



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
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March 23, 2007

The Honorable Trudi K. Williams
Chair, Committee on Environmental Protection
221 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Protection Act, House Bill 535
Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, Senate Bill 392

Dear Representative Williams:

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program's Management Conference has reviewed House Bill 535, "Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Protection Act" and its companion Senate Bill, 392, "Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program." The Charlotte Harbor NEP commends you and Senator Saunders for introducing this critical amendment to last year's legislation and fully supports the passage and implementation of HB 535/SB 392.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP Management Conference understands that legislation moves quickly through the Legislature at this juncture of the session; in fact Senate Bill 392 was already passed by the Senate just yesterday! The Charlotte Harbor NEP supports integrating the text changes as set forth in SB 392 into its companion House Bill 535.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP 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 and one of the most productive estuaries in Florida.

Since 1996, the Charlotte Harbor NEP has developed and adopted a *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* (CCMP) for the estuary and its watershed. This plan was developed utilizing four committees of citizens, scientists, resource managers, industry representatives and policy makers. Our partnership includes, among others, Lee, Polk, Manatee, Sarasota, Hardee, DeSoto, and Charlotte Counties; several cities; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and both the South and the Southwest Florida Water Management Districts.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP supports improving water quality and estuarine habitat within the Caloosahatchee estuary. House Bill 535 and related SB 392 are consistent with our CCMP:

- Quantifiable Objective HA-2: Identify, establish and maintain a more natural seasonal variation in freshwater flows by the year 2010 for the Caloosahatchee River.
- Priority Action FW-R: Promote development and enhancement of plans and programs to improve fish and shellfish resources.

On behalf of the Charlotte Harbor NEP, this letter of support is being sent to Senator Burt Saunders, sponsor of Senate Bill 392, the Charlotte Harbor NEP Legislative Delegation in Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Polk, Hardee and DeSoto Counties and to Lee County Commissioner Tammy Hall.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (239) 338-2556 or at lbeever@swfrpc.org.

Sincerely,



Lisa B. Beever, PhD
Director

cc: Sen. Burt Saunders
Commissioner Tammy Hall, Lee County Board of County Commissioners
Charlotte Harbor NEP Legislative Delegation:
Senator Paula Dockery, District 15
Senator JD Alexander, District 17
Senator Mike Bennett, District 21
Senator Lisa Carlton, District 23
Senator Dave Aronberg, District 27
Representative Seth McKeel, District 63
Representative Marsha Bowen, 65
Representative Baxter Troutman, 66
Representative Ron Reagan, District 67
Representative Doug Holder, 70
Representative Michael Grant, District 71
Representative Paige Kreegel, District 72
Representative Nick Thompson, District 73
Representative Gary Aubuchon, District 74