

SFW

## TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2008

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

**Total Clips: 35**

Headline	Date	Outlet	Reporter
<a href="#">Fla. board OKs talks for US Sugar, Everglades deal</a>	06/30/2008	Associated Press (AP)	Skoloff, Brian
 <a href="#">Water district gives OK to Florida-sugar deal</a>	06/30/2008	Miami Herald - Online	CURTIS MORGAN
 <a href="#">Water managers give blessing to bid for Glades' `missing link'</a>	07/01/2008	Miami Herald - Online	
<a href="#">Florida's plan to buy out U.S. Sugar Corp.</a>	07/01/2008	Miami Herald	
 <a href="#">Sugar deal gets preliminary OK from Water district</a>	06/30/2008	South Florida Sun-Sentinel - Online	Fleshler, David
 <a href="#">Debt limit set to rise to allow sugar deal</a>	07/01/2008	Palm Beach Post - Online	Sorentroue, Jennifer
 <a href="#">Land deal requires borrowing \$1.7 billion</a>	06/30/2008	United Press International	
 <a href="#">AP U.S. NewsBrief at 4 46 p. m. EDT</a>	06/30/2008	Macro World Investor	
 <a href="#">Agency approves deal with U. S. Sugar</a>	07/01/2008	Sarasota Herald-Tribune - Online	Spinner, Kate
 <a href="#">Back to the mining debate</a>	07/01/2008	Palm Beach Post - Online	Engelhardt, Joel
 <a href="#">Water District Board Approves Sugar Deal</a>	06/30/2008	WTVJ-TV	

<a href="#"><u>SUGARS LAND IN THE EVERGLADES TO THE STATE FOR</u></a>	06/30/2008	NBC 2 News at 4 PM - WBBH-TV	
<a href="#"><u>OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION IS ONE STEP</u></a>	06/30/2008	WINK Noon News- WINK-TV	
<a href="#"><u>A NEARLY TWO MILLION DOLLAR PLAN TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES IS A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY.</u></a>	06/30/2008	Channel 9 News - WFTV	
<a href="#"><u>187-THOUSAND ACRES, CRUCIAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION. BUT AS</u></a>	06/30/2008	News 12 at 11 PM - WPEC-TV	
<a href="#"><u>THE BOARD OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT</u></a>	06/30/2008	First Coast News at 6 PM - WTLV-TV	
<a href="#"><u>SWEET DEAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION HAS ONE LESS HURDLE TO CLEAR.</u></a>	06/30/2008	WPBF News 25 at 11 PM - WPBF-TV	
<a href="#"><u>AND FLORIDA EVERGLADES RESTORATION, THE \$1.7</u></a>	06/30/2008	FOX 29 News at 10 PM - WFLX-TV	
<a href="#"><u>THE STATE IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO ACQUIRING ALL OF LAND NEEDED FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION.</u></a>	06/30/2008	Fox 4 News at 10 PM - WFTX-TV	
<a href="#"><u>FILTER TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES. 12 00 48</u></a>	06/30/2008	NewsChannel 5 at 11 PM - WPTV-TV	
<a href="#"><u>(there are \$1.75bn deal to save Everglades</u></a>	06/30/2008	Environmental Data Interactive Exchange	
<a href="#"><u>SWEET DEAL FOR KEYS</u></a>	07/01/2008	Key West Citizen	O'Hara, Timothy
<a href="#"><u>Crist Discusses Job Loss Due To The Sugar Land Deal</u></a>	07/01/2008	WPEC-TV	
<a href="#"><u>County weighs ban on new rock mines</u></a>	07/01/2008	Palm Beach Post - Online	PAUL QUINLAN

