



House Approves Plan to Restore Everglades

Clinton Is Expected To Sign the Measure

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 — In a rare moment of solidarity, the House voted today for a \$7.8 billion plan intended to restore the Florida Everglades, a project supporters call the largest environmental renewal effort ever.

The legislation now goes to President Clinton, who is expected to sign the bill into law and set in motion a restoration plan that would take nearly four decades to complete.

By passing the measure, 312 to 2, House Republicans and Democrats set aside their partisan rancor for two hours this morning and made the Everglades bill their final vote before leaving town to campaign for the Nov. 7 elections.

The blueprint to restore the Everglades was developed by the Army Corps of Engineers. The plan is to revamp South Florida's water supply by catching and storing rainwater, then rerouting its flow into the Everglades, which stretches south of Orlando through the Florida Keys.

The federal government, which was partly responsible for damaging the Everglades, will pay \$7.8 billion, half the cost of the project, with the State of Florida paying the rest. Today's vote releases \$1.4 billion to start the project and requires that the administration request additional money from Congress every year.

"There is only one Everglades on the planet earth," said Representative Peter Deutch, a Florida Democrat, whose district encompasses Everglades National Park. "This is it."

Supporters of the project called it a feat of convergence among the unlikelyst of groups: the sugar industry, environmentalists, real estate developers and Indian tribes, all backed the final product.

The legislation also united Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, a Republican; his brother Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; Vice President Al Gore, who took a particular interest in the project; and President Clinton.

Passage of the bill came at an opportune time — by design — for Representative E. Clay Shaw Jr., a veteran House Republican from Florida who is locked in one of the

year's tightest re-election races. Over and over today, his colleagues lauded Mr. Shaw for his role in pushing the legislation.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said in a telephone interview today that this year's presidential election and the one in 1996 helped compel the local, state and federal governments to devise and move the plan.

"This state was in contention twice," Mr. Babbitt said, referring to Florida's pivotal role in the elections. "It required all of the players in the political system to look over their shoulders at the public and look beyond the classic stakeholder groups."

The Senate approved the final bill earlier this week by a voice vote. The overall water bill authorizes \$7 billion for flood control projects, environmental programs and navigational improvements, including one to deepen the harbor at the Port of New York and the Port of New Jersey.

At least one nonpartisan group, Taxpayers for Common Sense, said the approval of the Everglades plan had come at a high price, noting that the underlying bill grew fat with projects added at the last minute.

"Congress used this historic legislation to pass a historic amount of pork-barrel spending," said Steve Ellis, who works for the group.

By redirecting the flow of water into the Everglades, the project aims to restore the 12 million acres of sawgrass and swamp that make up the Everglades and reinvigorate its dying plants and animals.

Up to 68 Everglades animal and plant species, including wading birds, are fighting extinction.

In redirecting the water, the Army Corps of Engineers must also ensure an adequate supply of fresh water

for South Florida's cities and farms, a critical concern for utility companies, developers, the sugar industry and citrus farmers. Eighty percent of the collected rainwater will be used for the Everglades.

Environmentalists said the plan is so ambitious and some of the techniques so experimental that it must be closely monitored.

"We will not let them get sidetracked," Mark Van Patten, president and chief executive of the National Wildlife Federation, said of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Babbitt agreed, saying: "We got a long ways to go. It's going to be a long slog over the next 30 years."

The Everglades' undoing began in 1948, when Congress ordered the Corps to drain the South Florida swamps, the so-called river of grass, which were viewed as an impediment to urban growth.

The corps built a series of levees and canals that changed the natural flow of water into the Everglades and funneled 1.7 billion gallons of fresh water into the ocean every day. This meddled with the salinity of the water of Florida Bay and jeopardized the Everglades.

"We almost got there," Mr. Shaw said of the corps' instructions to drain the Everglades. "Thank God, we stopped it."

House OKs Everglades, Starts Recess

By JIM ABRAMS

.c The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - The House left for the campaign trail Friday after laying aside partisan animosity for a moment and passing an Everglades restoration bill that both sides hailed as a testimony to what can be achieved when they work together.

After the 312-2 vote on the Everglades bill, one of the largest environmental restoration projects ever, lawmakers quickly agreed to recess and streamed for the exits. Their departure assured there would be a sixth lame-duck session of Congress in the past three decades and left undecided tax and spending issues that have defined their differences in the coming election.

The House and the Senate, which recessed Wednesday, are scheduled to return on Nov. 14, a week after the election.

Republican House members had resisted taking a break for the election, saying they would not open themselves up to Democratic charges they were abandoning unfinished work to concentrate on politicking.

But with six of the 13 annual spending bills for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 still unsigned by the president and negotiations with the White House at a near-standstill, there was little resistance at a GOP meeting Friday morning to the 11-day respite.

The Everglades bill gave the majority party a chance to leave on a high note, presenting a legislative gift to the election battleground state of Florida and showing what Congress can accomplish when the two parties cooperate.

"Some have said Republicans can't work with Democrats to produce good policy," said Rep. Clay Shaw, R-Fla., the chief sponsor of the bill, who returns home to a competitive re-election race. The joint effort shows "we can do good things for our country and for our entire globe."

The Everglades project, part of a \$7 billion water resources package, was universally popular: Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said he was "thrilled" by acceptance of "this century's biggest and most important environmental restoration project."

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, often at odds with congressional Republicans, applauded the "landmark and bipartisan" effort.

"The Everglades have suffered too long. It's time to restore the River of Grass," he said. Environmentalists, agriculture interests and Indian tribes all support the bill.

The bill authorizes \$1.4 billion as a first installment in a 30-year, \$7.8 billion attempt to restore the natural flow in the 300 miles of swamp land, saw grass marshes and mangrove estuaries. It will involve water storage, storm water treatment areas and agriculture storage reservoirs. The overall cost is to be divided equally with the state of Florida.

Half of the Everglades, a national park, disappeared over the past half-century as a result of Army Corps of Engineers work that was ordered by Congress. The orders were to build canals, levees and pumping stations to decrease the risk of flooding and open up land to agriculture and residential development.

Every day, 1.7 billion gallons of water drains from the park into the sea.

The bill, said Mark Van Putten, president of the National Wildlife Federation, "provides a great opportunity to turn the Army Corps of Engineers from a force at war with nature to an ally in restoring it."

He said the project will bring cleaner drinking water to 6 million South Florida residents, a boon to the tourist industry and a reprieve for the Florida panther, the West Indian manatee and other endangered species in the Everglades.

The bill authorizes funds for 28 water resources projects involving the Lower Columbia River Estuary, the Puget Sound, the Illinois, Missouri and Ohio rivers and others. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said there were "absolutely essential" provisions to deepen the ports of New York and New Jersey so they can handle larger ships.

House Transportation Committee Chairman Bud Shuster, R-Pa., voiced some opposition to the final bill after the House-Senate compromise version took out some \$400 million in projects he had backed.

But Shuster said he had promises that negotiators would consider attaching those projects to the spending bills they must take up when Congress reconvenes.

The Republican leadership is not expected to send the bill to the White House until after the election, ensuring that President Clinton will not be able to hold an election-eve signing ceremony.

Two fiscal conservatives, Reps. Helen Chenoweth-Hage, R-Idaho, and Mark Sanford, R-S.C., voted against the bill.

The bill is S. 2796.

On the Net: Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

National Wildlife Federation: <http://www.nwf.org>

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REPLUMBING THE EVERGLADES

THE Everglades have been high on America's environmental agenda for decades. Famed conservationist Marjory Stoneman Douglas first warned of the unique swampland's decline a half century ago. But decisive action to save the 12-million-acre expanse has been slow in coming.

Commercial and residential development, and agricultural interests, have usually won out.

But that could be about to change. The voices of those who want to preserve this natural treasure have grown loud and diverse enough to shift the political balance. Last week the US Senate overwhelmingly agreed to devote \$7.8 billion to restoring the critical flow of fresh water into the Everglades ecosystem. The House should waste no time in passing the same measure before adjournment.

The scale of the task envisioned in this legislation is staggering. That's another reason decisionmakers have balked over the years. The plan would retool the plumbing of much of south Florida. Levees will be removed, canals rerouted, natural aquifers re-filled. The time frame is decades.

The plans were drawn, and the work will be done, by the Army Corps

of Engineers. Ironically, this is the same outfit that built the levees that cut off the Everglades wetlands from their sources of water in the late 1940s. That work, done in the name of flood control, has steadily eroded the habitat in Everglades National Park and nearby Big Cypress National Preserve and Biscayne National Park.

Not all the threats to the Everglades are specifically dealt with in the plan before Congress. Some critics of the \$7.8 billion plan suspect the emphasis will veer toward assuring more water for commercial and residential development, instead of restoring the water-starved swampland.

Other questions: Will pro-Everglades forces be able to hold off pollution-belching airport construction on the parks perimeter? Can scientists come up with ways to fend off invading nonnative species like the voracious swamp eel?

The challenges are daunting, but the prospects for saving the Everglades have never been brighter. Most important, the undertaking has strong bipartisan support. The country, and the world, are waiting to see American ingenuity and idealism prove that a man-made environmental disaster can be reversed.

THE THIN GREEN LINE

By Bruce Babbitt

I recently mounted over my desk in Washington a color photograph of what I consider perhaps the most complex and intriguing landscape in the world.

It is not one of those "Sierra Club" pictures of some precolumbian Garden of Eden, untouched by the hand of Western man. To the contrary. It is a landscape where architects and engineers have tried -- with the best of intentions -- to control and subjugate that garden to make it more productive and useful.

To do so, they dug drainage ditches, straightened out rivers, built dikes, imported exotic trees like melaleuca, Brazilian pepper and Australian pine. They even installed a long retaining wall so that heavy rainfall would not run off from the garden to flood nearby homes. But because of their hasty efforts to make over an entire landscape, I can today clearly see in the photo the extensive damage they have done to the garden. I see a deeply flawed landscape.

And an epic opportunity.

For my photograph was snapped by a satellite orbiting 300 miles above the surface of the United States. The damaged garden is the Everglades ecosystem. And the Clinton Administration has now organized a unique interagency effort under the leadership of the Corps of Engineers to restore the entire South Florida watershed.

This undertaking is, without exaggerating, the most ambitious environmental restoration project in the history of civilization. It involves 11,000 square miles of a complex ecosystem, employs hundreds of full time earth scientists, reworks 1,400 miles of diversion canals, demands many years of hard work and will require hundreds of millions of dollars to complete.

Yet scale is not the real issue. At stake is whether we can use good planning and careful science to restore equilibrium between the built environment and the natural landscape, or, in this case, between 6 million people crowded into a coastal strip right up against the most unique and fragile wetland ecosystem on the planet. Can it be done? We're starting to find out.

