



EVERGLADES COALITION

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RE: Wetland Protection and Restoration Urgently Needed for America's Everglades

Dear BBSEER Project Delivery Team:

The Biscayne Bay and Southeastern Everglades Ecosystem Restoration (BBSEER) Project planning is underway with Congressional authorization anticipated in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in 2026. The Everglades Coalition - an alliance of nearly 60 conservation organizations committed to the protection and restoration of the entire Greater Everglades watershed - has long advocated for full and timely implementation of restoration efforts to benefit the BBSEER project area, including Everglades and Biscayne National Parks and the waters of the Florida Keys.

The Everglades Coalition supports advancing a final BBSEER plan that includes critical wetland features that will benefit the ecology and hydrology of the Everglades and Biscayne Bay, including Pennsuco and Bird Drive Basin. The benefits of wetland restoration are significant and include:

- Acting as a recharge zone for the Biscayne Aquifer, the primary water supply for millions of Floridians across Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Monroe Counties.
- Providing enhanced short-hydroperiod foraging habitat for wading birds.
- Serving as an environmental buffer to the Everglades Protection Area.
- Improving flood resilience across and beyond the project site.
- Sequestering carbon in alignment with climate resilience goals.

We write today because all of the benefits associated with rehydration of the Pennsuco and Bird Drive Basin wetlands are threatened by land development in Miami-Dade County. The Everglades Coalition urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District to ensure that Pennsuco and Bird Drive Basin wetland restoration are included in BBSEER for Congressional authorization in 2026. We are troubled to hear that these important project features may instead be considered as part

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of the upcoming Southern Everglades Study, slated to begin the planning phase in late 2024. **When it comes to wetland protection in Miami-Dade County, there is no time to lose. Waiting to include these key project areas in the Southern Everglades Study could mean losing these important wetland features to development permanently.**

We appreciate the work of state and federal agency leaders in advancing this important project, which has the potential to greatly benefit Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, and the waters of the Florida Keys. The Everglades Coalition remains committed to supporting the protection and restoration of the entire Greater Everglades ecosystem and improving habitat connectivity and climate resilience across South Florida. We hope to support a final BBSEER plan that will get us closer to achieving these goals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Kelly Cox
Co-Chair

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