	<a href="#"><u>Good news arrives for Everglades' alligators</u></a>	06/30/2008	Arizona Daily Sun	SHEILA MADRAK
	<a href="#"><u>The Governor of Florida Saves the Everglades Ecosystem With a Million Dollar Deal</u></a>			
	<a href="#"><u>What becomes of Clewiston?</u></a>	06/30/2008	St. Petersburg Times - Online	
	<a href="#"><u>Workers key in Fla. land deal</u></a>	07/01/2008	Knoxville News-Sentinel, The	
	<a href="#"><u>Water managers aide Reyka murder weapon search</u></a>	07/01/2008	WPTV-TV	Dubetz, Danielle
	<a href="#"><u>BSO divers search Pompano lake for clues in deputy's slaying</u></a>			
	<a href="#"><u>Financially, state is betting against a major hurricane this year</u></a>	07/01/2008	South Florida Sun-Sentinel	Clark, Kevin
	<a href="#"><u>Hunt for Reyka gun goes on</u></a>	07/01/2008	Orlando Sentinel - Tallahassee Bureau	Deslatte, Aaron
	<a href="#"><u>Search fails to find gun in Broward deputy's death</u></a>	07/01/2008	Miami Herald	Beasley, Adam
	<a href="#"><u>Miami-Dade projects up for federal funding</u></a>	07/01/2008	Palm Beach Post	Jordan, Don
	<a href="#"><u>Conservation Groups Plan Legal Action to Prevent the Extinction of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow</u></a>	06/30/2008	South Florida Business Journal	

---

**Fla. board OKs talks for US Sugar, Everglades deal**

06/30/2008  
 Associated Press (AP)  
 Skoloff, Brian

[Return to Top](#)

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.\_A historic deal for Florida to acquire some 300 square miles of agricultural land for Everglades restoration has been ratified by water managers.

The move Monday paves the way for official negotiations on the potential \$1.75 billion purchase. The South Florida Water Management District board unanimously approved the negotiation process for the district to obtain all U.S. Sugar Corp.'s land in the Everglades.

Gov. Charlie Crist announced last week that the state and the nation's largest producer of cane sugar were close to an agreement on turning over the land for Everglades restoration.

The deal would mean the end of U.S. Sugar's operations. Officials hope to have a final agreement by November. U.S. Sugar would then be allowed to continue farming for another six years.

Copyright © 2008 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

---

## **Water district gives OK to Florida-sugar deal**

06/30/2008

Miami Herald - Online

CURTIS MORGAN

[Return to Top](#)

CURTIS MORGAN-Miami Herald

Negotiations for nearly 300 square miles of sugar farms officially began Monday as the South Florida Water Management District's governing board approved the framework of a \$1.75 billion deal that would be a landmark in Everglades history.

The nonbinding "statement of principles" doesn't mean the deal is close to done, but it allows the district to start hammering out the complex details of a proposed buyout of U.S. Sugar Corp. that environmentalists and Gov. Charlie Crist have hailed as the "missing link" to restoring the Everglades.

While board members unanimously endorsed moving ahead with the deal, with a target for closing it by November, they also acknowledged on Monday that there are numerous yet-to-be-resolved questions and concerns. Among them: the basic question of what might be built there and how many hundreds of millions, or more likely billions, of dollars it might wind up costing taxpayers.

And to make any Everglades project work, the state must not only buy up U.S. Sugar's lands, which sprawl across four counties, but complete land swaps with other growers.

"Between now and closing, we know a lot of work needs to be done," said Eric Buermann, a Miami attorney who chairs the district governing board.

Commissioners and landowners from communities in the Everglades Agricultural Area also warned that the proposal already was having economic impacts, driving down land prices and home sales.

---

## Water managers give blessing to bid for Glades' 'missing link'

[Return to Top](#)

07/01/2008

Miami Herald - Online

The state's stunning \$1.75 billion bid to buy out the biggest sugar grower in the Everglades got an expected but key endorsement Monday from South Florida water managers.

The governing board of the South Florida Water Management District agreed to officially open negotiations to purchase nearly 300 square miles of farmland that Gov. Charlie Crist and environmentalists call the critical "missing link" to restoring the struggling River of Grass. The aim is to get the deal done by November.

In reality, the vote simply gave formal approval for the district to continue hammering out the crucial details of a proposal crafted after eight months of secret talks between the Crist administration, U.S. Sugar Corp., and water managers.

While environmentalists almost universally lauded the proposal as "visionary" or "historic," political leaders from South Bay, Pahokee, and Hendry County fear it would be devastating to people in already poor rural communities.

Kevin McCarthy, a Hendry County commissioner, told the board the state had no plans for replacing 3,000 jobs and 25 percent of the county tax base tied to U.S. Sugar. Though the deal would allow U.S. Sugar to continue farming for six years or more, McCarthy said land sales had virtually stopped since Crist's surprise announcement last week.

"We do not have six years or six months for this board to take action. Bankrupting an entire county is simply not an option," McCarthy said. "I wonder if this board and this governor have truly considered the people of the Everglades."