The origins of our restoration challenge go back more than a century. At a time when nature -- especially the sharp sawgrass wilderness of the Everglades -- was still considered something to conquer, developers and their political leaders began "draining the swamps" in the name of progress. As long as capital was scarce and settlement slow this process of eating away the Everglades merely proceeded at a gradual pace, acre by acre.

But then came World War II, economic growth, and the postwar push to provide tens of thousands of new, air conditioned homes in the comfortable climate of coastal Florida. And then, in 1947, amidst the early stages of this regional boom, came the torrential rains and back-to-back hurricanes that put most of South Florida under water. That's when the conquest of the Everglades began in

earnest: Congress authorized the Central and South Florida Flood Control District and contracted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to take care of the problem once and for all.

Of course, Congress wasn't the only powerful client involved; the Corps had to satisfy the demands of Florida's farmers, urban residents, and the environmental movement emerging throughout the nation. All at the same time. Under pressure to act quickly, it came up with a neat solution: Like Caesar in Gaul, the Corps divided the entire Everglades ecosystem into three distinct parts.

First came the farmers. In the north, on the shores of Lake Okeechobee, my satellite photo shows a checkerboard of sugar plantations. To establish a stormproof agricultural industry, the Corps continued the old tradition: drain, drain, drain until the landscape was at last free of water. The first step was to redesign Lake Okeechobee, diverting the natural overflow of 2.5 million acre-feet of water through two artificial outlets: west through the Caloosahatchee River to the Gulf of Mexico and east through the St. Lucie River to the Atlantic. It then widened and deepened the drainage canals across the farmlands and out to the Atlantic. The resulting 430,000 acres of land, with the help of considerable agricultural subsidies, make up the lucrative Florida sugar industry.

Next, the thirsty cities. Below the sugar fields, the photograph shows a series of huge, enclosed irregular polygons, like those mysterious Inca lines in the desert. These are the water conservation areas, a million acres in extent. Essentially a flattened version of mountain storage reservoirs, the vast shallow ponds were created by enclosing the landscape with dikes. The Corps designed them to store both natural rainfall and runoff from the sugar fields, helping to recharge the urban wellfields to the east, as well as providing flood protection.

Third and, in the order of priority, last, the Corps left the amputated remnants at the bottom, and in 1947 Congress turned those 1.5 million acres into Everglades National Park. In the photo the park is marked by deep shades of green and blue merging into the brackish then salty waters of Florida Bay. The Corps had completed its work -- characterized as the largest earth moving project since the Panama Canal -- in record time, satisfying all three clients and the Congress who contracted it. Temporarily, as it turned out.

Fifty years later, even from the distance of a satellite photo, huge parts of the landscape appear sick and discolored. As far back as 1964 a writer for Audubon magazine reported on the changes in the Everglades:

I found no Eden but rather a waterless hell under a blazing sun...Everywhere I saw Everglades drying up, the last drops of water evaporating from water holes, creeks and sloughs....The sawgrass was a brown and lifeless tinder, the sky was darkened by great pillars of smoke billowing from a rampaging, crackling fire. (Peter Farb, "Disaster Threatens the Everglades" Audubon Magazine, Sept.-Oct. 1965 p. 302-306)

How could the nation's best engineers have overlooked the consequences of their grand plumbing scheme? Easy. At that time the dominant vision of the natural world was scenic, not ecologic. In the era of Henry Ford, America typically visualized and managed nature as an assemblage of unrelated parts, each to be used, removed, or substituted without much regard to the others: Native trees and exotic ones were considered much the same; wetlands could be transformed into farmlands with no effect beyond the fence line; and a swamp was just acreage whether the water was six inches or six feet deep.

Today of course we know better. With the insights of modern ecological science, we have come to

understand that neither the Everglades nor any other protected landscape is an island unto itself, that every part of the ecosystem is tributary to the whole; and that diversion dams, dikes and levies in the northern part of the photo have unintended consequences for the entire watershed, especially for a biological system so finely balanced as the River of Grass.

The first unintended consequence was water pollution. Drainage waters from the sugar fields, saturated with 200 tons of phosphorous and other fertilizers each year, stimulated the growth of huge cattail thickets that spread inexorably across the entire landscape, crowding out the native sawgrass and water lily swamps.

Next, too much water gathered in the wrong places. The stacking of storage water in the conservation areas began to drown the tree islands, known as hardwood hummocks, that sustain a variety of endemic species.

Farther down, within the National Park itself, the problem was not enough water. Cut off from predictable seasonal water flows, the great flocks of birds, ibis, egrets, spoonbills, herons, began to thin out and die off as their fishing sources and breeding periods were disrupted. The population of nesting wood storks, for example, crashed from 6,000 pairs before 1947 to 200 pairs.

Even in Florida Bay, great algal blooms began to appear, and the sea grass began to die, threatening the entire food chain that supports the fisheries of South Florida.

On the other hand, one thing that has grown exponentially as a result of all the die-offs has been the most contentious litigation in the continental United States. Suit followed by countersuit has been the old-fashioned way of settling scores. So over the past three decades Florida's state and federal courts have been clogged, hearings held, accusations made, fingers pointed, attorneys well paid and in the Everglades itself... nothing accomplished.

Nothing, that is, until this Administration intervened, took money away from the courts and lawyers and plowed it back into the world's largest subtropical wetlands ecosystem, where it can actually do some good.

The Everglades restoration plan seeks to rectify the decades of biological and legal abuse by weaving the torn pieces of fabric together into one integrated hydrologic system. As ecological writer Thomas Berry puts it, we can no longer envision the landscape "as a collection of objects rather than a communion of subjects."

Fortunately, the dynamic, evolving science of landscape restoration has already given us instructive precedents that we can apply to the Everglades. Just months ago the Bureau of Reclamation gave one dramatic, large scale illustration: It released 45,000 cubic feet of water per second from Glen Canyon Dam to mimic the natural pattern of historic spring floods. This scientifically controlled flood was carried out to restore the sand bars and beaches along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. It succeeded beyond our highest expectations, and brought the river's riparian habitat back toward its natural pre-dam condition.

And in Florida, just north of the Everglades, we are learning from the restoration of the Kissimmee River Valley. The Kissimmee tributaries gather on the outskirts of Orlando, then flow (and often naturally overflow) south into Lake Okeechobee. But decades ago, the Corps of Engineers destroyed the original 106 mile meanders and wetlands by dredging a straight 52-mile channel; now they're plugging and filling it to reverse the damage and restore the timeless flow.

These precedents show a fundamental difference between the old era and the restoration era: Rather than marching blindly into the fray to carry out a rushed, cut-and-paste landscape job, they're approaching this watershed with care and foresight. In both cases, the restoration efforts were preceded by comprehensive and technologically advanced hydrological and biological studies. The studies were shared freely and compared openly with all stakeholders for criticism. This scientific review process takes time, and patience, but it ultimately lays the groundwork for lasting success.

To begin the Everglades restoration, the Corps first published a \$1.8 million reconnaissance study with six alternative plans, all of which have common features. The central, organizing concept of each alternative is to repair the severed hydrologic arteries by stitching together the landscape that was sliced in thirds by the 1947 project. That means some sugar cane farms in the agricultural area must be purchased and returned to their natural condition to facilitate the natural storage and flow of water southward. There, polluted runoff will be cycled through manmade treatment areas -- giant, ecological kidneys -- where cattails and other vegetation will soak up phosphorous before releasing waters into the Everglades.

Then, in the water conservation areas the plan will require us to lower and reconfigure the dikes that maintain the storage ponds, as well as filling in some of the drainage canals that carry precious freshwater out to Atlantic tides. Our goal is to keep more water in the system and to keep it moving south, filtering through marshes, flowing through Everglades National Park and on into Florida Bay in a seasonal pattern that more closely resembles the pre-development landscape.

Restoring the historic pattern will of course benefit the white, black and red mangroves, the scarlet milkweed, pink grass and slender goldenrod that grow in the Everglades. It can only improve the health of the 400 species of birds, 60 amphibians and reptiles, and 25 mammals that live within the River of Grass. But how will it affect the health and population of one particular species that lives outside that garden?

On the photograph above my desk the coastal cities that stretch from West Palm Beach southward to Miami show in blotches of pink and mildew colors. The population of six million residents has doubled in the past 20 years and will triple in the next 50. But the coastal cities are separated from the Everglades by what from above appears as a thin, luminous green line. Down on the ground, I can see that this line is a long earthen flood control levee that, ironically, acts as a two-way growth barrier, also holding the sprawling coastal communities back from the quiet, timeless expanses of sawgrass, tree islands and spider lily marshes to the west.

A clear line thus splits the world into two apparently unrelated parts. Develop one, goes the conventional wisdom, save the other. A classic example: In 1858, Frederick Law Olmsted designed his seminal park with an eastern border, Fifth Avenue, allowing for a metropolis of 8 million to spring up on the other side. A century later, the Army Corps of Engineers did essentially the same thing in Florida. Instead of a street, it dug the levee, which would always function like a demilitarized zone, allowing suburbs to grow right up to the line, while keeping the two worlds eternally separate.

But the Everglades and the coastal cities, it now turns out, are really not so separate after all. The reality that draws the two together is their increasing demand for water. The marshes, mangroves and manatees needs more water on one side, but so do the hot and thirsty millions on the other. What's more, the scientists have now shown us that the water must increasingly come from a shared

water system, the Biscayne Aquifer.

Most of the water consumed in Miami and the other coastal cities is pumped from shallow spongelike limestone aquifers. And the constant pumping, together with the effect of surface drainage canals, acts like a black hole, sucking groundwater down and out from the Everglades. Why pour water back into the Everglades only to watch it fall into the vortex of urban demand? Thus the cities have a lien on the future of the Everglades. The key to that future, then, is more water used more efficiently.

Not that there isn't enough to start with. South Florida gets a generous average 60 inches of rainfall each year. For millennia, those heavy drops from the sky fell, gathered and flowed as a wide, sprawling sheet of water from present day Orlando down to Florida Bay. In their haste and myopia, our predecessors simply did too good a job in draining the swamps, funneling the miles-wide sheets into six foot wide ditches, pumping the aquifer dry. To reverse that we would have to include in our "community of subjects" the urban water needs for the coastal cities, which requires broader, more comprehensive and complex participation.

And that's exactly what we did. In 1995, Governor Lawton Chiles appointed South Florida citizens to a group called the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, charging it to help select the best restoration plan through public commitment with statutes and citizens.

The commission, working with the South Florida Water Management District, has endorsed a new concept called "Chain of Lakes." As the name implies, the proposal is to construct a series of lakes on the urban side of the green line, in the western areas of Dade, Palm Beach, and Broward Counties. The idea, originally an engineering solution to water shortage, is that by storing water just outside the Everglades, the lakes would reduce groundwater seepage out of the Everglades, recharge the municipal well fields, and provide a place to store floodwater and urban runoff.

