



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

May 28, 2009

Secretary Ken Salazar
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Thank you for taking the time to visit our beautiful Florida. We are a state rich in natural resources – from springs, rivers and estuaries, to pine woods, grasslands and white sandy beaches. In addition, the Everglades is truly a natural wonder, a mosaic of freshwater ponds, prairies and forested uplands. It is a place known throughout the world for its abundant bird life – the only place on Earth where alligators and crocodiles exist side by side. It is a living classroom where students and teachers can learn about endangered wildlife and a unique ecosystem.

That is why I have made Everglades restoration and the conservation of Florida's environment such a priority. We must take action in our lifetime to protect these treasures so that future generations can experience the Florida we love.

Last month, we announced a revised strategy to acquire land for Everglades restoration from the United States Sugar Corporation, adapting to fiscal realities by saving \$800 million at closing. The South Florida Water Management District would initially invest approximately \$530 million for 72,500 acres of property south of Lake Okeechobee. Approximately 32,000 acres of that land, currently in citrus production, would be available to the district within a year. U.S. Sugar would lease back the other 40,500 acres of sugar cane land for \$150 per acre per year for at least seven years. The district would have an option to purchase the remaining 107,500 acres of U.S. Sugar property for restoration within 10 years after closing.

As we move forward, I look forward to continuing to support the historic partnership to protect our treasured ecosystems. To that end, I am requesting your attention and assistance with obtaining federal funding and a long-term commitment for **Florida Everglades** restoration.

Partnership to Preserve the River of Grass

I would like to acknowledge President Obama's request for \$279 million for Everglades restoration funding in the FY 2010 budget. We are appreciative of the recent actions of the federal government, and would request that the partnership continue. I look forward to working with you in supporting these critical federal dollars in the United States Congress. I would also ask that the Department of the Interior take a fresh look at expectations and long-term goals with regard to Everglades restoration. Our success depends on a strong State-Federal partnership.

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Preserving Florida's Waterways

In addition to the Everglades, I would like to request your assistance and attention to another important environmental issue. As you are aware, Florida, Georgia, Alabama and the Federal Agencies continue to be embroiled in lawsuits and controversy over the management of the reservoirs on the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint River systems. The prior drought has shown that this basin of Three Rivers – this ecosystem – has limits on its ability to meet all demands. However, the impacts of this drought are not limited to Georgia.

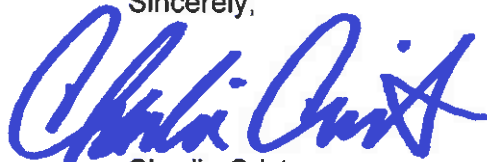
This drought and possible further flow reductions have threatened the very existence for some 1,300 families of 3rd and 4th generation oystermen and a way of life that is an integral part of the community. Florida's Apalachicola River and Bay is the most productive contained commercial fishery in Florida. The local economy depends on the entire ecosystem, which has annual seafood landings reaching millions of dollars dockside.

This is a tri-state problem which requires a tri-state solution. However, it is essential that the Department of Interior engage in meaningful and independent participation as the three states look to an equitable sharing of this precious resource. In addition, in order to truly quantify the impacts associated with the federal government's management of the system, it is incumbent on the Department of Interior to conduct a comprehensive review of the cumulative downstream effects that have occurred to threatened and endangered species, as well as the environment on which they depend.

To avoid these impacts and the challenges being faced by Florida, Georgia and Alabama, it is imperative that we work toward a long-term solution or else we will find ourselves facing a crisis every year. Florida recognizes a solution must include equitable sharing of adversity.

I again thank you for taking the time to visit our state and experience first-hand the beauty of the Florida Everglades. I looking forward to working with you to protect the River of Grass and reach a meaningful resolution in the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint River system.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist