



November 9, 2018

Governor Rick Scott  
State of Florida Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Mismanagement of Public Lands and Everglades Restoration Future

Dear Governor Scott:

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) writes in strong objection to yesterday's action by the South Florida Water Management District SFWMD Governing Board to execute a new contract with Florida Crystals on public land designated for Everglades restoration. Virtually no public notice was given for a decision that will have significant implications for restoration activities for years to come.

NPCA and our 1.3 million members nationwide have long supported the planning and authorization of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir. This project will be critical in directing desperately-needed freshwater flow to Everglades National Park and the Florida Keys. As you know, stakeholders from around the state, and indeed the country, strongly support this project as absolutely vital to the health of America's Everglades. Yesterday, with less than 24 hours' notice, the Governing Board voted to execute a contract with Florida Crystals on state-owned lands slated for the construction of the EAA Reservoir without full public review of how this lease will impact the project's path forward. This action is completely contrary to the State's purported support for Everglades restoration and commitment to use state-owned lands for restoration. This action is a complete injustice to Floridians who are desperate for a solution to the toxic discharges devastating Florida's coastal communities.

Floridians are still struggling with impacts of the water crisis that dominated national news this summer. Toxic blue-green algae and red tide left scores of dead manatees, dolphins, and fish on our beaches in the height of tourism season. Meanwhile, downstream Everglades National Park and the waters of the Florida Keys are plagued with dead seagrass and depleting fisheries that will not bounce back unless and until Everglades restoration is fully implemented.

**Now is the time to focus full-force on restoration for the health of our communities, environment, and economy.** Instead, the SFWMD Governing Board maneuvered a questionable contract outside the public eye – one that locks a public resource into private industry operation for years to come. This action is at best an ill-timed management decision, and at worst a proactive obstacle to implementing Everglades restoration. Governor Scott, NPCA calls on you to direct the SFWMD Governing Board to re-vote on this contract. At a minimum, time for reasonable public review and input must be provided.

Sincerely,

*Cara Capp*

Cara Capp  
Everglades Restoration Program Manager