Board members said the district, and governor, would work to boost the rural economies. They also acknowledged the deal came with an array of questions and risks.

### UNANIMOUS VOTE

But the six in attendance, all but one appointed by Crist, unanimously supported moving forward on a proposal proponents believe can help resolve long-standing pollution and storage problems not just for the Everglades but ravaged river estuaries on both coasts. Two members were absent. Malcolm "Bubba" Wade, a U.S. Sugar vice president named by former Gov. Jeb Bush, resigned last week, citing potential conflicts from the pending deal.

Board Chairman Eric Buermann, a Miami attorney, called the proposal "world-shaking." Buermann, who was in Europe on business when Crist announced the surprise deal last week, said media coverage had been "extremely positive," even in Europe. Still, Buermann said, "as a contractual attorney, I know the devil is in the details."

There are lots of potential devils in a complex deal that will be negotiated under the gun of a tight deadline. A "statement of principles" the board approved, though non-binding, sets a September target for reaching a deal and November for closing it.

### OTHER LAND

The state aims to not only acquire U.S. Sugar's lands, which sprawl across four counties, but also secure one wide swath between Lake Okeechobee and the remnant Everglades marshes. Doing that will require a series of land swaps with Florida

Crystals, the region's other major grower, and other landowners.

Mike Collins, a board member from Islamorada, said any environmental benefits of the deal could be undermined without those key tracts.

"If we buy the land and then try to negotiate for the other pieces of it, I don't think we're in a very good position," Collins said.

Other board members and Carol Wehle, the district's executive director, said it was a goal to get the entire plan done simultaneously, but the board didn't take up Collins' suggestion to put the land swaps and land buys on the same timeline.

The Sierra Club, which supports the purchase, also urged the Crist administration to place restrictions on any land swaps to prohibit future development, rock mining or power plants, suggestions the board didn't discuss. 'WEALTH FOR US ALL' Drew Martin, conservation chair of the Sierra Club's Loxahatchee chapter, urged the board to look beyond the agency's bottom line when negotiating the deal. The benefits of ensuring cleaner water for the Glades and region are incalculable, he said.

"One of the things we need to understand is that protecting the environment provides wealth for us all," he said. "We cannot get caught up in short-term economics."

Just the negotiations alone will be expensive. The board on Monday approved spending \$5 million to cover appraisals, environmental studies, and other work, with another \$2 million expected to be needed in October.

While the district and most environmentalists expect a combination of massive reservoirs and farm-pollution-treatment marshes, there are no specific plans, nor cost estimates for what those projects might cost taxpayers. Construction on such a massive scale could easily hit the billions, but might eliminate the need for other Everglades restoration work. It may be years before specific plans are developed.

"This is like the homeowner buying the vacant lot," Buermann said. "Now, we have to design our dream house."

---

## **Florida's plan to buy out U.S. Sugar Corp.**

07/01/2008

Miami Herald

[Return to Top](#)

The framework of the proposal to acquire U.S. Sugar Corp:

Property: Some 187,000 acres spread over four counties -- 107,316 in Palm Beach, 74,889 in Hendry, 5,656 in Glades and 80 in Gilchrist -- along with a sugar mill in Clewiston, a citrus plant in Hendry, two rail lines and all company assets.

Price:

\$1.75 billion, but both sides can back out if appraisals come back much higher or lower. Financing terms have not yet been set, but because the state intends to borrow much of the money, interest over 30 years would roughly double the cost.

Terms: U.S. Sugar Corp. would be allowed to continue farming for six years with no leasing fees; that could be extended if both sides agreed. Afterward, the company would cease operations.

Land swaps: To carve a key open swath of land south of Lake Okeechobee for Everglades restoration, the state is also negotiating land swaps with Florida Crystals, another major grower, and intends to sell other company assets.

Copyright © 2008 The Miami Herald

---

## **Sugar deal gets preliminary OK from Water district**

06/30/2008

South Florida Sun-Sentinel - Online

Fleshler, David

[Return to Top](#)

WEST PALM BEACH - The blockbuster plan for the state of Florida to acquire U.S. Sugar won preliminary approval from the today, opening the way for negotiations aimed at closing the deal by November.

The district's governing board voted 6-0 to begin detailed talks with the company, and it budgeted money for appraisals and environmental assessments of the land.