In recent months, urban planners have started to visualize an even larger role for the Chain of Lakes. Properly designed, the waters could also provide a great recreational resource for boating, water skiing and the urban activities not appropriate in a national park. And the lakes, thoughtfully designed and built, could provide still more opportunities -- housing developments could be designed with density transfers and integrated with lake lines to provide waterfront access.

The restoration process is accelerating from vision toward action. In April, Congress appropriated \$210 million to the Interior Department to be used, with matching funds from the state of Florida, for the acquisition of land in the agricultural area and to accelerate the purchase of lands for the Chain of Lakes. Support continues to be high among the citizens of Florida for a comprehensive plan, although debate continues on method of financing, such the obligation of the sugar industry to pay its fair share.

The final result is still decades away. That may seem like a long, long time. And yet Olmsted's park took 16 years and over \$14 million (roughly \$200 million today) to build. And our task is even larger in its vision. In short, we need to remember what is at stake: The Everglades watershed is not just a fragile, incomparable garden, teeming with diverse biological life and blessed with landscapes that seem to float in time and space. It is surrounded by and inextricably supports some of the largest and fastest growing cities in America.

We have seen again and again in the past how the blistering pressures of urban and suburban

growth can, if ignored or unmanaged, destroy the natural world from which they came. But by finding the balance through good biology, we have learned, and are now able, to embody the values of nature in a way that integrates and enhances both our human and natural landscapes of complexity.



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State, federal leaders praise Everglades restoration plan

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

By JENNIFER MADDOX SERGENT, Washington Correspondent

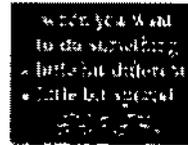
WASHINGTON — Top government leaders joined Florida's senators on Tuesday to praise legislation that will authorize the massive Everglades restoration project.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt called the restoration "the most important piece of environmental legislation that is in the process of emerging from the Congress in the last generation.

"It's opening an entirely new chapter in conservation history," Babbitt said. "It invents for the first time a brand new state-federal relationship."

The legislation gives the governor of Florida — Jeb Bush and his future successors — equal authority with the federal government in approving the course of the restoration. State officials were adamant in achieving that goal during negotiations leading up to Tuesday's press conference.

The bill, which will be finalized in a "mark-up" session in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee today, also represents a commitment from the state to the federal government that none of the restoration's 68 individual projects will be started until the state has already reserved enough water in advance to make sure



the ecosystem thrives when the projects are done.

"What we announce here today is not simply about a beautiful park, it is also about water," Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner said Tuesday. "Fundamental to protecting that park, fundamental to protecting our quality of life in South Florida, is clean, fresh, abundant water. We are finally returning the water to the Everglades."

The agreement on water use was a state concession to the federal government so the state would preserve its own water law as the guiding force over all restoration projects. Originally, the Interior Department and national environmental groups didn't trust the state to live up to its agreements on water use.

After months of negotiations and dozens of drafts, all parties expressed delight with the outcome.

"We are in a marriage which will last many, many years," said Sen. Bob Graham, D-Miami Lakes.

Said Sen. Connie Mack, R-Cape Coral: "The openness in which we approached this process has allowed us to get where we are today ... If we don't do something, we are going to lose this treasure, and that's what this is all about."

Once Congress authorizes the restoration as a whole, it will still have to authorize each of the restoration's 68 projects as they come up over the years.

"Over the next 30 to 40 years, we're going to have to work even harder to make sure those projects are the right projects," said Tom Adams, an Everglades lobbyist for the National Audubon Society. "This is a suitable starting point to begin that work. This is not the last time Congress visits this issue."

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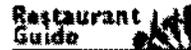
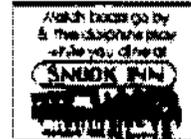
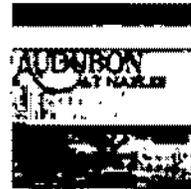
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June 27, 2000

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/501-4633

INTERIOR SECRETARY BABBITT PRAISES EVERGLADES RESTORATION ACT

Statement by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt:

"The Everglades Protection and Restoration Act represents a great step forward for the future of South Florida. It is the product of months of hard work and negotiation between the Clinton-Gore Administration, the Congress and the State of Florida.

Eight years ago we began to plan the largest landscape restoration ever undertaken. This year, with the mark-up of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 in the Senate, we have the historic opportunity to fund this project in a way that provides ample clean water for the restoration of the natural system as well as offering South Florida communities new sources of fresh water for their future and buffers against catastrophic flooding.

The Everglades Protection and Restoration Act ensures that the overarching goal of restoration of what remains of the natural system remains a primary purpose of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan or Restudy.

I would particularly like to commend Senators Bob Smith, Bob Graham and Connie Mack, Governor Jeb Bush and the whole Florida Congressional Delegation for their support of these efforts."

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Bill would authorize start of 30-year Everglades restoration plan

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

By JENNIFER MADDOX, Scripps Howard News Service

WASHINGTON — The Clinton Administration intends to send to Congress today legislation that will authorize a 30-year plan to restore the Everglades and give the go-ahead to the first series of restoration projects to start next year.

The plan will be part of the Water Resources Development Act, which is up for renewal this year. The legislation authorizes hundreds of projects across the country, such as harbor maintenance, beach restoration and river navigation.

The Everglades portion of the bill is expected to define which projects will start the restoration.

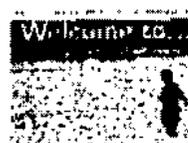
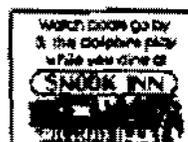
Environmentalists are hoping it will be about a dozen "phase I" projects that already have been described as necessary to create enough water storage to restore the original "sheet flow" of water through the River of Grass.

"Until we have water storage, there ain't a whole lot to restore in the Everglades," said Tom Adams of the National Audubon Society in Washington. "It's the whole concept of getting the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water right."

The legislation will define the mission of the plan as environmental restoration — a "significant departure" from the Army Corps of Engineers' original mandate in 1947 that emphasized water supply and flood control, Interior Department officials said.

The bill is needed to put into action the restoration that Vice President Al Gore presented in Washington in July. It isn't expected to change any of the projects already described in that plan.

The preliminary projects include — at the top of the list — creating a reservoir in Martin County to capture runoff



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from the St. Lucie River basin. It also will redirect surges of storm water into the Indian River Lagoon from Lake Okeechobee.

Also planned is the construction of a reservoir on 50,000 acres recently sold to the state and federal governments by the Talisman Sugar Co. The reservoir will collect agricultural runoff and reuse it for irrigation within the Everglades Agricultural Area that surrounds the southern portion of the lake.

On Monday, Interior officials announced the second-largest land purchase for restoration work since Talisman: 9,000 acres of citrus groves in the Caloosahatchee River basin for \$65.6 million.

The original plan contemplated a cost of \$120 million for at least 20,000 acres in that area before a willing seller — Barry Groves Co. — approached with what officials called ideal land in Hendry County.

The reservoirs to be created on that land will account for 20 percent of the restoration work, said Peter Umhofer, a senior analyst at the Interior Department.

"We're able to move forward and do our part" for land acquisition and water storage, Umhofer said.

Senate leaders wanted the administration's plan presented by mid-March.

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Bob Smith, R-N.H., has complained about the delays. He announced on March 31 that he would simply begin drafting his own bill.

"I am greatly disappointed that the administration cannot send us its legislation, so that we may begin the process of restoring the Florida Everglades," Smith said.

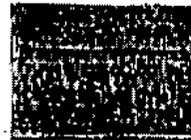
His action got praises from Gov. Jeb Bush.

David Struhs, secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection, has tried to convince lawmakers in Washington that the Everglades bill should stand alone, unhindered by disagreements that might arise on unrelated projects in the water resources bill.

There are still no plans to separate the Everglades portion, Umhofer said,

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Buyout to aid Glades costly

Report outlines complex hurdles

BY CYRIL T. ZANESKI
czaneski@herald.com

Buying the 8½ Square Mile Area for Everglades restoration will be more expensive and complicated than state and federal planners originally expected, according to a draft federal report expected to be made public on Monday.

The price for about 1,900 properties in the far southwest Miami-Dade neighborhood, which includes 514 houses and mobile homes and dozens of small farms and ranches, will climb to \$158 million — or \$45 million higher than earlier estimates, the report says.

Opposition from the area's residents and

**The price
for about
1,900
properties
will climb
to \$158
million.**

possible conflicts with Clinton administration initiatives to protect communities of poor and minority residents would also further delay a long-stalled project for restoring natural flows of water to the eastern edges of Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, the report says.

Three-quarters of the area's estimated population of 850 full-time residents are Hispanic, and a substantial number are low-income farm workers, the report says. Moving these residents, as well as other property owners with farms or weekend retreats, would result in a "loss of the community and unique Hispanic culture" of the area, the report says.

The earliest the buyout could be completed is 2004 — one year after water is supposed to begin flowing under a directive aimed at protecting the park's endangered species, the report says.

The three-volume report was prepared by HDR Engineering of Fort Lauderdale for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps ordered the report to help South Florida's water managers choose a strategy for ending a long impasse over how to put

PLEASE SEE GLADES, 8B

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Report: Land buyout costly

EVERGLADES, FROM IB

more water into the River of Grass without facing liability for adding to the flood woes of the already-soggy neighborhood at the river's edge.

In the works since last summer, the report attempts to provide in-depth analyses of nine alternatives for protecting property. The options range from building a \$32 million levee and canal to protect the area from the Everglades water flow to the buyout of all properties for \$158 million.

The South Florida Water Management District's Governing Board will select one of the alternatives and pay at least 25 percent of the costs, with the rest coming from some combination of federal and county governments. The board has scheduled a workshop for 1 p.m. May 1 at the Miami-Dade Agricultural Extension Service office, 18710 SW 288th St. in Homestead.

The draft report is expected to be posted on the Internet late Monday afternoon at the Web site of the Corps' Jacksonville district, www.saf.n-sacc.army.mil.

LINCHPIN FOR EFFORTS

The 8½ Square Mile Area is a linchpin in efforts by the federal and state governments to restore the southern Everglades and eastern Florida Bay, which have been severely damaged by flood-control projects that deprived wetlands and wildlife

of life-giving water for the sake of residential development and agriculture.

The future of the area has been the focus of heated debate for more than two decades. The water district board voted unanimously in November 1998 to buy the entire area for \$113 million, but backed down later in the face of legal challenges.

The poorly named 8½ Square Mile Area actually sprawls over about 10 square miles west of levees designed to separate wetlands from farmland in South Miami-Dade. The neighborhood is about 20 miles southwest of Miami and six miles north of Homestead at the border of the expansion area of Everglades National Park.

