



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
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December 18, 2008

Governor Charlie Crist
Office of Governor
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: CHNEP Support for Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve Activities

Dear Governor Crist:

The purpose of this letter is to encourage continued state support for the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve programs, activities and office. Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve is an important partner in the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP).

The CHNEP is a partnership program created by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act to protect and preserve the Charlotte Harbor estuary, recognized as an "estuary of national significance". The CHNEP partnership includes citizens, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users who are working to improve the water quality and ecological integrity of Charlotte Harbor's estuaries and watersheds.

Charlotte Harbor estuarine complex, which includes Estero Bay, is one of the most productive estuaries in the State of Florida with regards to recreational and commercial fishing industries, and includes areas designated as Outstanding Florida Waters, State Aquatic Preserves, National Wildlife Refuges and Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Waterbodies.

Long term management, preservation and restoration activities within the CHNEP are guided by our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) 2008, developed and implemented by our partners, including Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve. The CCMP lists four priority problems, accompanied by more specific quantifiable objectives and priority actions relating to improving water quality, hydrology, fish and wildlife habitat, and stewardship throughout the Charlotte Harbor watershed.

Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve programs help implement essential CCMP Quantifiable Objectives and Priority Actions, including:

WQ-1: Maintain or improve water quality from year 2000 levels.

WQ-A: ...Coordinate (water quality) monitoring programs and implement programs to fill data gaps for impairment assessments, TMDLs and BMPs.

FW-1: Native submerged aquatic vegetation should be maintained and restored to a total extent and quality no less than caused by natural variation.

FW-A: Develop methods to enhance seagrass recover from prop scarring.

FW-P: Support public involvement programs in habitat and wildlife issues.

SG-1: By 2025, a minimum of 75 percent of all residents will have recalled attending a watershed event.

SG-B: Provide people with opportunities to be involved in research, monitoring and restoration activities.

Resource management activities conducted by Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve staff directly related to accomplishing CCMP objectives and actions include 3 water quality monitoring programs, one of which is an award winning citizen based monthly monitoring program, biannual seagrass monitoring, on-going bird rookery monitoring and quarterly public estuary wading trips. In addition, the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve staff cooperate with other governmental and educational institutions on critical environmental decisions and provide a visible source of information to the public.

Because of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve staff's significant contributions to the success of the CHNEP, we strongly urge you to continue support for these vital programs and not include closure of the office or elimination of the programs as part of the state budget reductions currently under consideration.

We look forward to our continued partnership with Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve to enhance the sustainability of our valuable Charlotte Harbor resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact me at (239) 338-2556 Ext 235 or lbeever@swfrpc.org.

Sincerely,



Lisa B. Beever, PhD, AICP
Director
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Cc: Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp
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Secretary Michael Sole
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