



February 15, 2002

Ms. Trudi K. Williams  
Board Chairman  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

**RE: SWIM Designation for lower Charlotte Harbor**

Dear Ms. Williams,

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, a federal-state-local partnership of citizens, elected officials, resource managers, and commercial and recreational resource users of Charlotte Harbor respectfully request that the lower Charlotte Harbor area, including Pine Island Sound, Matlacha Pass, San Carlos Bay, and Estero Bay be designated as a priority Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) waterbody. We feel strongly that this designation is warranted in order that the lower Charlotte Harbor be afforded the same measure of protection that the upper Charlotte Harbor area currently receives from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). In designating lower Charlotte Harbor as a priority SWIM waterbody, SWFWMD will help ensure that the financial and staff commitments necessary to address the water quality and quantity concerns of this area are met.

As you know, this area includes waters that have been designated by the Federal Government as an "estuary of national significance" and, by the State of Florida as both an Aquatic Preserve and Outstanding Florida Waters. The area also includes the renowned J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, is considered one of the most productive estuaries in the state, and is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program. For these reasons alone, it would appear that SWIM designation is appropriate.

Pursuant to Florida Statutes 373.453 (1)(b), the criteria for consideration of SWIM designation are all met in this region. Currently, much of this area violates the State's water quality standards and is listed on the Impaired Waters list for Total Maximum Daily Load development. The biological condition of the water body, the fish and wildlife values, and public recreational usage are under threat due to the water quality impairments as well as a multitude of water quantity issues. The dramatic population growth in southwest Florida, coupled with the changing water regimes that the area will experience as a result of the

greater Everglades restoration efforts further support the need for priority SWIM designation.

Finally, as a signatory to the greater Charlotte Harbor Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, we feel that SFWMD's support for this designation is consistent with our shared goal of protecting the ecological integrity and improving the water quality of our watershed. We hope you agree.

We look forward to your support in moving forward on this effort and we offer our assistance in whatever appropriate manner to realize this goal. Please contact the Program Office should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Richard Cantrell  
Co-Chairman  
CHNEP Policy Committee



Tom Welborn  
Co-Chairman  
CHNEP Policy Committee

Cc: SFWMD Board members  
Henry Dean, Executive Director SFWMD  
CHNEP Management Conference