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BONEFISH & TARPON TRUST ** CLEAN WATER ACTION
COALITION OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RETIREES
COLLIER COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY ** CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
EVERGLADES FOUNDATION ** EVERGLADES TRUST
EVERGLADES LAW CENTER ** FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
FLORIDA OCEANOGRAPHIC SOCIETY ** FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
FRIENDS OF THE ARTHUR R. MARSHALL LOXAHATCHEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
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TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY ** URBAN ENVIRONMENT LEAGUE

September 29, 2009

Nancy Sutley, Chair
The White House Council on Environmental Quality
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: A Roadmap to Success for Everglades Restoration 2009 – 2012

Dear Chairwoman Sutley,

In February, we shared with you our Vision for getting Everglades restoration back on track in our paper, *Executive Call to Action to Restore America's Everglades*. Since then, President Obama has recognized the national importance of Everglades restoration, and has provided critical leadership to get the restoration efforts back on track. Appointing key officials to work on Everglades restoration, and ensuring the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan received its first construction dollars since its passage in 2009 have already brought a renewed enthusiasm about ecosystem restoration to south Florida.

In response to a request from the Administration to provide further guidance on how to accomplish our objectives for the benefit of our ecosystem and our economy, we have prepared the attached report, *A Roadmap to Success for Everglades Restoration 2009 – 2012*, for your review.

In particular, over the next four years, the Administration should:

1. Fully fund the construction of authorized Everglades restoration projects;
2. Focus on promptly planning and implementing a bundle of complementary priority Everglades restoration projects the Water Conservation Area 3 Decompartmentalization and Sheetflow Enhancement, Everglades National Park Seepage Management, Tamiami Trail Next Steps, and the C-111 Spreader Canal; and
3. Take actions to restore the Everglades' estuaries, which are essential to making two cornerstones of successful restoration a reality: 1) providing the water quantity and quality to provide the right timing and distribution of clean water to the Everglades and sustain it during droughts and 2) restoring unimpeded sheetflow within the southern Everglades and into Florida Bay.

In addition, as noted in our *Executive Call to Action*, without implementing and improving several cross-cutting programmatic elements, it will be difficult for the Administration to effectively move forward with critical restoration projects.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to discussing these priorities and working with you toward the successful restoration of America's Everglades.

Sincerely,

/signatures waived for delivery/

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EVERGLADES RESTORATION: A ROADMAP TO SUCCESS 2009-2012

INTRODUCTION: TWO KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL RESTORATION

The successful restoration of America's Everglades¹ means expediently building and operating projects to provide measurable ecological benefits to the natural system. From the headwaters of the Kissimmee Valley to Florida Bay and the Florida Keys, we look to the Obama Administration to significantly advance long awaited Everglades restoration projects to make a meaningful difference for this imperiled ecosystem. **We also look to the Administration to concurrently pursue programmatic improvements, which will ensure restoration's success over the long term.** Putting projects in the ground and achieving programmatic objectives are complementary endeavors that the Administration should prioritize.

EVERGLADES PROJECT ROADMAP: 2009-2012

Over the next four years, the Administration should: 1) fully fund the construction of authorized Everglades restoration projects, 2) focus on promptly planning and implementing a bundle of complementary priority Everglades restoration projects: the Water Conservation Area (WCA) 3 Decompartmentalization and Sheetflow Enhancement (DECOMP), Everglades National Park Seepage Management, Tamiami Trail Next Steps, and the C-111 Spreader Canal, and 3) take actions to restore the Everglades' estuaries. These actions are essential to making two cornerstones of successful restoration a reality: 1) providing the water quantity and quality to provide the right timing and distribution of clean water to the Everglades and sustain it during droughts and 2) restoring unimpeded sheetflow within the southern Everglades and into Florida Bay.

Priority Project: Essential Decompartmentalization and Seepage Management

Explanation: The restoration of historic sheetflow is critical to the Everglades' recovery, especially to Florida Bay and Everglades National Park. Decompartmentalization (DECOMP) will remove significant barriers to sheetflow (e.g. canals, dams, levees) in the southern Everglades and make it possible to maximize benefits from the State's River of Grass Initiative. DECOMP is central to full estuary recovery in the Everglades ecosystem. DECOMP will deliver much needed freshwater flows to Florida Bay, while providing a means to move undesirable excess freshwater from the northern estuaries – the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie.

