



# THE EVERGLADES COALITION

September 13, 2004

1000 Friends of Florida  
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation  
Audubon of Florida  
Audubon Society of the Everglades  
Broward County Audubon Society  
Clean Water Action  
Clean Water Network  
Collier County Audubon Society  
The Conservancy of Southwest  
Florida  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Earthjustice  
Environmental & Land Use Law  
Center  
The Environmental Coalition  
Environmental Defense  
Everglades Coordinating Council  
Florida Defenders of the  
Environment  
Florida Keys Chapter of the  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Florida Keys Environmental Fund  
Florida Public Interest Research  
Group  
Florida Sierra Club  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Friends of the Everglades  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Last Stand  
Legal Environmental Assistance  
Foundation  
League of Woman Voters of  
Florida  
Loxahatchee River Coalition  
Mangrove Chapter of the Izaak  
Walton League of America  
Martin County Conservation  
Alliance  
National Audubon Society  
National Parks Conservation  
Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
North Carolina Outward Bound  
School  
The Ocean Conservancy  
The Pegasus Foundation  
The Redland Conservancy  
Sierra Club  
Sierra Club Broward Group  
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group  
Sierra Club Miami Group  
Tropical Audubon Society  
The Urban Environment League  
The Wilderness Society  
World Wildlife Fund

Mayor Alex Penelas  
Stephen P. Clark Center  
111 N.W. 1st Street  
Miami, Florida 33128

RE: Opposition to Lakebelt Ordinance #042266

Dear Mayor Penelas:

The Everglades Coalition, an alliance of 45 national, state and local environmental organizations, urges you to veto Ordinance #044226. This ordinance rezones the area around Miami-Dade County's Northwest Wellfield for rock-mining uses, thereby removing the "unusual use" designation of rock-mining in this area. As a result, this ordinance restricts public involvement in mining approvals and hampers the County's ability to provide a safe, secure and affordable drinking water supply.

Over the last year, concern has been escalating that mining near the County's Northwest Wellfield threatens to contaminate the County's water supply. Both the County's Department of Environmental Resources Management and the United States Geological Survey, expressed strong concern regarding contamination of the wells by microbial pathogens from the adjacent mining. Such pathogens, like cryptosporidium, which causes severe intestinal illness, are resistant to chlorination and filtration and can be fatal.

To protect the drinking water supply, the County Manager stated in a memorandum on February 10, 2004, that the current ½-mile setback (adopted in the ordinance) between mining activities and the wells is not "realistic" and will need to be expanded to be "more protective." The County Manager detailed steps the County will take, by itself and in conjunction with other agencies, to scientifically calculate and implement a new expanded setback. Until that information is available, the County must highly scrutinize mining in this area and not allow for blanket permitting, as this ordinance allows.

Rockmining in this area clearly constitutes an "unusual use." It is a major, disruptive, unnatural use of the land that poses a drinking water contamination threat, creates noise and blasting impacts, and destroys significant wetlands acreage and wildlife habitat. Cumulatively, the 80-foot deep mining pits will encompass approximately 30 square miles, the size of the City of Miami. The suggestion that such a land use is the equivalent to constructing a housing unit is ridiculous and incomparable.



The current “unusual use” designation requires the approval of the Community Council/Zoning Board of the specific region and a County staff evaluation to identify compliance with the Comprehensive Master Development Plan, as well as hydrologic and environmental impacts. Without the “unusual use” designation, the public’s participation is limited because the rockmining permits would not come before this important public forum. In addition, the permits would not undergo a County zoning evaluation or be publicly debated before the Board of County Commissioners.

The Coalition holds that this effort to “streamline” the process represents an attempt by the mining industry to inflate their land prices. If and when the County needs to acquire that land to protect the county’s drinking water supply, this ordinance will further complicate and make more expensive this task.

This ordinance will limit public involvement and put at risk a safe, secure and affordable drinking water supply for the citizens of Miami-Dade County. We respectfully urge you to veto this ordinance.

Sincerely,

John Adornato, III  
**National Co-Chair, Everglades Coalition**  
Regional Program Manager  
National Parks Conservation Association

Richard Grosso  
**State Co-Chair, Everglades Coalition**  
Executive Director  
Environment and Land Use Law Center, Inc.