The neighborhood is actually not in the Everglades, but on higher, drier prairies known as the Rocky Glades, which essentially are riverbanks for the Everglades.

The problem for the federal government is that it cannot put large amounts of water back into the Everglades without periodically flooding the 8½ Square Mile Area, most of which is undeveloped. About 30 percent of the area includes farms, ranches and groves.

The flooding from the Everglades would be minimal, a matter of elevated ground-water levels that can cause puddles to linger in farmland and backyards, federal officials say. But the area is also prone to se-

rious flooding during storms because it is beyond the regional flood-control system.

In 1989, Congress authorized a federal project for restoring natural flows of water into the eastern Everglades. As part of that plan, Congress directed the Army Corps to guarantee that flooding would not get worse in the 8½ Square Mile Area.

The Corps' plan would build a levee-and-canal system around the western and northern boundaries and install two water-pumping stations to direct water away from the neighborhood. The proposal would not protect the properties from flooding, but merely prevent conditions from getting worse as more water flows into the park.

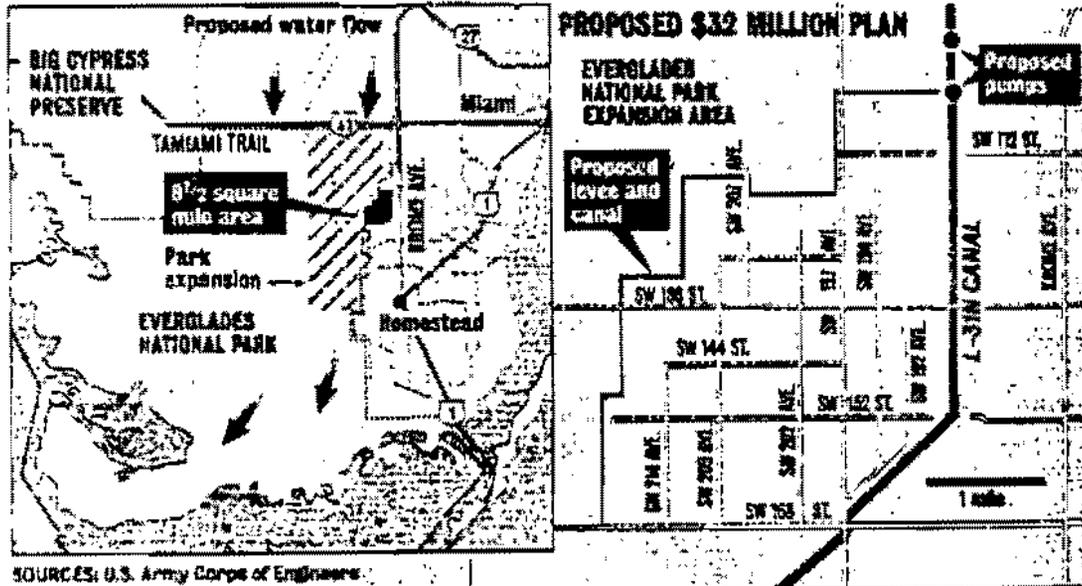
COALITION CONCERNS

A broad coalition of conservation groups and two federal agencies, the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, oppose the Corps' plan. They expressed concerns that residents would apply political pressure to force government agencies to use the canal and pumps to provide full flood protection for their neighborhood. The drawdown would damage habitat in the national park and spur suburban development in the neighborhood, they say.

The Corps' report plays down the potential for development in the area. It also said that the cost of improving

Renewed battle over the 8 1/2 Square Mile Area

South Florida water managers are expected to decide later this spring how to get water to parched marshes in Everglades National Park without adding to flooding problems in the 8 1/2 Square Mile Area. Options range from building a \$32 million levee and canal around the western edge of the neighborhood to buying all 1,900 properties at a cost of \$158 million to providing full flood protection at a cost of \$202 million, according to a draft federal report on the issue.



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JERE WARREN/HERALD STAFF

roads and drainage in the neighborhood — which would be borne by Miami-Dade taxpayers — would be \$50 million. That estimate is a third of what the county's planners estimated previously.

The county is expected to prepare a detailed analysis of the Corps' report.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has already prepared its own analysis. In a 150-page draft that has yet to be made public, the department takes issue with the report's conclusions and supports a full buyout of the 8 1/2 Square Mile Area as the best option for providing

a full restoration of wetlands in Everglades National Park and expansion of habitat for two endangered birds, snail kites and wood storks.

The department says it could also support another \$158 million alternative that would allow residents to stay in the area if they agreed to sell easements to the state and federal government that would cover both during periodic flooding.

Another option that the department would back with less enthusiasm is an \$86 million compromise under which the government would buy the westernmost two-thirds of the

neighborhood while providing full flood protection for remaining properties.

While the buyout option is more expensive up front than the Corps' plan, the agencies say that costs for the levee-canal system would rise because the Corps would have to provide compensation for expected damage to the park's wetlands and habitat, according to the department report, which is signed by Dick Ring, the superintendent of Everglades National Park, and Steve Forsythe, the state supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The agencies have not determined the cost of such damages.

Babbitt: Swap deserves study

Federal officials hear from all sides of Everglades debate

By ERIC STAATS
Staff Writer

A U.S. Senate committee put a plan to rework Everglades water flows under its microscope Friday — and got an eyeful.

The four-hour hearing, rare for being held outside Washington, was part of an annual meeting of Everglades boosters at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club. The meeting ends Sunday.

It put three key members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works across the hearing-room table from leaders of important factions of the debate over the \$7.8-billion plan aimed at ensuring enough water for growing cities, farms and the environment.

The hearing began what will be months of deliberations as Congress weighs the plan, advertised as a 50-50 partnership with Florida, and how to pay the federal share of it.

Everglades advocates are pushing hard for Congress to approve the plan in 2000.

Committee Chairman Bob Smith, R-N.H., promised a hard look at the plan but sought to reassure nervous environmental advocates that he would not be a stumbling block for the restoration plan.

His predecessor as committee chairman, the late Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., was regarded as a friend to environmental causes and a known quantity compared to Smith.

"You will not find daylight between John Chafee and Bob Smith on support for the Everglades," Smith said to applause.

Florida Sen. Bob Graham, D-Miami Lakes, and Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, also attended the hearing.

The group took a helicopter tour of Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge on the eastern edge of the Everglades before traveling to Naples for the hearing.

Testimony ran the gamut from technical recommendations about the course of the restoration plan to poetic recitations about the beauty of the Everglades and its value as a national treasure equal to the Grand Canyon or the Mississippi River.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner asked committee members to improve water quality protections in the plan, authorize more than \$1 billion worth of core Everglades projects and find a long-term funding source for the project that is proposed to be built over the next two decades.

"There is no other River of Grass, and there will be no other chance," Browner said. "Now is the time to act."

U.S. Sugar Corp. Senior Vice President Malcolm "Bubba" Wade urged a more methodical approach to address farmers' worries about what he said is a water supply plan based on untested science.

"There is a lot more work to be done," Wade said.

Micosukee Tribe of Indians attorney Dexter Lehtinen, who has humiliated some environmental advocates with lawsuits over parts of Everglades restoration, told senators the effort was bogged down in "bureaucratic arrogance and incompetence."

He said the only way to save the Everglades is for public officials to take a politically incorrect stand against the plan pending in Congress.

On a day of lots of hearing-room talk about the Everglades, Browner said she took heart in the fact that the talk was happening on the edge of the Everglades rather than in the halls of the Capitol.

"I'm incredibly encouraged by that," she said.



U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, left, shares a lighter moment Friday with David Guggenheim, president of The Conservancy of Southwest Florida. Earlier, Babbitt spoke at the Everglades Coalition Conference being held at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club. Cameron Gillie/Staff

The Collier family has proposed exchanging its Big Cypress mineral rights for development rights at Homestead air base.

By ERIC STAATS
Staff Writer

The Collier family's proposal to swap mineral rights on environmental lands for the right to develop an abandoned air base in Homestead has Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's attention, he said Friday in Naples.

The fate of Homestead Air Reserve Base in southeastern Dade County has become a high-pitched fight just as the push for Everglades funding heads to the national stage.

Business interests are pushing for a commercial airport at the Homestead site, but environmental advocates contend an airport doesn't belong in the spot between Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park.

The Colliers have proposed turning the air base into homes, golf courses, hotels and office and retail space.

In exchange, the family would give up its rights to drill for oil in parts of the Big Cypress National Preserve and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Collier County.

"I think it bears careful consideration and scrutiny," Babbitt said Friday while standing on the beachfront lawn at the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club after an address to the Everglades Coalition, a group of some 40 organizations working to preserve the Everglades.

Members of the group gave Babbitt his loudest applause when he said he remains "intensely concerned" about the impact that the commercial airport proposal would have on the two national parks.

He said "better alternatives" exist.

Environmental groups have focused on noise and polluted rainwater runoff, but a preliminary environmental study by the Army and Federal Aviation Administration has concluded there is little reason to worry about the commercial airport plan.

Babbitt demurred when reporters asked whether he has been negotiating with Collier interests about their plan, saying it was not his role to negotiate.

Collier family representative Roy Cawley, who has pushed the swap, said that if a deal is to be made, it should happen before the 2000 elections.

"I think they find it very interesting," Cawley said of Interior Department officials.

A similar swap in 1996 added 108,000 acres of Collier County wilderness to the Big Cypress preserve and panther refuge and created the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

That land and a \$35 million donation to a trust for American Indian education bought the Colliers two federal parcels in Phoenix where they are building an office, retail and hotel complex.

One of the company's drilling permits is up for public review and could be issued within 90 days, Cawley said.

A supporter of the airport plan accused Babbitt of playing to his Everglades Coalition audience with his remarks about the Collier proposal.

Opposition to the airport plan ignores the wishes of South Dade County residents who are still reeling economically from Hurricane Andrew in 1992, said Tom Kirby, executive director of the Dade County Farm Bureau.

Homestead boosters have pinned their hopes for economic revitalization on the airport plan.

"The community has spoken and spoken loudly and clearly," Kirby said.

Miccosukees strike deal to build in Glades

Housing plan for reservation still needs approval from Congress

By CYRIL T. ZANECKI
Herald Staff Writer

The Miccosukees and the Department of the Interior have struck a deal that would end their long feud over the tribe's plan to expand its housing in Everglades National Park.

The agreement, which must be approved by Congress and signed by President Clinton, will establish a permanent 680-acre Miccosukee reservation along a five-mile stretch of the Tamiami Trail.

In return, the tribe would set aside easements to let flowing water and migrating wildlife pass through the proposed housing development. The tribe would also agree to protect water quality, prohibit gaming on the reservation and restrict the height of buildings in the park to five stories.