Although the initial terms were negotiated through the governor's office, the acquisition would be done by the water management district, which oversees drainage, water supplies and Everglades restoration.

Carol Wehle, the water management district's executive director, called today 'a very historic and exciting day.' Board members expressed concern about the cost of the deal and the economic impact on the communities around the lake, which would lose a major employer.

And during a public comment period, city and county commissioners from the communities around the lake pleaded with the board to take the blow to their economies into account in the celebratory rush to close the deal. 'No plans have been put forth to show how in excess of 3,000 jobs will be replaced,' said Kevin McCarthy, a Hendry County commissioner.

He said home sales have already stopped in the area. 'By your announcement, you have devalued our homes and businesses,' he said. 'Are we lesser citizens because have chosen to live in farming communities?' Environmentalists were unanimous in their applause for the plan, although some expressed concerns about the economic impact and the possibility of unpleasant environmental surprises on land used by U.S. Sugar for so many years. 'This acquisition can ultimately provide tremendous benefits for both natural and human environments,' said Jonathan Ullman of the Sierra Club.

Under the initial terms, the state of Florida would acquire all of the company's assets, including 187,000 acres around Lake Okeechobee, for \$1.75 billion.

Plans call for more land to be acquired south of the U.S. Sugar land through swaps to link the lake to the Everglades to the south.

Initial plans call for the land to be used for water storage, with a deep reservoir near the lake and wetlands connecting it to the rest of the Everglades.

The acquisition would allow the restoration of the historic link between Lake Okeechobee, although there's some debate already about whether the water will flow naturally from the lake or would require pumps and other water-control structures. The acquisition would address a host of environmental problems in South Florida.

It would allow a dramatic reduction of damaging discharges of fresh water from the lake to the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean.

It also would help cleanse the water of phosphorus and take pressure off the aging Herbert Hoover Dike that surrounds the lake.

---

## Debt limit set to rise to allow sugar deal

07/01/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

Sorentrue, Jennifer

[Return to Top](#)

Water managers are prepared to shatter their debt limit as they pursue a \$1.75 billion buyout of U.S. Sugar Corp. and its 187,000-acre empire in an initiative that Gov. Charlie Crist calls critical to securing the future of the Everglades.

The deal is so crucial, the South Florida Water Management District says, that the agency should change its debt policy, which restricts the burden to 20 percent of its annual property tax revenue, permit fees and related income.

Because of the U.S. Sugar deal, the district would have to pledge as much as 27 percent of that income next year to repay the money it borrows.

District board members endorsed the mammoth buyout in a 6-0 vote Monday, authorizing their staff to begin formal negotiations with the sugar-farming giant. A roomful of environmental activists and other spectators broke into applause.

'This is something people have looked for for a very long time,' district board Chairman Eric Buermann, a Miami lawyer and state Republican Party activist, said during the meeting in suburban West Palm Beach.

'This has been a world-shaking event,' said Buermann, who was in Europe when Crist announced the deal last week. 'Even in the European press, everything was extremely positive. I think everyone should be heartened by that.'

Board members also signed off on as much as \$5 million in spending for the appraisals, environmental studies and other steps needed to make the deal happen. An additional \$2 million will be needed for those purposes after Oct. 1.

Water managers have said the \$1.75 billion cost is based on estimates that U.S. Sugar provided. The district plans to begin work on the appraisals immediately.

District leaders estimate their yearly debt payments for the sugar deal alone would be \$117.6 million next year. The total payments for the purchase are expected to exceed \$3.5 billion over the next 30 years, including the costs of borrowing the money.

Those numbers don't include the costs of the expected next step: working out land swaps or other transactions to acquire property from the state's other major sugar grower, West Palm Beach-based Florida Crystals Corp.

The water district has a yearly budget exceeding \$1 billion and draws much of its revenue from property taxes it imposes in all or parts of 16 counties, from Orlando to the Keys. State leaders have said the district won't increase its tax rates to help pay for the sugar deal.

Board members said they would do everything they could to prevent the deal from harming the economy of the Glades, which has relied on sugar for a livelihood for decades.

But community leaders from Pahokee, South Bay and Hendry County said they want a seat at the table - now, not after the purchase has become a done deal.

'We should not and will not bear the brunt of Everglades restoration on behalf of the state, the nation and the world,' Hendry County Commissioner Kevin McCarthy said.

