

Compiled by: South Florida Water Management District
(for internal use only)

Total Clips: 10

Headline	Date	Outlet	Reporter
 U. \$. \$UGAR It's loss will hurt Belle Glade football	08/13/2008	Winston-Salem Journal	
 Fla. says reservoir work might harm sugar buy	08/13/2008	Times-Picayune - Online	By CURT ANDERSON
 Project May Stall Everglades Deal	08/13/2008	Tampa Tribune - Online	
 Tribe asks judge to restart Everglades reservoir project	08/13/2008	South Florida Sun-Sentinel - Online	Blum, Vanessa
RESTORATION OF THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES WILL BE GENERAL SUBSIDIZE	08/13/2008	NBC 6 News at 6 PM - WTVJ-TV	
 Reservoir puts sugar deal at risk, U.S. judge told	08/13/2008	Miami Herald - Online	CURTIS MORGAN
Glades reservoir risks sugar deal, judge told	08/13/2008	Miami Herald	Morgan, Curtis
 Fla. says reservoir work might harm sugar buy	08/13/2008	Jackson Sun	CURT ANDERSON
 Sugar buy threatened	08/13/2008	Daily Advertiser	
 Editorial Crist wades into a swamp of Everglades muck	08/13/2008	Jupiter Courier	

U. \$. \$UGAR It's loss will hurt Belle Glade football

08/13/2008
Winston-Salem Journal

[Return to Top](#)

BELLE GLADE, Fla. - Surrounded by a sea of sugar cane, this poverty-ravaged town on the southeastern edge of Lake Okeechobee has long been one of the country's most fertile football areas.

It's a place where running backs of the future are said to gain speed chasing rabbits, where college coaches begin recruiting trips and where Friday nights produce future NFL stars. Football is the main diversion in Belle Glade, aka 'Muck City,' a place so depressed it lacks a movie theater and even a big discount store.

Now football is being threatened.

When U.S. Sugar -- the nation's largest sugarcane producer -- agreed in June to sell its nearly 300 square miles of farmland to the state for \$1.75 billion, the deal was touted as an environmental victory for the government's ongoing Everglades restoration project. But for the community, it's a big blow.

In what is already one of the country's poorest areas, about 1,700 U.S. Sugar employees will lose their jobs when the transfer to the state is consummated in six years. The rest of the local economy, which mostly supports U.S. Sugar and its employees, also will suffer. 'The only thing most people around here know how to do is grow sugar and play football,' 70-year-old resident Jack Brown said. 'Without sugar, there will be no football.' The town of about 15,000, which got its nickname from its soil's black muck, has football talent just as rich.

Running back Fred Taylor of the Jaguars, Pittsburgh's Santonio Holmes and dozens of other current and former NFL players call Belle Glade home. The four major programs in the area -- Glades Central, Pahokee, Glades Day and Clewiston -- have combined to win 17 state championships. Glades Central, the best of the four, has won six titles.

Pahokee, eight miles north along the lake's shore, produced receiver Anquan Boldin of the Arizona Cardinals among others. Glades Central and Pahokee have combined to send 48 players into professional football. 'That's just God-given talent,' Boldin said. 'No other way to put it.' (Three players on the Wake Forest roster are from Pahokee -- cornerback Alphonso Smith, wide receiver D.J. Boldin and defensive end Antonio Wilson.)

A bit of football folklore has even grown up around a local tradition called 'running rabbits.' Children started the game decades ago to earn money, and they still sell rabbits for \$2 and \$3 on the streets. When the sugar cane is burned during harvest, rabbits run from the flames and young boys give chase. Only the fastest kids catch rabbits, and residents say the game is what has given area players their legendary speed.

When U.S. Sugar closes, there won't be enough jobs to support the population, and many people will be forced to commute about 45 miles to West Palm Beach. Most likely, residents will have to move and leave proud football traditions behind. 'Football is going to be hit hard,' said Willie McDonald, the football public address announcer and track coach for Glades Central. 'It will survive, but no one knows what will be left of it.' Antonio McCloude is a star running back for Glades Central, and his mother has worked in sugar mills for 32 years. Her job happens to be safe.

