

A RESOLUTION OF THE COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE, THE ST. LUCIE AND CALOOSAHATCHEE ESTUARIES, AND THE LAKE WORTH LAGOON TO DECLARE THE CRITICAL NEED FOR AN ECONOMIC TRANSITION AND SUPPORT PLAN IN RESPONSE TO THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT INITIATIVE TO PURCHASE ASSETS OF THE UNITED STATES SUGAR CORPORATION; AND PROVIDING FOR COOPERATION WITH THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

RESOLUTION NO. 2008 – 1

WHEREAS, the County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee - St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Lake Worth Lagoon (hereafter known as the County Coalition) is committed to the protection and restoration of its water resources; and

WHEREAS, the County Coalition represents over 3.3 million residents of Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Osceola, Glades, Polk, Highlands, Lee and Hendry Counties who are dedicated to the restoration of America's Everglades, its estuaries and Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, the County Coalition is a multiple County based advisory group organized primarily for the purpose of providing the general public, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Florida Legislature, and various groups and committees with a body which will present a variety of issues dealing with the health and welfare of the lakes, estuaries, and riverine systems consisting of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and the Lake Worth Lagoon, and all of the water bodies connected thereto;

WHEREAS, the United States Sugar Corporation (USSC) has been the economic backbone of eastern Hendry County for over 70 years and provided an agricultural livelihood for thousands of people in this region; and

WHEREAS, the SFWMD has announced an initiative to purchase all assets of the USSC and the impact of the purchase will result in a direct loss of 1,700 agricultural jobs and incalculable service and contractor related jobs, along with significantly reduced residential and commercial property values and the related revenue base within the affected Counties; and

WHEREAS, by Executive Order of the Governor, Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee Counties, the Cities of Belle Glade, South Bay and Pahokee were previously designated as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern and this vast purchase by the SFMWD will further degrade the Counties' already critical economic condition; and

WHEREAS, the Coalition urges that all lands being purchased from the USSC that are not necessary for the water storage and treatment area from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades be sold to private entities in order to sustain and expand the agricultural and industrial base of the Counties; and


WHEREAS, the Coalition conveys to the Governor and the SFWMD a critical need to provide an Economic and Support Plan (*The Plan*) which is deemed essential to the economic sustainability and growth of the Counties, and appeals for *The Plan* to be finalized prior to signing of the SFWMD agreement for purchase of USSC's assets.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COALITION, that:

1. The Coalition urges that, as a minimum, enough of the lands being purchased from the USSC that are not necessary for restoration be released for economic development to provide for maintaining and improving the job base of the affected counties.
2. The Coalition declares the critical need of the Governor and SFWMD to provide an assurance that the job base will be protected, or improved, through an economic support plan and appeals to the Governor and SFWMD to provide an assurance and commitment for such a plan be made prior to, or concurrent, with the signing of the agreement for purchase.
3. The Coalition is sending this resolution to the Governor, the SFWMD, and members of the South Florida Legislative Delegation requesting that they support the request for these commitments.

This Resolution adopted this 29th day of August, 2008.

ATTEST:


LYNN SHAIN

Deputy County Clerk


CLIF BETTS, Jr., CHAIRMAN

**County Coalition for Responsible
Management of Lake Okeechobee—St. Lucie
and Caloosahatchee Estuaries—Lake Worth
Lagoon**