Since last week's announcement, the commissioner said, some home sales have stalled.

'We do not have six years, we do not even have six months, for this board and the state to take action,' McCarthy said. 'By your announcement, you have devalued our homes and businesses.'

Former Pahokee Mayor J.P. Sasser said the state should ensure that some of the land it is acquiring goes toward economic development that will create jobs.

'Everybody is talking about bringing in help,' Sasser told the water board. 'The bottom line, the reason we have never had economic development in the Glades, is due to lack of land. ... This is the last, best effort to save the endangered Everglades and the endangered Glades.'

'We are tired of fighting, but we will continue to fight before we let somebody run over the top of us,' he said. 'I know you are not going to abandon us now.'

The Miccosukee Indian tribe also expressed concerns, calling last week's purchase announcement 'a carefully scripted PR event.'

The tribe has refused to support the deal until its members know what will happen to the \$10.9 billion Everglades restoration plan that Florida and the federal government agreed to eight years ago.

That plan calls for creating a massive network of reservoirs, marshes and deep-storage wells around the Everglades' periphery, but would not re-create anything like the historic flow that once connected the Everglades with Lake Okeechobee.

'We do not believe this deal amounts to divine intervention,' said Claudio Riedi, an attorney for the tribe.

Water district board members Paul Huck and Robert 'Jerry' Montgomery did not attend Monday's meeting. A ninth board member, U.S. Sugar Executive Vice President Malcolm 'Bubba' Wade, resigned from the district last week to avoid a conflict of interest.

What happens next?

Water managers will begin formal negotiations with U.S. Sugar Corp.

The district will hire appraisers to determine the value of U.S. Sugar's land and assets.

The district's board must vote to change its debt policy before water managers can finance the purchase by selling \$1.7 billion in certificates that are similar to bonds.

The debt

Water managers must change their debt policy before they can finance the proposed \$1.75 billion deal.

The current policy prohibits the district from pledging more than 20 percent of its property tax revenue, permit fees and certain other income to repay bondholders.

Under the deal with U.S. Sugar, water managers say they will have to pledge 25 percent to 27 percent of that revenue for repayment during the next budget year. That debt also would include money the district has already borrowed for Everglades-related construction work.

The district would borrow \$1.7 billion of the purchase price while using \$50 million in cash.

Including interest and finance charges, the deal could cost more than \$3.5 billion over the next 30 years.

---

## **Land deal requires borrowing \$1.7 billion**

06/30/2008

United Press International

United Press International

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., June 30 (UPI) -- Financing a \$1.75 billion-dollar public land purchase in the Everglades in Florida would require borrowing \$1.7 billion, local officials said.

The South Florida Water Management District would raise the sum by issuing certificates of participation, which are similar to bonds, but can be issued without a voter referendum, the Palm Beach Post reported Monday.

The Management District would also use \$50 million of its reserves to finance the 187,000-acre deal with U.S. Sugar, considered a historic opportunity by environmentalists, the newspaper reported.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **AP U.S. NewsBrief at 4 46 p.m. EDT**

06/30/2008

Macro World Investor

Fla. board OKs talks for US Sugar, Everglades deal

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP), A historic deal for Florida to acquire some 300 square miles of agricultural land for Everglades restoration has been ratified by water managers. The move Monday paves the way for official negotiations on the potential \$1.75 billion purchase. The South Florida Water Management District board unanimously approved the negotiation process for the district to obtain all U.S. Sugar Corp.'s land in the Everglades.

Copyright 2008 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **Agency approves deal with U.S. Sugar**

07/01/2008

Sarasota Herald-Tribune - Online

Spinner, Kate

[Return to Top](#)

Kate Spinner - Sarasota Herald-Tribune

The board with the power to make or break Gov. Charlie Crist's plan to restore the Everglades unanimously agreed to start negotiations Monday on a historic \$1.7 billion deal to buy U.S. Sugar.

Officials with the South Florida Water Management District can begin to finalize the purchase of about 300 square miles of land owned by the sugar company that has been a big presence in the northern Everglades since 1931.

The 6-0 vote Monday also allows the water district to spend \$7 million previously allocated for restoration work on appraisals, environmental surveys and other costs associated with closing the deal. 'Everybody's optimistic and in the right frame of mind to try their darndest to do it,' said Eric Buermann, chairman of the district board.