But McCloude, a senior tailback -- who is being recruited by West Virginia, Pittsburgh and Colorado among others -- said that many of his friends' parents weren't so lucky. Some are among those U. S. Sugar plans to lay off. 'I think it's going to have a really big effect around here,' he said. 'There's nothing really to do besides work for sugar companies and play football here. I don't have to worry about it. But them little kids coming up will.' Belle Glade is in Palm Beach County, one of America's wealthiest, but parts look like they're in the Third World.

West Palm Beach is dotted with luxury high-rises and mansion, yet out here migrant workers comb through the burning, leafy undergrowth as smokestacks puff from distant sugar mills. The town, appearing like a mirage slowly above the swaths of sugarcane, welcomes with a sign that reads, 'HER SOIL IS HER FORTUNE.' But the fortune has never trickled down.

About a third of the population lives below the poverty line, according to the 2000 census. At times in the 1980s, Belle Glade had the nation's highest rate of AIDS infection, and the town is still fighting one of the highest per-capita rates of the disease. Belle Glade also had the second-worst violent crime rate in the country in 2003, according to the FBI. And Glades Central received its second consecutive F' grade from the state for its academic performance this year.

Through it all, though, there has been football. The sport has provided a distraction -- and a way out -- from life in the sugar fields and factory. But despite their success, the football programs have always needed financial backing from the private sector -- and U.S. Sugar has always helped. 'They've given lots of financial support to all the schools over the years,' Pahokee coach Blaze Thompson said. 'I'd like to think we're going to find someone else to support our program, but there isn't anyone else out here.'

Fla. says reservoir work might harm sugar buy

08/13/2008

Times-Picayune - Online

By CURT ANDERSON

[Return to](#)
[Top](#)

MIAMI (AP) - Florida's proposed purchase of thousands of acres of farmland from U.S. Sugar Corp. to restore the Everglades would be jeopardized if a federal judge forces the state to resume construction on a huge reservoir, state attorneys said in court Tuesday.

The Miccosukee Indian Tribe, which considers the Everglades its ancestral home, wants U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order work to continue on a planned 25-square-mile reservoir considered a key to cleaner water in the vast wetlands.

But the Florida state attorneys said the estimated \$300 million cost of the next phase of the massive reservoir work in western Palm Beach County might make it difficult for the state to finance the planned \$1.75 billion, 187,000-acre sugar land buy. Lawyers for several environmental groups agreed, telling Moreno at a hearing that the planned U.S. Sugar purchase represents a once-in-a-generation chance to rescue the Everglades.

Sugar farms and other agricultural interests are blamed for decades of damage to the 'River of Grass' because of fertilizer and other contaminants. 'The ability to acquire this piece of property is really monumental,' said Thom Rumberger, attorney for the Florida Audubon Society.

Moreno has authority over Everglades work because of a 20-year-old lawsuit that was root of the multibillion-dollar restoration effort.

The Miccosukees' attorney, Dexter Lehtinen, questioned what might happen if the U.S. Sugar deal falls through, and yet the reservoir remains stalled. 'They've already started it. The bulldozers are sitting there,' Lehtinen said. 'Delay is the enemy of the Everglades. You don't come back from being poisoned.' Burns and other Florida attorneys said the main reason construction was halted on the reservoir was the possibility that its permits would be revoked due to a separate lawsuit pending before another federal judge. That case involves the legal uses of the proposed reservoir's water.

But the state lawyers also said they may not resume the project at all if the U.S. Sugar transaction closes as planned in four or five months even though the work has already cost some \$200 million. Instead, it might be relocated to the sugar lands, which would be a better place from which to manage water flows into the Everglades. 'We can reconfigure the location of the reservoir,' Burns said. Moreno did not issue an immediate decision and did not indicate when he would rule.