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Direct Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to integrate planning efforts for DECOMP Phase 1 and Seepage Management projects.
- Direct Corps to prepare one PIR that couples DECOMP PIRs 2 and 3, and ENP Seepage Management.
- Direct Corps to complete the planning for the entire DECOMP project by 2013.
- Clearly identify the project's end goal in the PIR: removing the L-67A, L-67C, and L-29 levees and canals to show ecological benefits; and begin construction to remove 25% of these barriers by 2013.
- Take an incremental approach to implementing DECOMP and Seepage Management. The PIR should plan for the incremental removal of sheetflow barriers and the incremental implementation of seepage management in accordance with the end project goal. For example, managers could remove sections of the L-29 levee over a period of years until the levee is 100% degraded or initially install a seepage management curtain wall every other mile along the eastern Everglades.
- Move DECOMP and Seepage Management forward in conjunction with the River of Grass Initiative.

¹ Everglades restoration encompasses the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), authorized by Congress through the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, and other foundation public works projects critical to repairing the central and southern Florida ecosystem. CERP is a unified and comprehensive program of over 60 separate modifications to the 1948 Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project to repair ecological damage resulting from this project and related activities.

Priority Project: Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park

Explanation: By bridging one mile of the Tamiami Trail and making other flow improvements in the southern Everglades, Modified Water Deliveries is a first step to restoring more natural water flows to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. It lays the groundwork for successful Everglades restoration, and its immediate completion is of utmost importance.

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Break ground on the one-mile Tamiami Trail bridge no later than November 2009, and expediently finish construction of the related road improvements within 3 ½ years.
- Ensure adequate funds are appropriated in FY11 and FY12 to complete Modified Water Deliveries.
- Begin fully operating the Modified Water Deliveries project, in a way that is most beneficial to Everglades National Park, before the end of 2013.
- Finish Modified Water Deliveries.

Priority Project: Tamiami Trail Next Steps

Explanation: For the last 80 years, the Tamiami Trail—a road connecting Tampa to Miami, Florida—has acted as a tourniquet squeezing off vital north-south water flows from the Everglades into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. While a one-mile bridge will be constructed under the Modified Water Deliveries project to help restore flow, the true restoration of ecological connectivity between Water Conservation Area 3 and Everglades National Park and Florida Bay requires many more miles of bridging.

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Support maximum additional bridging on the Tamiami Trail and select Alternative 6 to ensure optimal environmental benefits to the Everglades ecosystem.
- Direct the National Park Service to stay in close communication with the relevant State agencies and the agencies implementing DECOMP as planning of Tamiami Trail next steps moves forward.
- Seek out the Federal Highway Administration's (FHA) and the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) transportation planning and construction expertise as DOI moves forward with bridge planning, funding and construction. The Administration should recognize and designate this as a high priority highway project, uniquely for the purposes of restoring Everglades National Park and Florida Bay.
- Ensure adequate funds are appropriated in FY11 and FY12 for implementation. Funding vehicles could include a special appropriation within Park Service Construction Budget or the Federal Highway Bill SAFTE-LU or other stimulus vehicles that may arise.
- Begin project construction in early 2011.

Priority Project: River of Grass Initiative

Explanation: The River of Grass (ROG) Initiative is critical to the recovery of the Everglades. Since the construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike and the subsequent drainage of vast reaches of the historic Everglades, experts have continuously underscored the need to create more water storage and treatment opportunities in the Everglades Agricultural Area. The ROG Initiative will allow clean freshwater to be stored and sent south through Everglades National Park and into Florida Bay to rehydrate the natural environment. Everglades restoration will immeasurably benefit from the ROG project's goals to considerably increase water storage south of Lake Okeechobee and prevent harmful pollutants from entering the Everglades.

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Maintain open lines of communication with the state of Florida as the ROG Initiative moves forward.

- Engage in ROG planning processes and discussions as ROG project-related benefits will compliment, enhance and support CERP and other federal Everglades restoration efforts.
- Collaborate with the State to maximize restoration benefits of the ROG Initiative, including reprioritizing those projects that intend to convey water into the southern Everglades, including the DECOMP project, ENP Seepage Management, and raising Tamiami Trail.

Priority Project: Protecting the Coastal Estuaries

Explanation: The Everglades includes four biodiverse estuaries: the Caloosahatchee, the St. Lucie Indian River Lagoon, Florida Bay, and Biscayne Bay. Due to loss of water storage capacity in the Everglades ecosystem, the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie suffer from damaging freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee and all but St. Lucie are starved of adequate freshwater during the dry season. It is critical to prevent damaging releases to the northern estuaries and restore freshwater flows to Biscayne and Florida Bays. Estuary restoration efforts offer some of the best opportunities for achieving near term benefits.

