



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
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March 30, 2007

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

Re: Inland Navigation Districts, Senate Bill 2176

Dear Senator Bennett:

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program's Management Conference has reviewed Senate Bill 2176, entitled, "Inland Navigation Districts," amending s. 374.975, F.S., and s. 374.975, F.S. The Charlotte Harbor NEP is concerned that the passage and implementation of this legislation may result in negative impacts to the natural resources of Charlotte Harbor.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP, Management Conference, requests that the legislation be held in abeyance until such time that the Florida Department of Environment Protection, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA), can 1) complete its statewide plan for aquatic preserve management, 2) update the management plans for each of 6 Aquatic Preserves within the Charlotte Harbor NEP Study Area and 3) develop the General Permit for the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND) channel designations.

Specifically, the Charlotte Harbor NEP Management Conference requests that dredging activities not be expanded without the appropriate public review of water quality and habitat resource impacts within the aquatic preserves.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP has been working with CAMA to document impacts to seagrass beds and assist in restoration efforts. Moreover two pieces of legislation introduced this year, SB 2178 and SB 548, specifically address the preservation and restoration of seagrasses. The Charlotte Harbor NEP welcomes the opportunity to work with CAMA and the WCIND to ensure that seagrasses are protected and restored and that any proposed new dredging in Charlotte Harbor is reviewed and designed to support the intent of SB 2178 and SB 548.

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; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; both Southwest and Central Regional Planning Councils; and both the South and the Southwest Florida Water Management Districts.

The Charlotte Harbor NEP Management Conference wants to ensure that Senate Bill 2176 is consistent with our CCMP:

- Quantifiable Objective FW-2a: native submerged aquatic vegetation should be maintained and restored at a total extent and quality no less than caused by natural variation.
- Priority Action FW-R: Promote development and enhancement plans and programs to improve fish and shellfish resources.

On behalf of the Charlotte Harbor NEP, this letter of request 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.

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: 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