The judge has previously found violations of court orders mandating certain reductions in phosphorous levels in the Everglades, but state officials have insisted they are doing all they can do to comply. 'We have stayed on track. We're going to continue to stay on track,' said Charles DeMonaco, attorney for the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Project May Stall Everglades Deal

08/13/2008

Tampa Tribune - Online

[Return to
Top](#)

MIAMI - Florida's proposed purchase of thousands of acres of farmland from U.S. Sugar Corp. to restore the Everglades would be jeopardized if a federal judge forces the state to resume construction on a huge reservoir, attorneys for the state said in court Tuesday.

The Miccosukee Indian Tribe, which considers the Everglades its ancestral home, wants U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order work to continue on a planned 25-square-mile reservoir considered a key to cleaner water in the vast wetlands.

Attorneys for the state said the estimated \$300 million cost of the next phase of the massive reservoir work in western Palm Beach County might make it difficult for the state to finance the planned \$1.75 billion, 187,000-acre sugar land buy. 'Our ability to close that deal would be impaired,' said Kirk Burns, attorney for the South Florida Water Management District.

Lawyers for several environmental groups agreed, telling Moreno at a hearing that the planned U.S. Sugar purchase represents a once-in-a-generation chance to rescue the Everglades.

Sugar farms and other agricultural interests are blamed for decades of damage to the 'River of Grass' because of fertilizer and other contaminants. 'The ability to acquire this piece of property is really monumental,' said Thom Rumberger, attorney for the Florida Audubon Society.

Moreno has authority over Everglades work because of a 20-year-old lawsuit that was root of the multibillion-dollar restoration effort. The Miccosukees' attorney, Dexter Lehtinen, questioned what might happen if the U.S. Sugar deal falls through, and yet the reservoir remains stalled. 'They've already started it. The bulldozers are sitting there,' Lehtinen said. 'Delay is the enemy of the Everglades. You don't come back from being poisoned.' Burns and other attorneys for the state said the main reason construction was halted on the reservoir was the possibility that its permits would be revoked because of a separate lawsuit pending before another federal judge. That case involves the legal uses of the proposed reservoir's water.

Attorneys for the state also said they may not resume the project at all if the U.S. Sugar transaction closes as planned in four or five months.

Moreno did not issue an immediate decision and did not indicate when he would rule.

Tribe asks judge to restart Everglades reservoir project

08/13/2008

South Florida Sun-Sentinel - Online

Blum, Vanessa

[Return to
Top](#)

The Miccosukee Tribe asked a federal judge Tuesday to order South Florida water managers to resume construction of a reservoir in western intended for Everglades restoration.

The tribe wants the project restarted even as state officials negotiate a \$1.75 billion deal to purchase 187,000 acres from U. S. Sugar Corp. a move environmental groups say could significantly advance efforts to clean up the Everglades.

With the deal pending, water managers contend spending \$300 million on the next phase of the reservoir construction would be a waste of money and jeopardize financing for the land acquisition.

U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno, based in Miami, did not rule on the tribe's request. If the land purchase goes through, the 16,700-acre reservoir likely would be relocated north of its current location along U.S. 27, said attorney Kirk Burns, who represents the . The district halted the project in June, citing a pending federal lawsuit over how the water would be used. That leaves taxpayers paying contractors \$1.9 million a month to stand by until a final decision is made.

The reservoir is needed to hold excess water that otherwise overwhelms stormwater treatment areas designed to clean water headed to the Everglades.

Taxpayers already have invested about \$250 million in the reservoir. Dexter Lehtinen, the tribe's attorney, said the promised reservoir should be completed. Potential environmental gains from the land deal won't materialize in time to save the Everglades, he said. 'The Everglades is gone 15 years from now. It's dead,' Lehtinen said. 'You don't come back from being poisoned.' Members of the Miccosukee tribe settled in the Everglades in the mid-1800s, and federal law recognizes their historical and cultural connection to the land. The tribe's two-decade push for Everglades restoration has been supported by environmental organizations.