The plan is to use the land, trading some of it, to form a large contiguous network of reservoirs and water treatment marshes between Lake Okeechobee and the remaining Everglades.

Buermann said the biggest hurdle will be to obtain contracts for the other parcels before the closing date with the sugar company. 'We need to know that we can use the U.S. Sugar property for its intended purpose and that means locking down these extraneous parcels that we need,' Buermann said. Water managers anticipate that planning and engineering for the reservoirs will take at least six years, during which time U.S. Sugar will continue farming and operating its business.

Several other Everglades projects, including one that would benefit Charlotte Harbor, are likely to be halted or scaled back because of the diversion of funds for the U.S. Sugar purchase.

The water management district, governed by a nine-member board that levies property taxes in 16 counties from Orlando to the Florida Keys, will pay for the sugar land, which includes two railroads, a sugar mill and a citrus processing plant.

A negotiated contract is scheduled for completion in 75 days, with closing set for November.

Two governing board members were absent from Monday's special meeting. One member, Malcolm Wade, U.S. Sugar executive vice president, resigned last week to avoid conflict of interest. 'Today's vote is a triumphant victory for every Floridian who cares about a steady supply of clean water and a vibrant Everglades ecosystem,' said Kirk Fordham, of the nonprofit Everglades Foundation.

Material from The Associated Press was used in this report.

---

## **Back to the mining debate**

07/01/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

Engelhardt, Joel

[Return to Top](#)

## Palm Beach Post Editorial Writer

Now we know why Carol Wehle kept quiet throughout the debate over mining in the Palm Beach County sugar cane fields.

The executive director of the South Florida Water Management District did not stifle herself because she believed that a giant mine planned by U.S. Sugar would help save the Everglades. She stayed quiet because she was busy buying U.S. Sugar to save the Everglades.

Now, she plans on stopping the mine that moved forward while she was silent. All those arguments thrown up by environmentalists to block the mine - arguments that would have stopped the mine cold with just a word of support from Ms. Wehle - will become the water management district's arguments to block the mine.

Yes, Ms. Wehle is happy to do an about-face. She freely acknowledges what only a few months ago would have been impossible for her to say: Digging up 7,000 acres in the most promising path for the movement of water from Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades would be irresponsible.

It's the least she can do. After all, she's asking taxpayers in the district's 16-county region to pony up \$1.75 billion - perhaps the most expensive conservation land purchase in the nation's history - to buy 187,000 acres in hopes of saving the Everglades. And that mine, on land her agency would own, is in the way.

'We will definitely have comments on their permit,' Ms. Wehle told The Post Editorial Board last week. 'That's not over.'

She'll be doing a lot more than writing a letter, which Palm Beach County officials, led by Commissioner Karen Marcus, begged her to do while the county tried to block the mines before conceding in a 4-2 vote April 24. Ms. Wehle couldn't say anything then about the district's efforts to buy U.S. Sugar and flood the area, she says now, because it would have been illegal interference in the sale negotiations. It also would have given away the secret.

Ms. Wehle and the water management district will be in the unusual position of opposing a mining permit for land the district owns. It's hard to imagine that those permits will be approved if opposed by the savior of the Everglades.

To make matters worse for the miners, they likely will lose another ally: the state Department of Transportation. DOT officials have backed the idea of mining in Palm Beach County's farm belt because mines produce road-building materials. But now DOT officials are likely to err on the side of saving the Everglades over collecting rocks, since the U.S. Sugar deal stands to be Gov. Crist's legacy.

The U.S. Sugar mine wasn't in the way of efforts to restore the Everglades way back in April, when the county granted the zoning. Back then, you see, the state didn't own U.S. Sugar's land. Now that it will, the restoration plan has changed. Suddenly, there's hope for water storage and cleansing marshes south of Lake Okeechobee, right where the environmental groups have been saying for years that they're needed.

Tom Van Lent of the Everglades Foundation spelled it out in January at the Everglades Coalition's annual retreat. Instead of above-ground storage south of the lake, the \$10.9-billion Everglades restoration plan rested on the precarious theory of storing lots of water underground. The idea wasn't working in tests. And it would cost \$3 billion.

Ms. Wehle hinted but refused to confirm that underground storage wouldn't work very well. Mining advocates argued that underground storage made their land expendable. County commissioners, lacking informed, powerful opposition from water managers, couldn't say no. And didn't.

