatchee River Coalition  
Martin County  
Conservation Alliance  
National Audubon Society  
National Parks  
Conservation Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources  
Defense Council  
The Ocean Conservancy  
The Pegasus Foundation  
Sanibel-Captiva  
Conservation Foundation  
Save It Now, Glades!  
Sierra Club  
Sierra Club Broward Group  
Sierra Club Central Florida Group  
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group  
Sierra Club Miami Group  
Tropical Audubon Society  
The Urban Environment League  
World Wildlife Fund

Carol Wehle  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

January 8, 2009

Re: Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetland ERP Policy Update

Dear Director Wehle,

We recognize that there are 68 projects to implement within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, but of these, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) and C-111 Phase two, are the only projects that can deliver water to Biscayne National Park. This underlines the importance of land acquisition in the BBCW footprint.

In 2007 the Governing Board established a policy to deny all Environmental Resource Permits that seek to develop land within the critical footprint of BBCW. The rationale behind this decision was that the South Florida Water Management District would seek to acquire these lands for BBCW and restoration efforts. We thank the District for your visionary recognition that these lands are sensitive wetlands that are vital for restoration of Biscayne Bay. However, to date, many of the costal properties needed for future restoration benefits for this area have not been purchased.

At the most recent Governing Board meeting in December of 2008, the Board opted to rescind that previous policy to deny all ERP Permits in the sensitive area around BBCW, and consequently allow permit applications to be examined on a case by case basis. We are alarmed and disappointed by the Board's decision to rescind this policy. We urge the District to proceed with acquiring these highly sensitive properties as originally intended, including Cutler Properties. We recognize that the South Florida Water Management District has limited funds and must prioritize these funds accordingly, and thus not all of the District's endeavors can be fully realized concurrently. In this light, we ask that the BBCW project be given attention to the extent practicable and urge the District to continue to explore all options available to acquire sensitive wetlands and improve the health of Biscayne Bay. If this is not feasible, we urge the District to examine each ERP application with exceptional rigor and detail, to, among other things, ensure that as much land as possible can be set aside for restoration efforts.

[www.evergladescoalition.org](http://www.evergladescoalition.org)

Ph: 561-746-8078 ♦ Fax: 561-745-8936 ♦ P.O. Box 1902, Jupiter, FL 33468

We are concerned that this policy discussion was not adequately portrayed to stakeholders of Biscayne Bay. We were not aware that this specific policy would be discussed at the most recent Governing Board meeting, as the only mention of Biscayne Bay was a BBCW project update on the workshop agenda. There was no mention of what that would entail, nor any supporting documents to indicate that this policy related to ERPs would be discussed or that a decision would be made by the Governing Board. We are remiss that we did not have proper notification about the topic so that we could attend the meeting and provide public comment on this policy change. We suggest that in the future when such important issues related to BBCW are to come before the Governing Board with a looming decision at hand, that stakeholder groups are informed appropriately, including through notification of the Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team (BBRRCT) of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. We feel the next BBRRCT meeting should discuss this decision and we request a presentation about the rationale and consequences of this decision.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter, and please take this letter into your records as our public comments.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry  
State Co-Chair



Sara Fain  
National Co-Chair

cc: SFWMD Governing Board  
Eric Buermann, Chair  
Shannon A. Estenoz, Vice-Chair  
Michael Collins  
Charles J. Dauray  
Paul C. Huck, Jr.  
Melissa L. Meeker  
Jerry Montgomery  
Patrick J. Rooney, Jr., Esq.

Mark Lewis, Superintendent Biscayne National Park  
Evan Skornick, Chair, Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration Coordination Team