However, on the reservoir issue, a coalition of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation and the Audubon Society of the Everglades, sided with state officials urging Moreno not to interfere.

The deal calls for U.S. Sugar's property to be transferred to the state over at least six years. Officials hope to have a final agreement by November, but Burns said Tuesday it could take longer to complete, possibly six months.

The state has yet to meet the cleanup standards set in 1992, as a result of lawsuits filed by Lehtinen and the Miccosukees.

Moreno asked Lehtinen if he was worried about interfering with the land deal that environmental groups find so promising. To the contrary, Lehtinen said, the land acquisition likely would result in lawsuits, studies and more delay, which he called 'the enemy of the Everglades.' Vanessa Blum can be reached at vbblum@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4605.

Learn more Take a look at the history of the sugar cane industry in South Florida through an interactive photo gallery and video report at Sun-Sentinel.com/sugar. Also, take an interactive tour through the Everglades and gain insight into Florida's unique 'river of grass.'

RESTORATION OF THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES WILL BE GENERAL SUBSIDIZE

08/13/2008

NBC 6 News at 6 PM - WTVJ-TV

[Return to
Top](#)

WHILE STATE ATTORNEYS SAY THAT THE RESTORATION OF THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES WILL BE GENERAL SUBSIDIZE JEOPARDIZED IF THE STATE RESUMES RESERVOIR. THE TRIBEMENT WANTS THE USDISTRICT JUDGE TO ORDER WORK TO CONTINUE ON A PLAN 25 SQUARE MILE RESERVOIR, CONSIDERED A KEY TO CLEANER WATER IN THE VAST WET LANDS. BUT FLORIDA ATTORNEYS SAY THAT THE ESTIMATED \$300 MILLION OF THE NEXT PHASE MIGHT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR STATE TO FINANCE THE PLAN'S \$1.7 BILLION BUYOUT OF US SUGAR CORPORATION.

Reservoir puts sugar deal at risk, U.S. judge told

08/13/2008

Miami Herald - Online

CURTIS MORGAN

[Return to
Top](#)

For decades, environmental groups have pushed to speed up Everglades restoration but on Tuesday they urged a federal judge in Miami not to step in and force the state to resume work on a key project halted in May.

The reason for the change in tune: Paying for a \$700 million reservoir the size of Boca Raton could threaten state financing of a deal they consider even bigger for the Everglades -- the proposed \$1.75 billion buyout of U.S. Sugar.

In a split with the Miccosukee Tribe, which had asked Chief U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order construction restarted on the stalled reservoir, lawyers for several of the state's biggest conservation groups argued the wait was worth it to secure a "monumental" purchase of 187,000 acres of sugar fields.

"It really is a new ball game," said Thom Rumberger, an attorney for Audubon of Florida. "This is an opportunity to do some serious restoration. For that not to happen would really be a crime."

Dexter Lehtinen, the tribe's attorney, called the land buy the latest state "excuse" to delay deadlines for cleaning up pollution damaging the Everglades.

He argued the deal could push back the reservoir and other projects to restore the flow of clean water back 15 years or more.

"Delay is the enemy of the Everglades," Lehtinen said. "The Everglades is dead 15 years from now."

Moreno, who oversees cleanup efforts under a 20-year-old lawsuit that forced Florida to reduce pollution flowing in the Everglades, took no action and gave no indication of when or how he might rule on the tribe's motion.

CONFLICTING LAWSUITS

But the judge peppered both sides with questions about how far his own authority extended under a legal settlement called a consent decree and how his decisions might conflict with a handful of other federal Everglades lawsuits.

"Can you throw out the consent decree by yourself because something else better comes along?" asked Moreno, who three years ago found the state in violation of the agreement after two high pollution readings.

Last month, another federal judge tossed out part of Florida's controversial 2003 overhaul of Everglades pollution laws, saying the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency turned a blind eye to "radical" water quality changes that pushed cleanup deadlines back a decade to 2016.

