



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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Via e-mail

March 24, 2006

David Dunn-Rankin
Charlotte Sun
23170 Harborview Road
Charlotte Harbor, FL 33980

Re: Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Dear Mr. David Dunn-Rankin:

I am the director of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (NEP), a program that works with partners to protect the natural environment that encompasses 4,400 square miles -- the entire watershed of Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island Sound, Lemon Bay, Estero Bay, and Dona and Roberts Bay. This watershed includes the 123-square-miles of the Babcock Ranch.

The sale of the Babcock Ranch has been an important issue of the Charlotte Harbor NEP since 2001 when the family first applied to the Florida Forever program, the State's land and water conservation program. We supported the inclusion of the project on the Florida Forever acquisition list and were especially pleased when the family decided to sell the entire ranch, not just portions of it to the State. More recently in 2004, we became a founding member of the Babcock Preservation Partnership, contributing staff time to the effort to acquire, preserve and conserve Babcock Ranch with an eye towards the proper management of the land.

Whenever a land transaction of this magnitude occurs, questions abound about the ultimate impact on the land and the water. As an advocate for the estuary, the Charlotte Harbor NEP views issues through the lens of what is best for the estuary. (Estuaries are where fresh and salt water mix.) The Babcock Ranch purchase presents an opportunity to continue the laudable stewardship of the Babcock family and to guarantee the continued protection of the environmentally sensitive lands that are providing valuable ecosystem services to the estuary.

The uplands of the Babcock Ranch provide a water recharge area for our aquifers. The Telegraph Swamp supplies crucial water to the Caloosahatchee River during our dry season. Maintaining the high quality and natural timing of the water that leaves the Babcock Ranch lands is imperative to the health of the Caloosahatchee, San Carlos Bay, Estero Bay and other beautiful places. The forested portions of the Babcock Ranch provide essential habitat for many birds and mammals that utilize the estuary as a source of for reproduction and sustenance. Moreover, the existing wildlife corridors allow animals to travel safely through the many interconnected

D. Dunn-Rankin

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habitats from Charlotte Harbor to Lake Okeechobee. This is one of many features critical to the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem.

As an organization that works from consensus, we are encouraged that all those involved in the effort to acquire and preserve Babcock Ranch have remained at the table and continue their involvement in the conversations about planned actions for the land. We believe that the fellowship among the various organizations developed through this joint effort to preserve Babcock Ranch is strengthened by all of us working together to ensure the very best outcome for the greater Charlotte Harbor watershed and estuary

The Charlotte Harbor NEP will continue to work with our partners to ensure that the ecosystem services provided by the lands and waters of the Babcock Ranch remain intact and opportunities to enhance the environment and ecosystem functions are considered and implemented.

The tremendous public support that we have witnessed in favor of protecting the water quality, water quantity, habitat, and cultural heritage values of Babcock Ranch demonstrates the importance of our work. The Charlotte National Estuary Program is proud to be a part of this historic effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa B. Beever". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Beever" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa B. Beever, Ph.D., AICP
Director