

April 21, 2006

Senator Paula Dockery
Room 326
Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Babcock Ranch Acquisition
SB 1226

Dear Senator Dockery:

On March 20, 2006, the Management Conference of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program re-affirmed its support for state funding for the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch. Previously on February 21, 2003, the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) adopted Resolution 03-1, in support of the State of Florida acquiring the Babcock Ranch for environmental purposes.

The CHNEP is a partnership of local, regional, state, and federal government, business, industry, and citizens. The acquisition, preservation, conservation and management of the Babcock Ranch implements the CHNEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) objectives FW-1 which call for the conservation, preservation, restoration and stewardship of freshwater wetland systems and native uplands communities vital to the ecological function of the in the CHNEP study area. The CHNEP advocates retaining the Babcock Ranch project on the Florida Forever "A" list.

The Babcock Ranch project presents a unique opportunity to conserve a large tract of land in Southwest Florida that not only retains the natural environment but also provides the key land linkage for a wildlife corridor from Lake Okeechobee west to Charlotte Harbor. Preserving this large tract of land in southwest Florida is extremely important to environmental health of this region. The CHNEP and its partners are committed to continue our collaboration with the State in acquiring the Babcock Ranch.

I have attached a copy of our resolution for your use.

Thank you for all of your efforts.

Lisa B. Beever, PhD, AICP
Director

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:

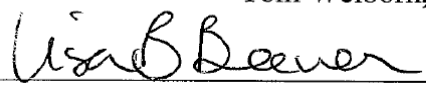
1. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program supports the acquisition of the Babcock Ranch for the environmental protections and the many public benefits preservation provides,
2. The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program requests the Governor and Cabinet to support the acquisition of the Babcock 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 21st DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2003.

CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM



Tom Welborn, Co-Chairman



Lisa B. Beever, PhD, Director