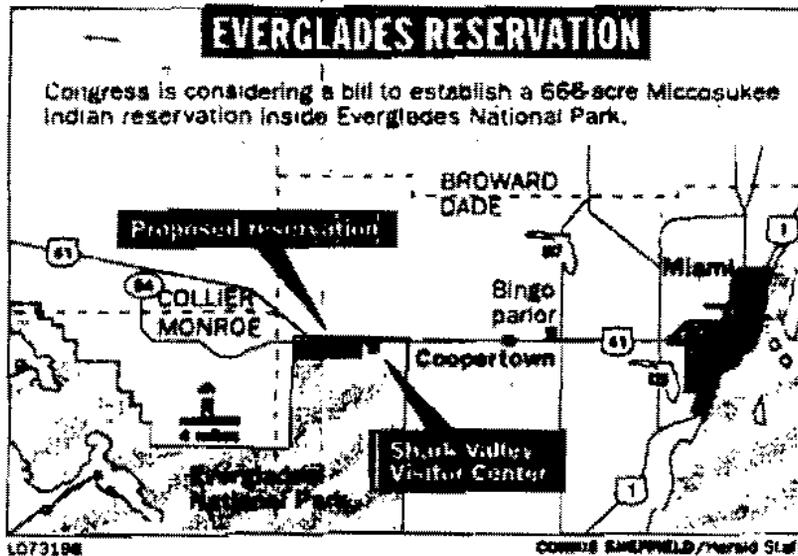
"This legislation allows every-

one to come out a winner," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who oversees the National Park Service.

But a big question remains. Will the deal satisfy Gov. Lawton Chiles and some national conservation organizations? They've been opposed to any plan to cut away a piece of the national park and worried about the impact of tribal development on the planned restoration of the Everglades.

"I just don't understand how you can increase the level of water flowing through the central part of the Everglades and agree to develop it at the same time," the governor's top environmental policy advisor, Estus Whitfield, said. "Twenty or 30 years from now, there's going to be a Miccosukee city strung along the Tamiami Trail."

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Edward Coben, an Interior Department attorney, said the agreement will guarantee the flow of water through the reservation through approximately 2,100 linear feet — flow ways whose locations will be determined by the Park Service before the bill is considered by the U.S. House and Senate in September.

"We think we found the right balance between what the tribe needs and what the park needs to fulfill its obligations toward the resource," Coben said.

The Indians have been living in the central Everglades since the early 19th Century when the Army drove them into the marshes. The Miccosukees have resisted any efforts by the government to move them to reservations elsewhere.

The Miccosukees and the Park Service have been battling in federal court since 1993 over the tribe's plan for building 65 new houses at the northern edge of Everglades National Park.

The tribe has about 100 houses, schools, tourist attractions and administration buildings in a 333-acre strip along the Tamiami Trail. The Miccosukees were given the right to live there after the federal government recognized the tribe in 1962.

But the Park Service considers the strip "a permit area" where the tribe's development plans are subject to federal approval. After a long court battle, for example, the service agreed to let the tribe build houses but insisted on a pattern of development that the tribe opposed.

Frustrated by their dealings with the Park Service, the tribe went to Congress for relief. The new agreement between Interior and the Miccosukees was included in a bill that was approved Wednesday by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Similar legislation is being considered by the House of Representatives.

The Miccosukee housing issue has split conservation groups. All support the Indians' right to live in the Everglades and praise the tribe for its efforts to protect the River of Grass. However, a few of the national groups are worried about the potential for a Miccosukee deal to weaken protections for national parks elsewhere.

"This is a very tricky issue — taking land out of a national park and giving it to a nonfederal entity to manage," said Tom Adams, director of government relations for the National Audubon Society. "While we are very sympathetic to what they're trying to do for the Miccosukees, we're very uncomfortable with what that might mean elsewhere."

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Immediate Release: February 25, 1999

Contact: Paul Bledsoe or
Stephanie Hanna (202) 208-6416

Babbitt Announces Plans to Create Scientific Panel to Guide Everglades Restoration; Leading Scientists Endorse Approach

Secretary Bruce Babbitt, representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers, and three leading scientists, Stuart L. Pimm, Gordon Orians, and Peter Raven, met today to discuss a letter from the scientists regarding further outside scientific input into the plan for Everglades restoration.

After a constructive dialogue, the scientists agreed with the Secretary's call for an on-going, independent scientific review panel to provide advice on the implementation of the Everglades Restudy.

"I am deeply gratified that this distinguished group of scientists will be helping us ensure that the best available science will continue to be used as Everglades restoration proceeds," Secretary Babbitt said. "The sheer scale of this restoration demands that we take full advantage of the range of talent our nation has to offer."

Following the meeting, the Interior Department and the Army Corps released a document, endorsed by the scientists, describing the approach to establishing a Science Advisory and Review Panel. The panel will be composed of scientists representing a broad range of expertise and will be named in the near future by Secretary Babbitt, under his authority as Chairman of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.

The Secretary, who has worked over the last several months with the Everglades Task Force on developing such a panel, plans to seek recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences, Federal and state agencies, and others regarding its composition.

"We need an on-going, independent group of advisors. This review panel provides it and we are absolutely delighted," said Stuart L. Pimm, of the University of Tennessee, also speaking on behalf of the other scientists attending the meeting.

"We are pleased with the outcome of today's meeting. The Restudy Plan was developed through an inclusive process that involved scores of scientists. We welcome additional input from the independent scientific review panel. This process will help us improve the plan as we begin implementation," said Michael Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, who also attended the meeting.

"This panel will add to our already strong dedication to good science in this undertaking," said Patricia J. Beneke, Assistant Interior Secretary for Water and Science. "Secretary Babbitt's mantra has always been sound science."

The Secretary's proposal as agreed to by the scientists follows:

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 1999

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

**TALISMAN LAND EXCHANGE FINAL AND SIGNED BY INTERIOR SECRETARY BABBITT
AND FLORIDA GOVERNOR BUSH**
Water Storage to Make Clean Water Available to Everglades During Dry Periods

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today joined Governor Jeb Bush of Florida in signing the final agreement for the landmark Talisman land exchange to benefit the restoration of the Everglades.

Today's agreement and related transactions involve the purchase or exchange of about 95,000 acres of land owned by six sugar producing companies in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), south of Lake Okeechobee. The complex agreement marks the culmination of more than 16 months of negotiations.

As a result of these transactions, the South Florida Water Management District, with funding from federal and state governments, will take title to over 63,000 acres. Approximately 11,700 of this acreage will be available to the District to construct natural storm water treatment areas to filter phosphorus from water flowing off sugar cane fields in the EAA before the water reaches the Everglades ecosystem.

More than 51,000 acres will be available for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin building in 2005 a vast water storage reservoir which will accumulate overflow water from Lake Okeechobee in the wet season for release to the Everglades during the dry season. The Corps is scheduled to complete this part of the restoration program in 2009.

"As the Everglades ecosystem restoration project is developed, today's exchange will go a long way toward delivering water at the right time, in the right amount and of sufficient quality to nourish and restore the network of national parks, refuges and conservation areas that are today suffering a slow death from starvation and pollution," Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt said.

"This is a wonderful example of how an effective state-federal partnership, working with private landowners, can achieve results for conservation," Governor Jeb Bush said. "The proposed reservoir is the lynchpin of Everglades restoration. Together with Secretary Babbitt and the Congress I will do all I can to ensure that construction of the reservoir begins on schedule."

(more)

The agreements were reached among representatives of the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, State of Florida, South Florida Water Management District, The Nature Conservancy, St. Joe Company, Knight Holdings Ltd., Woerner South Inc., and a coalition of sugar producers composed of Florida Crystals Corp., U.S. Sugar Corp., and the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative.

In its Everglades "Restudy" the Corps of Engineers has identified the need for storage throughout the ecosystem, but storage in the EAA is one of the highest priorities of the restoration effort, a vital component of the Administration's \$1.5 billion plan to restore the Everglades ecosystem.

Under the terms of the agreement, sugar producers can continue farming most of the District's new land until March 31, 2005. After that time, the lands can be leased for agricultural purposes until the Corps needs them for restoration purposes. Money derived from these leases will be set aside in a fund dedicated for future purchases of conservation lands from willing sellers.

"The Talisman exchange is a conservation legacy to future generations," Secretary Babbitt said. "It is a testimony to cooperation over conflict and to the importance of partnerships in weaving together the framework to carry out the most ambitious environmental restoration project ever attempted."

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NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 6, 2000

Stephanie Hanna (O) 202/208-6416

(Cong. Shaw) Donna Boyer (O) 202/225-3026

MELALEUCA RESEARCH FACILITY AND EAST COAST BUFFER LANDS TO BE FUNDED IN FINAL FARM BILL EXPENDITURES

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Congressman Clay Shaw announced today that a portion of the final expenditures from the 1996 Farm Bill will be used to construct a melaleuca quarantine facility in Davie, Florida, near Fort Lauderdale.

In recent years there have been promising research projects involving the eradication of this destructive invasive plant species in the Florida Everglades ecosystem using biological control agents. Melaleuca, left unchecked, propagates very quickly and displaces native plant and wildlife species, drying up wetlands, creating fire hazard and threatening the stability of the Everglades. Lack of quarantine space for testing biological control agents has impeded research and testing.

"Invasive plant and animal species are a great threat to the future health of the Everglades ecosystem and melaleuca is a particularly bad actor," Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt said. "We have unsuccessfully sought sources of funding for a melaleuca quarantine facility for several Congressional budget cycles. Now I believe it is a fitting to designate some of the last of the Farm Bill funds for this important and useful purpose."

"The construction of this quarantine facility is invaluable to the health and future of the Everglades," said Congressman Clay Shaw. "Currently, melaleuca poses a serious threat to the Everglades. It destroys the unique system of marshes, rivers and sloughs that make the Everglades a national treasure. I am thankful to Secretary Babbitt and the Department of the Interior for working with me to make the construction of this important facility happen."

In the agreement, the Department of the Interior will provide \$6.2 million to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for construction of the facility. When construction is completed, the facility will be run by the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture at the University of Florida's Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Davie.

Another of the final land acquisition projects funded by the 1996 Farm Bill will include adding to an existing joint agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the Department of the Interior to acquire 1,700-2,250 acres along the East Coast Buffer of the Florida Everglades. These buffer land acquisitions are considered critical to the restoration of

(more)

one of America's greatest natural resources and is an important component of the Administration's comprehensive plan to restore the Florida Everglades ecosystem.

"The restoration of the Everglades ecosystem depends plentiful supplies of clean water," Secretary Babbitt said. "Acquiring lands in the East Coast Buffer greatly increases our chances of meeting this goal."

The East Coast Buffer plan is a series of marshes and reservoirs dedicated to receiving excess water now discharged into the sea. The East Coast Buffer reduces seepage lost from the Everglades, enhances wetlands habitat, provides stormwater storage and recharges aquifers.

