

September 23, 2013

Office of Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott,

On behalf of afflicted coastal residents, South Florida taxpayers and millions of people whose drinking water depends on a restored Everglades, **we call on the State of Florida to complete the purchase of up to 153,000 acres of U.S. Sugar lands** before the exclusive option expires next month.

Five years ago, the South Florida Water Management District announced it would purchase 187,000 acres of U.S. Sugar's land south of Lake Okeechobee to restore clean water to the Everglades and provide relief to coastal estuaries. On October 12, 2010, the District closed on a contract to purchase 26,800 acres of land for \$197 million, while retaining a three-year exclusive option for the rest.

The state's exclusive 3-year option -- to purchase either a specifically identified 46,800 acres or the entire 153,000 acres at a fixed price of \$7,400 per acre -- will expire next month forcing the state to pay market prices for the land and compete with other buyers.

On November 18, 2010, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. Sugar purchase "serves the public purpose of conserving and protecting water and water-related resources."

Never before has that public purpose been more evident. Coastal estuaries served by the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers are collapsing along with their local economies. While short-term solutions can provide limited relief, the permanent solution is to send more water south to the Everglades by buying more sugar land to store, clean and eventually flow water south.

The purchase of U.S. Sugar lands before October 12, 2013, represents the most cost-efficient method for storing, treating and moving water south. We strongly urge you to make the investment in Florida's future at a price that may never come again.

Sincerely,

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Sierra Club

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