



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
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March 23, 2007

The Honorable Michael Bennett
Senate Office Building, Room 216
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Protection of Seagrasses – Enforcement, Restoration and Education Senate Bill 0548

Dear Senator Bennett:

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program's Management Conference has reviewed Senate Bill 0548, and its companion House Bill 1069, entitled, "Protection of Seagrasses." The Charlotte Harbor NEP commends both you and Rep. Kendrick for introducing this critical legislation to protect seagrass beds in Charlotte Harbor and supports the passage and implementation of SB 0548/HB 1069.

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 contracted with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to update of an assessment of prop scarring within our study area. Between 1997 and 2003, areas of severe prop scarring increase from 1576 acres to 11,255 acres. The Charlotte Harbor NEP supports the restoration of seagrass beds and education of the boating community to prevent future prop scarring as proposed in Senate Bill 0548 and House Bill 1069. This legislation is consistent with our CCMP:

- Quantifiable Objective FW-3: Reduce propeller damage to seagrass beds, identified from the 1992-1993 baseline data, within the Charlotte Harbor NEP area by the year


2010. Reduce all severely scarred areas to light scarring and reduce 70 percent or more of the moderately scarred areas to light scarring.

- Priority Action FW-D: Develop a program to educate people about environmentally responsible boating practices
- Priority Action FW-L: Provide additional support for environmental compliance and enforcement within the area of the Charlotte Harbor NEP.
- Priority Action FW-M: Develop methods to enhance recovery form seagrass prop scarring

On behalf of the Charlotte Harbor NEP, this letter of support is being sent to Senator Burt Saunders and Representative Williams, chairs of the Senate and House committees considering this bill and to the Charlotte Harbor NEP Legislative Delegation in Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Polk, Hardee and DeSoto Counties.

Finally, the Charlotte Harbor NEP is pleased that research which was funded in part by our program was utilized to support the need for this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact me at (239) 338-2556 or at lbeever@swfrpc.org.

Sincerely,



Lisa B. Beever, PhD, AICP
Director

cc: Representative Kendrick, Sponsor, HB 1069
Senator Burt Saunders, Chair, Committee on Environmental Preservation & Conservation
Representative Trudi Williams, Chair, Environment & Natural Resources Council
Charlotte Harbor NEP Legislative Delegation:
Senator Paula Dockery, District 15
Senator JD Alexander, District 17
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