To assist in this effort, the Department of the Interior will provide \$13.9 million to the South Florida Water Management District from funds appropriated to the Department in the 1996 Farm bill. The District plans to equally match these funds for a total expenditure of \$27.8 million. As required under the 1996 Farm bill, the Department of the Interior has spent \$200 million to assist the State of Florida in acquiring nearly 100,000 acres in South Florida of particular importance to the restoration of the Everglades ecosystem.

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"Restoring the Fountain of Youth"
Remarks of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt before the Everglades Coalition
Naples, Florida on January 7, 2000

I am pleased to be with you once again to report progress with our great task of restoring the Everglades. The Everglades Coalition has consistently been a powerful force in setting directions and mobilizing public support for restoration. You are leading the way.

I especially want to recognize and thank your chairman, David Guggenheim, for his leadership.

My Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Patricia Beneke, will soon be leaving the Interior Department to return to private life. Patty has chaired the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force with great skill and insight, and with the patience and goodwill needed to bring harmony out of such a highly motivated and diverse group. She will be missed, and we are all most grateful for her outstanding public service.

Yet the stars are falling into alignment, for Patty's successor is a natural for the job. In fact she is here today, and I hardly need to introduce her, for she is known to all of you as a former Florida resident and Dean of the University of Miami Law School. Mary Doyle came to Washington as Counselor to the Secretary at the very moment of transition, and I am pleased to announce her appointment, beginning today, as chair of the South Florida Ecosystem Task Force.

The year ahead, 2000, is a watershed where our decisions and renewed commitment toward common goals must converge. After months and years of steady progress, scientific study and assessment, we are now at the threshold of a momentous decision: Whether, and how, to provide the financing for a twenty year program of comprehensive restoration. That decision will be made in Washington by the Congress, and in Tallahassee by the Florida Legislature. But their deliberations will be heavily influenced by public opinion.

Since I share your appreciation for the unique beauty and ecological importance of this landscape, and since I share the passion of Floridians for the future of this great state, I believe the right decisions will be made. But it is not inevitable. Your leadership, and our mutual commitment to press the case for comprehensive restoration, are crucial to Florida's future.

Before I speak about that future, and the debates that will surely come with it, look back with me at the tricky passes we have crossed together over the last decade:

In 1992 the Everglades itself was bogged down in the muck of litigation over phosphorous; the manmade runoff that polluted and ate away at the fields of sawgrass in the timeless flow of the River of Grass. With Governor Chiles and the Florida Legislature, we broke the impasse, settled the litigation and enacted the Everglades Forever Act. Even as I speak, out there to the northeast,

the storm water treatment areas created below the Everglades Agricultural Area, are functioning effectively, absorbing phosphorous like a set of giant, landscape kidneys.

When we began, the watery landscape of South Florida was a collection of disjointed, dysfunctional parts, severed from one another by decades of ill conceived attempts at flood control and inappropriate development. But bit by bit, over the past seven years, we have worked with the State and the South Florida Water Management District to acquire half a million acres of land -- including Talisman and other sugar holdings in the Everglades Agricultural Area -- in order to store water, integrate private inholdings in the East Everglades, create buffer zones and protect sensitive lands like the Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuges. Notably, we have secured all the funds to complete acquisitions within Everglades National Park.

Then we extended this principle further: beyond mere land to the slow moving water which infuses it. In 1994 the Corps of Engineers was authorized and funded to embark on a Resudy of how best to reconnect the severed hydraulic arteries of the whole system and to provide additional water both for the Everglades itself and for the increasing demands of the growing South Florida cities. Last July the Corps met its own very ambitious work schedule by presenting the Comprehensive Plan to the U.S. Congress. We were extremely pleased that this plan includes assurances to secure the necessary water for Everglades National Park and Biscayne Bay.

We have also completed one of the nation's largest Multi-Species Recovery Plans, addressing recovery for the 68 federally listed threatened and endangered species in the entire South Florida ecosystem. Our efforts are grounded in innovative use of the best science, and I am pleased that Congress has provided funds to establish a science review panel under the National Research Council to oversee our multiagency efforts.

Most important for the work still ahead, we have, over seven years, established an effective partnership between State and Federal agencies now recognized by statute as the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. That partnership rests on equal footing, with each side splitting the costs 50-50. At the State level, the Governor's Commission has provided a parallel process for stakeholders to work on a comprehensive approach to growth issues in South Florida, and we look forward to working with the newly appointed members.

We should all take pride and confidence from the view behind us; let us now turn to the rugged terrain ahead.

We must continue to work on necessary land acquisition, and we must make the case to both Congress and the Florida Legislature to continue their support for these programs. Land use decisions will have a profound effect on our ability to carry out our long term restoration goals. I would like to call attention to two specific issues of great importance to our future.

Last week the Air Force released a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for public comment as part of its process to dispose of Homestead Air Force Base. As you all know, the Base lies squarely between Biscayne National Park and the Everglades. The Interior Department feels development of a commercial airport could seriously degrade both of these national parks, and remains deeply concerned over its potential adverse impacts to the surrounding pristine landscape. And we urge the parties to give careful consideration to other alternatives that lead to better development and more jobs at less environmental cost.

Second, the 8 1/2 square mile area continues to frustrate plans to restore natural water flows to Shark River Slough and the East Everglades. This area, perched in a natural flow-way on the 'wrong' side of the protective levee, should never have been developed. That is not the fault of the residents, but of the government. But that is no reason for us to compound the mistake by spending hundreds of millions of dollars on flood protection measures that will not solve the problem.

We must instead take action so that the water can flow as naturally and cleanly as possible into Northeast Shark Slough and the habitat can be restored. We fully support the Water Management District's willing seller acquisition program, and anxiously await the pending NEPA review of additional options available to us. These options include: offering voluntary buyouts of both undeveloped and developed property, or providing life estates (or the equivalent) to residents who want to stay on and who are prepared to cope with living on the wet side of the existing levee.

Our major task for the coming year will of course be obtaining approval of the Restudy and long term financing for its implementation. The major policy question will be "assurances," or, simply put, defining how additional water that is developed and conserved will be allocated between restoring the natural hydrology of the Everglades, and augmenting water supplies for the communities of South Florida.

Interior Subcommittee chair Ralph Regula and Senator Bob Graham have both put us on notice that this issue must be addressed in the coming year, and history bears witness to the importance of their concerns. Throughout the history of Florida (and indeed of our entire country), water development projects, whether for navigation, flood control, power, agriculture or irrigation, have too often starved the natural systems which produce pure water and carry out priceless environmental services, not to mention the beauty of our natural world.

That means that Federal legislation authorizing and financing the Comprehensive Restoration Plan must explicitly ensure that the natural system benefits are achieved in a timely manner and maintained forever. These assurances must address the proper quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water for the natural system, even in times of stress on the water system. Once restored, these assurances must guarantee that never again will we sacrifice the state's rich, wild, natural character.

We have come, at the end, back to where I started. Now is the time to put the next twenty years in place. Your Governor, Jeb Bush, has demonstrated his commitment to Everglades restoration, and I have enjoyed a close working relationship with both him and his staff. Our Administration remains committed to using our final year to help in every way possible. The Florida delegation continues to prove itself united and effective in its bipartisan support in the Congress. The budget restraints are easing ever so slightly, economic growth in Florida remains vibrant, and there is every reason to expect that we should be able to gain approval and financing from both the Congress and the Florida Legislature in the course of this year.

To say why that will happen, why Florida and the nation are united so firmly behind the Everglades, we must look not to abstract charts, financing proposals, or the whole complex of policies. We must look into the nature of restoration itself.

And that takes me back almost five centuries ago, just north of here, when Don Juan Ponce de Leon tried to establish the first European colony upon the shores of a land he had discovered and christened "Pascua Florida." He had coasted almost the entire island (as it was first thought), navigating down the east coast from the mouth of the St. John's River, to Cape Kennedy and Biscayne Bay, around the Florida Keys and the Tortugas and up past Naples to Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay

Like most Spanish *conquistadores*, Ponce de Leon was motivated by "gold, glory and God." Yet he also sought an elusive "fountain of youth." Scholars dispute what this meant to him. Some say he believed in legendary waters which, if drunk or bathed in, kept one forever young. Others argue that, when bumped from titled office in Puerto Rico, he felt his good name had been damaged and so sought a political rebirth with new honors, not a physical rebirth with wonder water. And revisionist historians claim the pragmatist, knowing the requirements for a permanent colony, simply led his troops in search of a freshwater spring.

In any case, for whatever reasons, and by whatever name, Ponce de Leon died without ever discovering his fountain of youth. But we have. We have rediscovered a magnificent, slow-flowing fountain so vast that it can create and modify its own weather systems, so powerful it filters and purifies rainwater runoff, so refreshing it can evaporate up and shower down the same pure water again and again in one day. It is a fountain that replenishes and sustains all plant and animal life. A fountain so complex only the Creator could have designed it. So valuable we almost destroyed it. So beautiful it has united us here today to restore it forever.

If we succeed in our efforts, the magic in water will heal not only mankind, but the whole of creation; it will keep the landscape itself in a perpetual state of renewal, of youth, of wonder. It will baptize us, surprise us, recharge our spirits. It will flow through our fountain - our River of Grass -- from which hope springs eternal.

Thank you.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 23, 1999

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NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES ANNOUNCES EVERGLADES SCIENCE REVIEW PANEL

INTERIOR SECRETARY BABBITT COMMENDS EFFORT

Washington, DC—The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences announced today the membership of the Committee on Restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. The 16-member committee will serve as an advisory panel to review and advise on scientific matters related to implementation of the Central and Southern Florida Comprehensive Review Study (Restudy) and the restoration of the South Florida Ecosystem.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, Chair of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force said "I am very pleased that the Everglades restoration effort will have the benefit of these distinguished scientists. This committee will help ensure that the best possible science leads the way in our efforts to restore the Everglades. The restoration of the South Florida Ecosystem is a major goal of the Clinton-Gore Administration and high quality, credible science must guide our efforts. I welcome these experts to the greater partnership involved with Everglades restoration."

The Task Force earlier this year endorsed the establishment of an on-going outside scientific review panel to ensure effective adaptive management for South Florida ecosystem restoration. All Task Force members agreed that an independent scientific review panel is needed to provide advice on the implementation of the Everglades effort. Secretary Babbitt made the proposal to the National Academy to choose the composition of the committee.

The Committee is composed of scientists representing a broad range of expertise including biology, ecology, toxicology, hydrology, agronomy, economics and other disciplinary backgrounds necessary to evaluate the full range of scientific issues associated with implementation of the Restudy and the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem.

"Restoration efforts are dependent on good science. With a restoration effort as massive as the Everglades, science must drive our policy decisions. However, people must have confidence in the science itself, which is why the work of the panel is so important," Babbitt said.

