



FLORIDA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

THE VOICE OF AGRICULTURE

November 6, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL:

dmedelli@sfwmd.gov

tedwards@sfwmd.gov

Mr. Don Medellin
Ms. Toni Edwards
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Re: EAA Reservoir Reservation Rulemaking – Request for Public Hearing and Consideration of Lower Cost Regulatory Alternative

Dear Ms. Edwards and Mr. Medellin:

The Florida Farm Bureau Federation thanks you for the opportunity to submit public comment on the proposed Everglades Reservoir Water Reservation Rules as set forth in the Notice of Proposed Rules published in the Florida Administrative Register on October 16, 2020.

The Florida Farm Bureau Federation is well aware of the multiple uses of south Florida's water resources which include agriculture, municipal and potable supply. We have and continue to actively participate in state and federal Everglades' restoration efforts. We have developed organizational policy that supports the state and federal efforts to restore the Everglades while continuing to provide for and maintain regional water demands and making sound operational decisions on Lake Okeechobee. We continue to support science based decisions concerning all restoration initiatives.

As noted in our previous comments on the EAA Reservoir Project, we remain concerned that the diminished water rights resulting from the temporary LORS08 are now being incorporated into the EAA Reservoir Water Reservation Rule. These water rights, as promised, must be recovered. Unfortunately, the erosion of water rights was recently made worse by the Corps LORS08 Planned Deviation. Our agricultural community emphasizes that a sufficient water supply is needed for the food security of our nation. Additionally, the sanctity of an existing legal users' right to water through the permitting process is a cornerstone

of Florida's water law, the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) water use permitting program, and the state/federal partnership in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). We have expounded upon this time and again in numerous forums, most recently during expert witness testimony in the U. S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment.

As proposed, the rule raises much uncertainty regarding the quantities and timing of discharges from the EAA Reservoir. It also begs to question whether the water reservation complies with state and federal mandates regarding the protection of existing legal sources of water in relation to CERP. We recognize the SFWMD is expediting this rulemaking in order to enter into a cost-share agreement with the Corps. Given that the SFWMD has adopted a rule restricting the allocation of additional water supply from Lake Okeechobee, it appears the necessary water protection measures are already in place and this alternative to the proposed rule should be considered.

Due to the fact that there are potential alternatives to the proposed EAA Reservoir water reservation rule, we respectfully request the district to hold a public hearing on its intended agency action.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and suggested alternative. We look forward to the continued collaboration on these issues and moving this important CERP project forward to completion.

Sincerely,



Gary Ritter
Assistant Director of Government & Community Affairs
Florida Farm Bureau Federation

CC: dbartlett@sfwmd.gov Drew Bartlett, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District

cgoss@sfwmd.gov Chauncey Goss, Chair, South Florida Water Management District Governing Board