



# CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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April 17, 2006

Secretary Colleen M. Castille  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard M.S. 49  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Dear Secretary Castille;

This letter is to reiterate our support of designating Horse Creek as an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW). The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (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 the State. The Peace River is a major tributary to and key components of the Charlotte Harbor estuary; protecting the natural flow regime and ecological integrity of this river and its tributaries is of great importance to the Charlotte Harbor NEP. Since 1996, the Charlotte Harbor NEP has developed and completed a 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, Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Manatee and Charlotte Counties; 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.

Through the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the issue of *Water Quality Degradation* has been identified as a priority problem for this region in our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The designation of Horse Creek as an OFW will address the following Quantifiable Objective of the CCMP:

**WQ-7:** Identify waterbodies in the Charlotte Harbor NEP study area that should be designated as Outstanding Florida Waters and support the establishment of that designation during the year 2000.

On October 16, 1998, the Charlotte Harbor NEP adopted the resolution supporting the designation of Horse Creek as an Outstanding Florida Water and urging the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to initiate rulemaking to accomplish this designation. On March 20, 2006, the Policy Committee of the Charlotte Harbor NEP after receiving recommendations from the Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Management Committee agreed to reaffirm the program's support for the designation of Horse Creek as an OFW.

Horse Creek is one of the largest tributaries of the Peace River drainage basin, contributing approximately 15% of the stream flow of the Peace River. The tributary is located within an ecologically diverse region, containing within its boundaries a variety of native communities including cypress wetlands, pine flatwoods, oak hammocks, palm hammocks, freshwater

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marshes, and wet prairies, and it is a major source of drinking water, supplying drinking water to Charlotte, Sarasota, and Desoto Counties. Therefore, the protection of Horse Creek is essential to maintaining the biological productivity of the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor and safeguarding the quality of life enjoyed by Southwest Florida's residents and visitors. Please let me know if there is any way the Charlotte Harbor NEP can help to make this designation possible. Preserving the water quality of this important tributary in southwest Florida is extremely important to environmental health of this region. The CHNEP is committed to assisting the State with this protection.

Thank you for your efforts.

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, PhD, AICP  
Director  
LBB/CAC/cac

Enclosure

**RESOLUTION #03-01**  
**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE PURCHASE OF THE BABCOCK RANCH**

**Whereas**, Charlotte Harbor has been identified as an estuary of national significance and the Caloosahatchee River basin is part of its watershed, and

**Whereas**, The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program duly adopted its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) in March 2000, including FW-1: Achieve a 25 percent increase in conservation, preservation, and stewardship lands within the boundaries of the Charlotte Harbor NEP study area by the year 2018 and HA-2: Identify, establish, and maintain a more natural seasonal variation (annual hydrograph) in freshwater flows by the year 2010 for (the) Caloosahatchee River, and

**Whereas**, the Babcock Ranch, located in Lee and Charlotte Counties, is the largest single remaining ownership that contains the water and habitat values so important to the region and South Florida's ecological recovery, and

**Whereas**, the acquisition of Babcock Ranch for environmental protection will help implement the CCMP objectives and priority actions by protecting habitat and natural hydroperiods, and

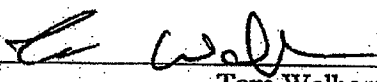
**Whereas**, the State of Florida has land acquisition programs with diverse missions for which the Babcock Ranch is more than suitable in fulfilling.

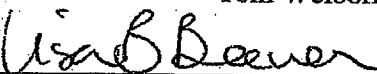
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program that:

1. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program supports the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch for the environmental protections and the many public benefits preservation provides,
2. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program requests the Governor and Cabinet to support the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch through the various programs that the Governor and Cabinet oversee,
3. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program requests the Governor to support the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch through the various programs he singularly oversees,
4. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program requests the Governor and Cabinet to promote the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch by other public and private entities with which the Governor and Cabinet have influence, and
5. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program commits to assist in the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch with the means it is capable of providing.

**DULY ADOPTED THIS 21<sup>st</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2003.**

CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Welborn, Co-Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa B. Beever, PhD, Director