But now, with a wide smile, Ms. Wehle can say unequivocally that the mine is going to be in the way of the new plan to save the Everglades. And she's going to let the environmental permitting agencies and her tenant - Florida Rock Industries - know it.

For county commissioners and environmentalists, it promises to be retribution of a special kind. They lost the battle, but now can win the war. For the rest of us, it's a special moment, too. Saving the Everglades has just been promoted. It now ranks above rock mining.

---

## **Water District Board Approves Sugar Deal**

06/30/2008

WTVJ-TV

WTVJ-TV

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. -- A historic land deal to acquire some 300 square miles of agricultural land for Everglades restoration has been ratified by water managers.

The move Monday paves the way for official negotiations on the potential \$1.75 billion purchase. The South Florida Water Management District board unanimously approved the negotiation process for the district to obtain all U.S. Sugar Corp.'s land in the Everglades.

Gov. Charlie Crist announced last week that the state and the nation's largest producer of cane sugar were close to an agreement on turning over the land for Everglades restoration.

The deal would mean the end of U.S. Sugar's operations. Officials hope to have a final agreement by November. U.S. Sugar would then be allowed to continue farming for another six years.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **SUGARS LAND IN THE EVERGLADES TO THE STATE FOR**

06/30/2008

NBC 2 News at 4 PM - WBBH-TV

NBC 2 News at 4 PM - WBBH-TV

THE LARGEST CONSERVATION PURCHASE IN STATE HISTORY IS MOVING FORWARD. THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT APPROVES A DEAL TO SELL US SUGARS LAND IN THE EVERGLADES TO THE STATE FOR RESTORATION PROJECTS. THE 1-POINT-75 BILLION DOLLAR DEAL INVOLVES 300 SQUARE MILES, THE DEAL WOULD MEAN THE END OF US SUGARS OPERATIONS. BUT COULD STILL CONTINUE TO FARM FOR ANOTHER 6 YEARS - ONCE THE DEAL REACHES A FINAL AGREEMENT IN NOVEMBER. A REMINDER TO THOSE LIVING ON SANIBEL - STARTING TOMORROW, FERTILIZERS CONTAINING NITROGEN AND PHOSPHOROUS MAY NOT BE USED ON LAWNS OR LANDSCAPING. THE CITY HAS WORKED OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT THE DANGERS THEY CAUSE TO THE ISLAND IN THEIR BE WISE IF YOU FERTILIZE CAMPAIGN. FOR MORE INFORMATION, YOU CAN LOG ON TO OUR WEBSITE, DOT-COM.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION IS ONE STEP**

06/30/2008

WINK Noon News- WINK-TV

WINK Noon News- WINK-TV

LOIS: AN HISTORIC LAND DEAL TO ACQUIRE SOME 300 SQUARE MILES OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO COMPLETION. THE DEAL HAS BEEN RATIFIED BY WATER MANAGERS. THE MOVE PAVES THE WAY FOR OFFICIAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE \$1.75 BILLION PURCHASE FROM THE STATE AND US SUGAR.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **A NEARLY TWO MILLION DOLLAR PLAN TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES IS A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY.**

06/30/2008

Channel 9 News - WFTV

Channel 9 News - WFTV

A NEARLY TWO MILLION DOLLAR PLAN TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES IS A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY. THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT IS GOING FORWARD WITH THE PURCHASE. LAST WEEK GOVERNOR CRIST ANNOUNCED THE PLAN TO BUY IT FROM US SUGAR CORPORATION. THERE ARE SOME CONCERNS BECAUSE THE INTEREST WOULD RUN A TOTAL OF \$3.5 BILLION.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **187-THOUSAND ACRES, CRUCIAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION. BUT AS**