In another federal suit in West Palm Beach, three environmental groups argued the state has not given proper assurances the water will be used for environmental purposes.

Kirk Burns, an attorney for the district, said the risk that federal permits could be revoked in that case was the primary reason the district halted the reservoir.

The state's surprise bid to buy U.S. Sugar added still more

complications, Burns said.

If the deal goes through -- a tentative deadline is Nov. 30 but Burns predicted it might take four or five months -- the existing reservoir site might be reconfigured as a pollution cleanup marsh and another reservoir built in vacated sugar fields to the northwest.

Burns, echoed by attorneys for the state and environmental groups, told the judge that forcing the district to spend \$300 million on the next phase of the reservoir would waste taxpayer's money and potentially jeopardize the plan to secure bonds to buy sugar lands.

"Our ability to close that deal would be impaired," he said.

DECADES OF DISPUTES

The tribe's move was supported by one environmental group, Friends of the Everglades, but others argued the land deal was the best hope of resolving decades of disputes over dirty water.

Though the state has spent nearly \$2 billion to improve water quality, its network of treatment marshes have yet to meet the super-low levels considered critical for restoring the Everglades. Environmental groups warned a Miami federal judge that forcing construction of a giant Everglades restoration reservoir could jeopardize a bigger deal to buy U.S. Sugar.

Glades reservoir risks sugar deal, judge told

08/13/2008

Miami Herald

Morgan, Curtis

[Return to
Top](#)

For decades, environmental groups have pushed to speed up Everglades restoration but on Tuesday they urged a federal judge in Miami not to step in and force the state to resume work on a key project halted in May.

The reason for the change in tune: Paying for a \$700 million reservoir the size of Boca Raton could threaten state financing of a deal they consider even bigger for the Everglades -- the proposed \$1.75 billion buyout of U.S. Sugar.

In a split with the Miccosukee Tribe, which had asked Chief U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order construction restarted on the stalled reservoir, lawyers for several of the state's biggest conservation groups argued the wait was worth it to secure a "monumental" purchase of 187,000 acres of sugar fields.

"It really is a new ball game," said Thom Rumberger, an attorney for Audubon of Florida.

"This is an opportunity to do some serious restoration. For that not to happen would really be a crime."

Dexter Lehtinen, the tribe's attorney, called the land buy the latest state "excuse" to delay deadlines for cleaning up pollution damaging the Everglades.

He argued the deal could push back the reservoir and other projects to restore the flow of clean water back 15 years or more.

"Delay is the enemy of the Everglades," Lehtinen said. "The Everglades is dead 15 years from now."

Moreno, who oversees cleanup efforts under a 20-year-old lawsuit that forced Florida to reduce pollution flowing in the Everglades, took no action and gave no indication of when or how he might rule on the tribe's motion.

CONFLICTING LAWSUITS

But the judge peppered both sides with questions about how far his own authority extended under a legal settlement called a consent decree and how his decisions might conflict with a handful of other federal Everglades lawsuits.

"Can you throw out the consent decree by yourself because something else better comes along?" asked Moreno, who three years ago found the state in violation of the agreement after two high pollution readings.

Last month, another federal judge tossed out part of Florida's controversial 2003 overhaul of Everglades pollution laws, saying the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency turned a blind eye to "radical" water quality changes that pushed cleanup deadlines back a decade to 2016.

In another federal suit in West Palm Beach, three environmental groups argued the state has not given proper assurances the water will be used for environmental purposes.

Kirk Burns, an attorney for the district, said the risk that federal permits could be revoked in that case was the primary reason the district halted the reservoir.

The state's surprise bid to buy U.S. Sugar added still more complications, Burns said.

If the deal goes through -- a tentative deadline is Nov. 30 but Burns predicted it might take four or five months -- the existing reservoir site might be reconfigured as a pollution cleanup marsh and another reservoir built in vacated sugar fields to the northwest.

