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**Stuart real estate agent name to water district board**

07/22/2009

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Port St. Lucie News Tribune  
Treadway, Tyler

STUART — Citing a “deep-rooted concern for the state and our area,” Kevin Powers of Stuart, owner of Indiantown Realty, accepted an appointment Monday by Gov. Charlie Crist as the Treasure Coast’s representative on the board of the South Florida Water Management District.

Powers, 42, replaces Melissa Meeker of Stuart, whose term recently expired. The governor also named Gladys Perez, 38, a Miami attorney who has worked for Crist as a civil rights and environmental counsel, and Joe Collins, 41, of Sebring, an engineering manager with Lykes Brothers, to the board. They may take their seats immediately but must be confirmed by the Senate.

The most controversial issue facing the board is the district’s proposal to pay \$536 million for 73,000 acres of sugar fields and groves south of Lake Okeechobee for Everglades restoration projects. The board will have to deal with significant financial issues before the June 2010 closing date for the sale, which has been pared down significantly since Crist first announced the plan to pay \$1.75 billion to U.S. Sugar for 180,000 acres more than a year ago.

Powers called the purchase “a historic and bold step that definitely has to continue to move forward,” but added, “I haven’t attended my first staff briefing, so I can’t say I’m this way or that on any of the issues.”

Powers said there are “very fair questions” that the sugar deal might divert money and attention away from other Everglades restoration projects, especially those on the Treasure Coast designed to clean water going into the St. Lucie River estuary and Indian River Lagoon.

“The state has a lot of (water) projects that need to be completed,” he said, “but exactly how that needs to be accomplished, I can’t say. I hope to get my hands around those issues, but I’m not there yet.”

Leon Abood, chairman of the Rivers Coalition, a consortium of environmentalists and anglers who favor the land purchase as a way to end harmful discharges of water from Lake Okeechobee into the estuary and lagoon, said the group supports Powers’ appointment.

“We believe he will represent the Treasure Coast very well and will be an advocate for stopping the discharges, Abood said, adding that in informal discussions among coalition board members, Powers was “our No. 1 choice.”

Powers, who was born in Stuart, also is a member of the Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce, the Martin

County Taxpayers Association, the Economic Council of Martin County and the United Way of Martin County's board and foundation.

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## Money Still Well Spent

07/22/2009

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Palm Beach Post

EDITORIAL

It's hard to throw away as much as \$40 million in public money and call it a cost savings. But that's essentially what the South Florida Water Management District is saying about its decision to halt construction in western Palm Beach County of the world's largest above-ground reservoir.

As The Post reported on July 12, the district stopped construction of the A1 Reservoir last year at a pivotal point. The district had spent \$272 million preparing the site, particularly by carving out a 22-mile perimeter. The next stage, at a cost of \$330 million, called for building 12-foot-high walls along the perimeter to turn the former sugar cane field into a humongous bathtub.

After a lawsuit challenged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit the district obtained for the project, district officials stopped work before erecting the walls. If the permit had been ruled invalid, the district would have had to dismantle the walls. So, on behalf of the public, the district swallowed \$2 million a month - the total could be as much as \$40 million - in fees to suspend the contract.

One month later, Gov. Crist announced plans for the water management district to buy U.S. Sugar. That deal - now just for part of the company's land - was a show-stopper. It changed everything about how the A1 Reservoir, on the former Talisman cane fields, would fit into the new picture of Everglades restoration. Since then, the district has stopped the contract on the A1 Reservoir and shelved the project.

But the completed work is not worthless. It could prove invaluable.

To preserve the Everglades, the district needs to store and clean water. With the U.S. Sugar purchase, the district no longer would need to store water on the Talisman land because it would be more practical to store water farther north, next to Lake Okeechobee. Instead of a reservoir with 12-foot walls, the Talisman lands would be converted more productively into a marsh that would cleanse polluted water before it is released into the Everglades. The construction that has been done could prove useful in creating the marsh.

Palm Beach County wasted millions by ignoring lawsuits and starting to build a Scripps Florida campus at Mecca Farms. The water district came dangerously close to a similar mistake with the A1 Reservoir, but pulled back before reaching the point of no return. There may be reason for the public to be a little frustrated, but there is no reason for the public to be angry.

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## Crist appoints three to water board

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Naples Daily News

ERIC STAATS

NAPLES Gov. Charlie Crist has appointed three new members to the South Florida Water Management District governing board that oversees Everglades restoration.

They are Joe Collins, 41, of Sebring, an engineering manager with agribusiness giant Lykes Bros.; Gladys Perez, 38, of Miami, a self-employed attorney; and Kevin Powers, 42, of Indiantown, partner with Indiantown Realty, according to Monday's announcement from the governor's office.

Collins success U.S. Sugar senior vice president Malcolm "Bubba" Wade, who stepped down in June 2008, as the water management board negotiated a buyout of U.S. Sugar assets south of Lake Okeechobee for Everglades restoration.

Perez succeeds Paul Huck Jr., who resigned in March, and Powers succeeds Stuart environmental consultant Melissa Meeker, whose term expired in March.

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## **Crist's SF water board appointments include civil rights lawyer**

07/21/2009

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St. Petersburg Times - Online

A Miami attorney is among three people Gov. Charlie Crist named Monday to the board of the South Florida Water Management District.

Gladys Perez, who has worked for Crist as a civil rights and environmental counsel, will join a Treasure Coast real estate agent and manager for the agricultural giant Lykes Brothers as members of a board overseeing a powerful, often controversial, agency that manages the water supply for 16 counties and directs Everglades restoration.

Kirk Fordham, chief executive officer for the Everglades Foundation, praised the appointments and predicted they would bolster sometimes shaky board support for Crist's \$536 million land deal with U.S. Sugar Corp. "It's my understanding these appointees all share the governor's vision," he said.