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Ensure C-111 Spreader Canal Phase 1 (C-111 SC) PIR, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands (BBCW) Phase 1 PIR, and C-43 Reservoir PIR are complete by 2010 and are authorized in WRDA 2010.
- Ensure that C-111 SC, BBCW Phase 1, and C-43 Reservoir projects are fully funded in FY11 and FY12.
- In 2011 initiate planning and set a date certain for completing the C-111 SC Phase 2 and BBCW Phase 2 PIRs and a date certain for beginning Phase 2 construction.
- In partnership with the state of Florida, ensure operations of the C-111 Spreader Canal Phase 1 that provide maximum ecological benefits.
- Complete C-111 South Dade project before the end of 2012, including full funding for FY11 and FY12.
- Complete PIR for the Lake Okeechobee Water Protection project for WRDA 2012.
- Complete the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.
- Fully fund the Indian River Lagoon and Picayune Strand projects, authorized in WRDA 2007, in FY11 and FY12.

Priority Project: Climate Change Planning for the Everglades Ecosystem

Explanation: Successful Everglades restoration is critical to building a strong mitigation and adaptation strategy for south Florida. Conducting research and compiling existing science to better understand the impacts of climate change on Everglades restoration should be a priority. In 2008, the National Academy of Sciences recommended that planners “assess and factor into planning and implementation the most recent projections of the impacts of climate change in South Florida” and that consideration should be given to understanding the effects of climate change on the water budget, human water demands; changes in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes; the distribution of biota in the Everglades ecosystem, and projected sea-level rise.²

Roadmap for Success – The Administration Should:

- Prioritize funding to prepare climate change vulnerability assessments and response plans for ecosystems, including the Everglades.
- Fund additional research on ecosystem adaptation and resiliency in order to increase opportunities for the protection of America’s treasured ecosystems, including the Everglades, in the face of climate change.
- Identify and evaluate alternatives for providing mitigation or adaptation opportunities for the long-term sustainability of the Everglades. Accelerate restoration efforts that are critical for adapting to climate change impacts, including sea level rise and salt water intrusion.

² Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades restoration Progress, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. 2008. *Progress toward Restoring the Everglades: The Second Biennial Review*. Washington, D.C.: p. 2-3.

OVERARCHING BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESSFUL EVERGLADES RESTORATION

There are several cross-cutting programmatic prerequisites to successfully protecting and revitalizing America's Everglades. Without these building blocks firmly in place, it will be difficult for the Administration to effectively move forward with critical restoration projects. Overall, the Administration must make an unwavering fiscal and political commitment to Everglades restoration and to a state-federal-stakeholder partnership on which restoration depends. Specifically, the Administration should:

1. Make a significant federal investment in Everglades restoration projects

- Push for the expedient appropriation of adequate funding in FY 2011 and FY 2012 to fully fund the construction of authorized Everglades restoration projects.³
- Work with Congress to ensure a Water Resources Development Act is passed in 2010 in order to authorize Everglades restoration projects such as Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands, the C-43 Reservoir, the Broward County Water Preserve Areas and the C-111 Spreader Canal.
- Should national climate and energy legislation pass into law and include a cap and trade system for greenhouse gas emissions control, direct and make full use of revenues generated by a federally-mandated carbon market to fund ecological restoration of important natural ecosystems, including the Everglades.

2. Continue to demonstrate committed, informed, and effective leadership

- Continue to stand accountable for making Everglades restoration progress.
- Through CEQ, encourage greater coordination between the involved federal agencies, especially DOI, EPA, and Corps.
- Work with the State of Florida to uphold the terms and conditions of the President-Governor Agreement dated January 9, 2002 and the Master Agreement signed on August 13, 2009.
- Continue to encourage a strong partnership with the State of Florida to implement authorized Everglades restoration projects, including working with the relevant state agencies such as the Departments of Environmental Protection, Community Affairs, Transportation, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

3. Ensure that planning, authorization and funding frameworks support timely and comprehensive ecosystem restoration as an integrated program, rather than as a series of isolated projects.

- Adopt a project bundling approach that focuses on the planning and incremental implementation of interrelated suites of restoration projects.
- Apply the principles of adaptive management to design and modify Everglades restoration projects in response to scientific uncertainties, to changing planning conditions, and to new ecological information.

4. Elevate the role of the Department of the Interior

- Designate DOI as a co-lead federal agency for Everglades restoration and prioritize its tremendous biological expertise in restoration planning and implementation.

5. Foster More Collaborative and Inclusive Decision-Making Premised on Sound Science

- Direct the federal agencies involved in restoration to adopt a public input process that encourages more meaningful and inclusive dialogue with all affected parties about project planning.
- Ensure that federal agencies duly consider sound and credible science from all scientists, including the large body of academic and non-governmental scientists, who are studying the greater Everglades system, in their decision-making on Everglades restoration.

³ Authorized Everglades restoration projects would include Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park, Kissimmee River Restoration, Indian River Lagoon South, Picayune Strand, Site 1 Impoundment and Ten Mile Creek.