Burns, echoed by attorneys for the state and environmental groups, told the judge that forcing the district to spend \$300 million on the next phase of the reservoir would waste taxpayer's money and potentially jeopardize the plan to secure bonds to buy sugar lands.

"Our ability to close that deal would be impaired," he said.

DECADES OF DISPUTES

The tribe's move was supported by one environmental group, Friends of the Everglades, but others argued the land deal was

the best hope of resolving decades of disputes over dirty water.

Though the state has spent nearly \$2 billion to improve water quality, its network of treatment marshes have yet to meet the super-low levels considered critical for restoring the Everglades.

Copyright © 2008 The Miami Herald

Fla. says reservoir work might harm sugar buy

08/13/2008

Jackson Sun

CURT ANDERSON

[Return to
Top](#)

MIAMI Floridas proposed purchase of thousands of acres of farmland from U.S. Sugar Corp. to restore the Everglades would be jeopardized if a federal judge forces the state to resume construction on a huge reservoir, state attorneys said in court Tuesday.

The Miccosukee Indian Tribe, which considers the Everglades its ancestral home, wants U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order work to continue on a planned 25-square-mile reservoir considered a key to cleaner water in the vast wetlands.

But the Florida state attorneys said the estimated \$300 million cost of the next phase of the massive reservoir work in western Palm Beach County might make it difficult for the state to finance the planned \$1.75 billion, 187,000-acre sugar land buy.

Our ability to close that deal would be impaired, said Kirk Burns, attorney for the South Florida Water Management District.

Lawyers for several environmental groups agreed, telling Moreno at a hearing that the planned U.S. Sugar purchase represents a once-in-a-generation chance to rescue the Everglades.

Sugar farms and other agricultural interests are blamed for decades of damage to the River of Grass because of fertilizer and other contaminants.

The ability to acquire this piece of property is really monumental, said Thom Rumberger, attorney for the Florida Audubon Society.

Moreno has authority over Everglades work because of a 20-year-old lawsuit that was root of the multibillion-dollar restoration effort.

The Miccosukees attorney, Dexter Lehtinen, questioned what might happen if the U.S. Sugar deal falls through, and yet the reservoir remains stalled.

Theyve already started it. The bulldozers are sitting there, Lehtinen said. Delay is the enemy of the Everglades. You dont come back from being poisoned.

Burns and other Florida attorneys said the main reason

construction was halted on the reservoir was the possibility that its permits would be revoked due to a separate lawsuit pending before another federal judge. That case involves the legal uses of the proposed reservoirs water.

But the state lawyers also said they may not resume the project at all if the U.S. Sugar transaction closes as planned in four or five months even though the work has already cost some \$200 million. Instead, it might be relocated to the sugar lands, which would be a better place from which to manage water flows into the Everglades.

We can reconfigure the location of the reservoir, Burns said.

Moreno did not issue an immediate decision and did not indicate when he would rule.

The judge has previously found violations of court orders mandating certain reductions in phosphorous levels in the Everglades, but state officials have insisted they are doing all they can do to comply.

We have stayed on track. Were going to continue to stay on track, said Charles DeMonaco, attorney for the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Sugar buy threatened

08/13/2008

Daily Advertiser

[Return to
Top](#)

MIAMI - Florida's proposed purchase of thousands of acres of farmland from U.S. Sugar Corp. to restore the Everglades would be jeopardized if a federal judge forces the state to resume construction on a huge reservoir, state attorneys said in court Tuesday. The Miccosukee Indian Tribe, which considers the Everglades its ancestral home, wants U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno to order work to continue on a planned 25-square-mile reservoir considered a key to cleaner water in the vast wetlands.

But the Florida state attorneys said the estimated \$300 million cost of the next phase of the massive reservoir work in western Palm Beach County might make it difficult for the state to finance the planned \$1.75 billion, 187,000-acre sugar land buy. 'Our ability to close that deal would be impaired,' said Kirk Burns, attorney for the South Florida Water Management District.

