Nothing talks quite like money. This helps explain the optimism at the annual Everglades Coalition's 29th annual conference this past weekend in Palm Beach Gardens. The mood was generally upbeat thanks to the Obama administration's $600 million infusion into the lagging Everglades cleanup plan.

The word "momentum" got a good workout at the conference, too, because the federal government finally stepped up to the plate as a full partner, along with the state, in funding of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The recession must not stop that momentum.

The $600 million triggered ground-breaking on two long delayed projects with a third about to be launched. The first is elevation of a one-mile stretch of the Tamiami Trail, which has greatly limited sheet flow to parched Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The administration hopes to add up to five more miles of bridges to the road to increase water flowing southward and to speed up removal of canals and levees north of the Trail that also trap water.

The second project is reclaiming a failed subdivision in the Picayune Strand in Southwest Florida. Looming is a third -- crucial repairs to the C-111 Canal in South Miami-Dade, which has long diverted water from the park.

The federal dollars also restored Florida officials' faith in the federal government keeping its share of the bargain struck by the state and Congress in 2000 to the cleanup and to restore the River of Grass. Through 2008, however, the state had outspent the feds by a 6-to-1 ratio.

Still pending is an ambitious plan authored by Gov. Charlie Crist to buy 73,000 acres of U.S. Sugar property for $536 million for increasing water storage and water quality. There are legal challenges to the purchase, but South Florida Water Management District officials hope to see these resolved this year.

The quicker the better to keep the momentum -- and the water -- flowing.