(more)

South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Science Advisory and Review Panel

Sound science has served as the basis for restoration of the South Florida ecosystem since 1992 when Congress first approved the Central and South Florida Restudy. The comprehensive Restudy plan was developed by an interdisciplinary team of scientists with extensive research and management experience in the South Florida ecosystem. Applying the best science through an adaptive management process will be critical as the conceptual Restudy plan moves to the implementation phase. In this regard, independent peer review is an integral part of the restoration process.

The Science Advisory and Review Panel (SARP) will be appointed by and provide independent scientific advice to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, chaired by the Secretary of the Interior. To help ensure the success of the adaptive management process, the SARP will, at the request of the Task Force, review the science associated with the South Florida ecosystem restoration effort including the implementation of the Restudy plan on an ongoing basis. Since the Restudy is the central component of the South Florida ecosystem restoration, the SARP will take into account the broad objectives of the Restudy as defined in the Water Resources Development Act of 1996:

The Secretary [of the Army] shall develop, as expeditiously as practicable, a proposed comprehensive plan for the purpose of restoring, preserving, and protecting the South Florida ecosystem. The comprehensive plan shall provide for the protection of water quality in, and the reduction of the loss of fresh water from, the Everglades. The comprehensive plan shall include such features as are necessary to provide for the water-related needs of the region, including flood control, the enhancement of water supplies, and other objectives served by the Central and Southern Florida Project. (Public Law 104-303, October 12, 1996)

The SARP will be composed of scientists representing a broad range of expertise including biology, ecology, toxicology, hydrology, agronomy, economics, and other disciplinary backgrounds necessary to evaluate the full range of scientific issues associated with implementation of the Restudy and the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem.

Members of the SARP will be individuals who are not personally involved in South Florida research and monitoring activities. Members will be expected to serve three to four years, rotating off the Panel at intervals that ensure sufficient continuity of activities.

The SARP will be a key element of the adaptive management process. The restoration of a large and complex ecosystem such as that in South Florida is a dynamic process that is continually influenced by the results of research and monitoring activities. The Science Coordination Team assists the Task Force by managing the broad range of scientific activities being undertaken by university and federal, state, tribal, and local governments. The SARP will evaluate the effectiveness of this complex scientific effort and ensure that the restoration of the

South Florida ecosystem is based on the highest quality scientific standards.

Beyond its responsibilities for providing broad scientific review during the implementation of the Restudy, the SARP may periodically undertake special reviews or provide science advice on future directions of the program at the request of the Task Force. This may include evaluating the quality of specific research, modeling, and monitoring activities, as well as providing guidance on the significance of research results and their implications for management and restoration of the ecosystem. In addition, the panel may make recommendations to the Chair of the Task Force regarding areas of review it believes to be important. Also, the SARP may be asked to identify individuals who might participate in peer review and advisory activities in specialized subject areas.

Babbitt signs \$46 million glades deal

By Robert P. King
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt signed a \$46 million agreement Thursday that finally delivers on the federal government's promise to help buy land for the Everglades cleanup.

The money includes \$20 million for 2,562 acres that the South Florida Water Management District bought just west of Wellington, plus \$26 million for 2,376 acres that remain to be bought.

The Army Corps of Engineers eventually will turn the land into a marsh to filter pollution from drainage flowing into the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Federal officials pledged to seek the money during negotiations behind the state's 1994 Everglades cleanup plan, but Congress didn't grant it until this year's budget. The delay prompted water managers last year to stop buying the land.

But it was all smiles Thursday at the district's headquarters near West Palm Beach, where Babbitt said state-federal cooperation on the Everglades is "unprecedented in the history of this country."

Other action

■ **Out of the sunshine:** Took no action after holding a closed meeting to discuss a suit filed by International Technology Corp., which says it unfairly lost out on a \$43 million cleanup contract. Last month, the district rejected a \$1.5 million settlement offer from IT.

■ **Full lake:** Told its staff to talk to environmentalists upset with the management of Lake Okeechobee, which has climbed to abnormally high levels because of El Niño rains.

■ **Mineral rights:** Accepted a possible donation of 73,810 acres of oil, gas and mineral rights under the Everglades, owned by paper towel maker Fort James Corp.



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BABBITT ENDORSES COHESIVE BUFFER BETWEEN CITIES, GLADES

Unites, protects Florida farmland, forests, wetlands, "Lake Belt" Homestead Air Force Base

For Release: June 12, 1997

For complete remarks: (202) 208-6416

Deerfield Beach, FL -- In a major, prepared speech before the Tenth Annual Growth Management Conference, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt today endorsed an aggressive plan to protect sensitive farmlands, forests, lakes and wetlands as part of a crucial buffer between urban development along Coastal Ridge to the east, and the Everglades watershed to the west.

The plan ties increasing water demands for 2.1 million new arrivals to South Florida, with the water needs of the wildlife and wildlands which attracted them there in the first place. Babbitt showed why and how closely the urban and natural landscapes are forever "inextricably linked."

"When engineers raised great levees to separate the Everglades and Water Conservation Areas from the urban areas along the coastal strip," said Babbitt, "they neatly partitioned land into a wild west and developed east. But they did not, and in reality could not, partition the waters."

The reason, he said, is the porous aquifers beneath both: "We cannot let subdivisions and shopping centers march right smack up against the edge of the Everglades. It simply won't work, because we would then have to choose either to sacrifice a part of the Everglades to perpetual drought or flood our subdivisions during the rainy season. There must be a transition zone designed to regulate water levels on opposite sides of the levee, one that stores enough water to both replicate natural hydro periods in the Everglades on the west, and to allow flood control on the east, and to recharge the aquifer beneath them both."

Babbitt detailed the shape of three critical parts of this transition buffer:

1) A "Lake Belt" plan could preserve 13,000 acres of pristine wetlands; store and recharge water above and below ground; consolidate the scattered checkerboard of limestone rock mining lands into one design, later available for 24,000 acres of freshwater fishing and boating.

2) The "East Coast Buffer" plan could interconnect a series of reservoirs and marshes dedicated to receiving excess water now discharged into the sea. It would reduce seepage lost from the Everglades, enhance wetland habitat, store stormwater, and recharge aquifers.

3) The impending transfer of Homestead Air Force Base must be conditioned on the effective protection of Biscayne National Park and its adjacent shoreline lands. "I believe that the land use plan should include a progression of buffers from the waters of Biscayne Bay across a suitable interval of natural landscape to protected agricultural lands to the developed areas that will quickly sprout up around a newly developed civilian aviation facility."

"East is West and West is East and in the Twain We Meet"

Transforming land and water into common ground in South Florida

Prepared remarks of Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt

Tenth Annual Growth Management Conference

Deerfield Beach, Florida June 12, 1997

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I am pleased to accept your invitation to appear before the Tenth Annual Growth Management Conference. Since becoming Secretary, I have followed with great interest the work of the Governor's Commission, the South Florida Regional Planning Commission, and the other groups which have contributed to the Eastward Ho! report.

That report presents our challenge with these words: "We must work towards consensus on the desire to redirect development away from Southeast Florida's remaining environmentally sensitive prime water resources and prime agricultural lands into eastern areas that were passed over, underutilized or allowed to deteriorate." Eastward Ho! recognizes that in South Florida our natural landscape, the Everglades, and our urban landscape, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and all the cities of the coastal ridge, are inextricably linked. We cannot restore either one without renewing the other; to sacrifice half is to lose the whole.

The Eastward Ho! report describes the issue in stark terms. Your counties already are building 8,000 new housing units per year. Each day Florida bulldozes 450 acres of forest, 410 acres of farmland, and sucks up 111,000 more gallons of water than it did the day before. And now the region is exploding; it is projected that within two decades South Florida must somehow absorb two million people, the equivalent to a second Dade County.

If we fail to prepare for this influx the result will be more traffic jams, more congestion, more asphalt, and progressively less of the open space, clean beaches and pure water that are synonymous with the word *Florida*. Unplanned development will eventually destroy the very values -- sportfishing, wildlands teeming with life -- which attract people here in the first place.

To be honest, I did not see clearly these connections between east and west when I began commuting to South Florida in 1993. At first I seldom looked East because it was hard enough just to grasp the complexity of issues on the West side of the levees.

It was hard enough just to grasp the roots and nuances of an intricate natural watershed whose fabric we had been ripping apart for a century. We had to deal urgently with the complex chain of events that starts as rain falls from the sky, drains through the winding Kissimmee River, flows down into Lake Okeechobee, spills over into the Everglades

Agricultural Area, turns into a shallow sheet that moves across the water conservation areas, through the Everglades and finally, a year later, empties into Florida Bay and the Keys.

Working together, we have brought restoration of the Kissimmee River toward completion. We have ended decades of costly litigation and enacted the Everglades Forever Act, which requires the sugar industry to contribute more than \$200 million toward the cleanup of their pollution. Just two weeks ago, the South Florida Water Management District took a big first step toward implementation of the Everglades Forever Act by breaking ground for the first Stormwater Treatment Area.

The state-federal working group initiated in 1993 is now recognized in federal law. With support from Florida's state and local governments, combined with strong public support, we have persuaded the Congress to contribute more than \$500 million to this restoration effort. And just last year Congress mandated the Corps of Engineers to integrate these efforts into a master hydrologic restoration plan for the Everglades ecosystem.

Yet even as the outlines of a complete restoration plan for the wildlands west of the levees emerge, we must now turn to the urban areas on the east side of the levees.

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When the great protective levees were raised to separate the Everglades and the Water Conservation Areas from the urban areas along the coastal strip, the builders neatly partitioned the land into a wild west and a developed east. But they did not, and in reality could not, partition the waters.

For the aquifers that support the Everglades also extend beneath the levees under and into the urban areas. From Miami restaurants to Palm Beach golf courses, we are drinking, and bathing in, and watering our lawns with Everglades water. The aquifers are indivisible, and that means that we cannot restore the Everglades without at the same time dealing with urban water supply requirements.

Flood control poses the same dilemma. Pumping the Biscayne aquifer in Dade, Broward or Palm Beach County for flood control will lower the water table in the Everglades on the other side of the levees by an equal amount. Conversely, should we try to restore the Everglades by raising the water levels in Taylor Slough, that, in turn, raises the water levels in urban lands on the east side of the levees, a problem with which we are still struggling in the so called 8 1/2 square mile area.

Given these hydrologic realities, we cannot let subdivisions and shopping centers march right smack up against the edge of the Everglades. It simply won't work, because we would then have to choose either to sacrifice a part of the Everglades to perpetual drought or flood our subdivisions during the rainy season. All parties are beginning to recognize that there must be a transition zone designed to regulate water levels on opposite sides of the

levee, one that stores enough water to both replicate natural hydro periods in the Everglades on the west, and to allow flood control on the east, and to recharge the aquifer beneath them both.