Lawyers for several environmental groups agreed, telling Moreno at a hearing that the planned U.S. Sugar purchase represents a once-in-a-generation chance to rescue the Everglades.

Sugar farms and other agricultural interests are blamed for decades of damage to the 'River of Grass' because of fertilizer and other contaminants. 'The ability to acquire this piece of property is really monumental,' said Thom Rumberger, attorney for the Florida Audubon Society.

Moreno has authority over Everglades work because of a 20-year-old lawsuit that was root of the multibillion-dollar restoration effort.

The Miccosukees' attorney, Dexter Lehtinen, questioned what might happen if the U.S. Sugar deal falls through, and yet the reservoir remains stalled. 'They've already started it. The bulldozers are sitting there,' Lehtinen said. 'Delay is the enemy of the Everglades. You don't come back from being poisoned.' Moreno did not issue an immediate decision and did not indicate when he would rule.

Editorial Crist wades into a swamp of Everglades muck

08/13/2008

Jupiter Courier

[Return to
Top](#)

The U.S. Sugar deal got a sour reception on Capitol Hill last month, when members of the Florida congressional delegation complained they were left in the dark by Gov. Charlie Crist.

While lawmakers said they do not intend to scuttle the 187,000-acre purchase, there are concerns that federal agencies may now feel free to pull back on their financial commitments to the Everglades.

Crist's bold initiative was, of course, well intended. But the governor's propensity for secretly negotiated deals threatens, once again, to blow up in his face.

To pull off the Everglades venture, Crist will need plenty of partners. In addition to the Army Corps of Engineers, which was inexplicably kept out of the decision-making loop, the complex plan will ultimately need cooperation from neighboring landholders. Chief among them is the Fanjul family of Palm Beach County.

The Fanjuls' Florida Crystals operation isn't going anywhere. Recently, the family's 155,000-acre sugar spread was the subject of a New York Times feature that touted the Fanjuls' growing stature as a producer of biomass energy. And the Fanjuls are looking to acquire more land.

Among the projects backed by Florida Crystals is an 'inland intermodal center' to hold containers for South Florida ports. The venture could add 32,000 jobs.

Contrary to earlier reports, Everglades restoration hinges on obtaining additional tracts. The need for more acreage will almost certainly boost the initial \$1.75 billion price tag. Within hours of Crist's announcement, the cost estimate climbed to \$2.25 billion.

For either amount, U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd, D-Monticello, calculates that Crist could have bought out the entire U.S. Sugar company, paying every stockholder 1 1/2 to two times the value of their

stock.

Crist has been eerily vague about how Florida - already strapped for cash - will fund this Everglades venture. Clearly, the state needs all the financial partners it can get, and it must keep the federal government and the Army Corps on board. Secrecy isn't the way to go.

Crist's deal-now-and-get-the-money-later approach is especially troubling because he's done it before. His compact to grant Las Vegas-style gaming rights to the Seminole tribe also was negotiated unilaterally and in secret. When the governor reneged on his pledge to take the agreement to the Legislature for ratification, lawmakers hauled the governor into the state Supreme Court, where he lost.

Florida cannot afford more legal battles over the Everglades. The state needs leadership, not political grandstanding, and Crist must get serious about coalition building if the restoration of our threatened national treasure is going to be effective and affordable.

Florida congressmen commenting on Gov. Charlie Crist's handling of the U.S. Sugar deal:

ALCEE HASTINGS, D-Miramar: 'If you want me on the landing, then you ought to have me on the takeoff.' TIM MAHONEY, D-Palm Beach Gardens: 'It's a sad state of affairs when I'm a federal representative and the people in the community call me to try to reach (the state).' ADAM PUTNAM, R-Bartow: 'It's clear this deal is now facing the consequences of the secrecy with which it was negotiated and the lack of impacted parties being part of the negotiation.' Tampa Tribune,

Florida Today