Here, in Dade County, history has provided us with the beginnings of just such a water preserve and "buffer-scape." For years rock mining companies have been digging out the high quality limestone in west Dade County, leaving behind the large rectangular water pits that are visible on the approaches to Miami International Airport.

The Lake Belt Committee, established by the Florida legislature, recently presented a framework plan to "enhance the water supply for both Dade County and the Everglades, to maximize efficient recovery of limestone, and to protect the environment." The Committee calls this plan "Making a whole, not just holes." I think that is precisely the right idea.

The Lake Belt Plan would consolidate the scattered checkerboard of mining lands into a cohesive design. It would preserve 13,000 acres of pristine lands, the Pensuco wetlands between the rock pits and the Everglades. Ultimately the whole area becomes a recreational and transitional buffer to urban growth. When complete, there will be 24,000 acres of lakes, the size of Biscayne Bay north of Coral Gable Waterway. Each of the 6.2 million residents in the tricounty region decades from now will face a serious dilemma when they wake up Saturday morning: Should I sail, swim and waterski on salt water ... or *fresh* water? Should I rig my rod for bonefish ... or for bass?

The Lake Belt Plan can help store more water above ground and recharge aquifers below. It would prevent urban sprawl from encroaching on the well field area, thereby protecting urban water supplies. For in the Lake Belt area, historic flows have been reversed. Where once excess rainfall flowed into the Everglades, now it flows into the Atlantic. The Lake Belt Plan could reverse that loss by storing water, both from rainfall and from back pumped storm water from urban areas.

The Lake Belt proposal is now sufficiently developed to allow hydrologic analysis as part of the Corps of Engineers restudy now underway. It may be that upon detailed analysis, further modifications will be necessary to protect water quality and assure against negative impacts on the Everglades. But the Lake Belt Plan is a good and imaginative beginning.

To complete its work, the Lake Belt Committee has recommended that the Florida legislature extend its life to 2001, provide authority for land exchange and purchases, and authorize a comprehensive plan of mitigation and permitting. The Committee has done an outstanding job and the Florida legislature should be encouraged to extend its mandate to bring this project to fruition.

The Lake Belt Plan makes up the central two thirds of a larger conceptual plan underway, called, quite simply, the "East Coast Buffer." The goal behind this "buffer scape" is an interconnected series of reservoirs and marshes dedicated to receiving excess storm water that now is discharged into the sea. It would reduce seepage lost from the Everglades, enhance wetland habitat, store excess storm water, and increase groundwater recharge.

The most urgent issue that we confront in bringing the Lake Belt and the East Coast Buffer plans from vision to reality is land acquisition. Yet with each passing day, land prices and development pressures escalate. It is this westward expansion pressure that adds such urgency to the infill and redevelopment objectives of Eastward Ho!

Escalating land prices is also a major reason why the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group has placed the highest priority on using Farm Bill funds to assist the South Florida Water Management District in acquiring these buffer lands before they are lost to development. That is why we have provided \$40 million in Farm Bill funds to the District in the past few months to help acquire those lands.

This brings us to a key issue. As you plan for urban growth, I'd like to say a word on behalf of agriculture. The Corps restudy, focused on the large patterns of water conservation and distribution, will not directly address the future of agriculture in the three southern counties along the coastal ridge. That is not to say, however that it is not critical to the future of South Florida.

We tend to pay lip service to agriculture, as if it were nothing more than an outdoor production line. Apply sunshine and water, goes the thought, and out come tomatoes and tropical fruit. And, as we push to clean up the deadly phosphorous pollution pouring off the Everglades Agricultural Area, the debate over the future of agriculture has all too often turned rancorous and bitter.

Yet for all the problems, I believe that agriculture is a desirable and indeed *essential* part of our vision for the future of South Florida. Several months ago, on an early morning trip from Flamingo back to Miami, I drove from the sawgrass swamps through fields of tomatoes ripening in the morning sun, then on through the rural subdivisions into the pulsating life of downtown Miami. It seemed a good transition, reminding me once again of the diversity of South Florida, and of the importance of having farmers as neighbors.

Both the county plans and the Governor's commission recognize the importance of maintaining agriculture as a vital buffer and transition between the wilderness to the west and the highly developed core of the Atlantic Ridge. A strong agricultural protection plan will also promote the infilling objectives of Eastward Ho!

The important question is how to turn the plans into an enduring reality. Many

communities have put forward agricultural plans, only to see the eroded away under the relentless pressure of urban sprawl. The exact mix of agricultural lands in the water preserve areas in Dade, Broward and West Palm Counties is of course a matter for state and local decision. I can only offer my personal encouragement, as a friend and fan of South Florida, that you will proceed to implement effective plans before the opportunity is lost forever.

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There is another area, however, where the Federal interest is more immediate, and that is Homestead Air Force Base. The shoreline of Biscayne National Park lies less than three miles downstream and eastward from Homestead. Right now the landscape between them is mostly open space, undeveloped land, giving way to an fringe of agriculture around Homestead.

One of our great accomplishments in South Florida has been the improving water quality in Biscayne Bay where, within sight of downtown Miami, we have thriving coral reefs, a great sport fishery, and a vast expanse of turquoise waters. And we cannot compromise this achievement, or degrade the quality of this National Park, by the impending redevelopment of Homestead Air Force Base.

I believe that the impending transfer of Homestead must be conditioned on the effective protection of Biscayne National Park and its adjacent shoreline lands. Together we must work out an effective land use plan, and I believe that the plan should include a progression of buffers from the waters of Biscayne Bay across a suitable interval of natural landscape to protected agricultural lands to the developed areas that will quickly sprout up around a newly developed civilian aviation facility.

The Urban Development Boundary and the Urban Expansion Area that have been established by Dade County constitutes a good beginning, but only that. We must ask what kinds of land use should be allowed on the open landscapes east of these lines and whether or not the boundary of Biscayne National Park should be expanded to protect them. We must also ask whether any part of the lands inside the Urban Expansion Area can be preserved in agriculture or low density uses to form a transition zone and to protect the quality of the waters entering Biscayne Bay. The Working Group has recently recommended that at least 75 percent of existing agricultural lands between the Urban Development Boundary and greater Biscayne Bay be acquired to provide a protective buffer.

The time for us to address and resolve these issues is now, because I do not believe that it would be appropriate to transfer title to Homestead Air Force Base until we have together worked out an effective, enforceable, and mutually beneficial plan for the future of these important lands.

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Finally, I want to commend your counties' work on the issue of growth management. Growth management, by its very nature, is a difficult and controversial topic. Many American communities, located like Florida in areas of rapid growth, have simply chosen to step back and disengage from attempts to manage growth. The unfortunate results of this approach may be seen in many places in Southern California, and, unhappily, in my home town of Phoenix.

Other communities, such as San Diego and Portland have chosen the harder and ultimately more rewarding path, making serious and imaginative efforts to balance growth and to protect the open space, agricultural, and environmental values.

Portland, and its surrounding Willamette Valley, is an example in the making where, through state and local law, communities took a stand against the blight of unchecked suburban growth and opted to preserve forest, farmland and orchards, to create buffers along creeks, streams and rivers, and to provide incentives for infill.

Portland, of course, does not border the most spectacular and complex subtropical wetland in the world. And so your challenge is as unique as it is daunting. My role as Secretary of the Interior fades away on the urban fringe, just as the decisions get really tough. There are, of course, many federal tools at your disposal, ranging from the EPA's brownfields initiatives to the Department of Transportation's mass transit programs

But our larger shared task in the years ahead is as simple as it is hard. You must recognize that the city limits extend east to Big Cypress Preserve, north to the Kissimmee River, and South to Florida Bay; we, in turn, must recognize that restoring the Everglades depends not just on the State of Florida, the EPA, the Park Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers, but on the 6.2 million residents who will live in South Florida, and upon those of you who make decisions about land use.

As we try to marry our urban and rural landscapes together, I have to ask: Why has South Florida been able to do in four years what takes two or more decades elsewhere? How is it that shaping growth and restoring watersheds attracts such unprecedented support, from Democrats to Republicans, from developers to environmentalists, from farmers to fishermen, and from your house to the courthouse to the Statehouse to the White House? What holds us -- a fragile, otherwise politically rancorous coalition of strangers -- together as we seek to implement our plans?

The simple answer, I believe, is that we can't help it. Whatever our disparate backgrounds, we have, to a man, woman and child, succumbed to the enchantment of this land we share. We know there is no other like it in the world, we know what it is at stake, and we now know an imaginative vision of the future is within reach at last. Together, we can write an entirely new chapter in the history of urban development -- and a new chapter in the history of American conservation.

Thank you.

**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office Of The Vice President**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, May 28, 1997

CONTACT:
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**VICE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION LAND ACQUISITION GRANT
FOR FLORIDA EVERGLADES**
Federal-State Agreement Will Mean Purchase of 4,500 Acres For Restoration

WASHINGTON -- Vice President Gore today (5/28) announced a \$20 million Federal grant for land acquisition for the Everglades, marking the next major step of progress in the Administration's restoration efforts.

The Vice President made the announcement during a conference call with Florida Governor Lawton Chiles; Lieutenant Governor Buddy McKay; Frank "Sonny" Williamson, Chairman of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD); and SFWMD Executive Director Sam Poole.

"This grant for land acquisition is an investment in the Everglades' -- and in America's -- future," the Vice President said. "Restoration of the Everglades is one of President Clinton's top environmental priorities, as well as an economic imperative for South Florida."

Today's action will double, to \$40 million, the Federal funds provided to the SFWMD for acquisitions in the East Coast Water Preserve Area and Everglades Agricultural Area, providing for the purchase of 4,500 acres of land. Together with the \$40 million in SFWMD matching funds, available funds now total \$80 million, allowing for the purchase of about 10,000 acres of critical lands.

The land acquisitions will ensure that the SFWMD can permanently protect lands critical to the environment and South Florida's water supply, promoting the fishing and recreation industries, preserving open space, and maintaining wildlife habitat.

Last February, Vice President Gore announced the Administration's Everglades program -- the most ambitious environmental restoration program in history, during a visit to the Anhinga Trail in Everglades National Park. Congress passed the central provisions of the President's Everglades program as part of the Water Resources Development Act and the President signed it into law last October. This month's balanced budget plan will help implement it.

(More)

The balanced budget agreement provides sufficient funding for the President's request for Everglades restoration, a 135 percent increase to almost \$300 million for 1998. The agreement specifically protects the largest portions of the Everglades restoration program at the National Park Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, for a total of \$238 million in 1998.

" If Congress follows through on the budget agreement, we will be on our way to reversing decades of decline in the Everglades," said Vice President Gore. "The effort will take many years of hard work and cooperation, but we know we are on the right track."

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