06/30/2008

News 12 at 11 PM - WPEC-TV

News 12 at 11 PM - WPEC-TV

LIZ WATER MANAGERS TAKE THE NEXT BIG STEP IN THE MASSIVE SUGAR LAND DEAL. TODAY THE WATE BOARD OKAYS NEGOTIATING WITH US SUGAR FOR ITS 187-THOUSAND ACRES, CRUCIAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION. BUT AS CBS 12'S CHUCK WEBER SHOWS US, AFFECTED COMMUNITIES ALSO HAD THEIR SAY TODAY. (TAKE PKG) NO SUPER FOR NEXT GUYPKG OUTCUE: STD THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF SUGAR CANE, LIKELY TO CHANGE HANDS SOON, FROM US SUGAR CORPORATION, TO THE STATE, FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION. THE MASSIVE 1.7 BILLION DEAL ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK BY THE GOVERNOR, SET TO TAKE A STEP FORWARD HERE AT THIS MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT . IT CERTAINLY IS A ONCE IN A LIFE TIME OPPORTUNITY AND WE DO SUPPORT IT WHOLE HEARTEDLY. THE DEAL HAS SUPPORTERS, AND CRITICS. WE BELIEVE THIS IS AN IMPULSE BUY. AND PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITIES AROUND LAKE

[Return to Top](#)

OKEECHOBEE, FEARING THE LOSS OF HUNDREDS OF GOOD US SUGAR JOBS, ALSO SEE OPPORTUNITY. THE REASON WE HAVE NOT HAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLADES IS DUE TO LACK OF LAND. WE COULD NEVER GET SUGAR OFF OF THE LAND SO WE COULD SURVIVE. WATER MANAGERS PROMISE HELP FOR GLADES COMMUNITIES, AND INCLUSION IN TALKS AND PLANNING. THE WATER BOARD UNANIMOUSLY BACKS THE CONCEPT OF THE US SUGAR DEAL, AND GIVES THE OKAY TO START NEGOTIATING. SOUTH BAY CITY COMMISSIONER LINDA JOHNSON PLEASSED HER CITY'S LEADERS WILL BE INVOLVED. SINCE THEY HAVE INVESTED ALL THOSE YEARS IN THE CITY, GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE THEIR LEADERSHIP TO BE AT THE TABLE REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THIS THIS IS A DREAM COME TRUE FOR EVERYBODY WHO HAS STRUGGLED WITH EVERGLADES RESTORATION. WATER MANAGERS HOPE TO FINALIZE THE DEAL BY NOVEMBER. CHUCK WEBER CBS 12 NEWS. LIZ AT TODAY'S MEETING, A PORT OF PALM BEACH COMMISSIONER, TOLD THE AUDIENCE, PLANS WOULD SOON BE UNVEILED FOR A TRANSPORTATION HUB IN THE WESTERN COMMUNITIES.

---

## **THE BOARD OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

06/30/2008

First Coast News at 6 PM - WTLV-TV

First Coast News at 6 PM - WTLV-TV

THE STATE PLAN TO BUY 300 SQUARE MILES OF EVER GLAIDS IS RATIFIED NOW BY WATER MANAGERS AND GOVERNOR CRIST ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK THE STATE WOULD BIT LAND FROM THE US SHOE GAR CORPORATION FOR 1.75 BILLION DOLLAR. NOW THE BOARD OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT HAS OKAYED THAT PLAN THAT MEANS THE DISTRICT WILL BEGIN NEGOTIATING WITH THE SUGAR COMPANY. OFFICIAL HOPES TO HAVE THAT DEAL SIGNED BY SEPTEMBER.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **SWEET DEAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION HAS ONE LESS HURDLE TO CLEAR.**

06/30/2008

WPBF News 25 at 11 PM - WPBF-TV

[Return to Top](#)

WPBF News 25 at 11 PM - WPBF-TV

SWEET DEAL FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION HAS ONE LESS HURDLE TO CLEAR. IN A 6-4 VOTE THE DEAL WAS ENDORSED TO PURCHASE 187,000 ACRES OF USSUGAR FARM THAT MEANS THE DISTRICT CAN START FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMPANY. THIS IS A DREAM COME TRUE FOR EVERYBODY WHO HAS STRUGGLED WITH EVERGLADES RESTORATION. THE DISTRICT DETAILED W WHE THE M MONEY WOULD C COM FROM TO I THE LAND MOST OF THE FUNDS WILL COME FROM 30 YEAR BONDS IN A SEPARATE VOTE THE DISTRICT UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED TO START APPRAISING THE LAND THAT WILL COST FIVE MILLION DOLLARS. THE ENTIRE DEAL IS EXPECTED TO CLOSE IN ABOUT 75 DAYS.

---

## **AND FLORIDA EVERGLADES RESTORATION, THE \$1.7**

06/30/2008

FOX 29 News at 10 PM - WFLX-TV

FOX 29 News at 10 PM - WFLX-TV

MNGTS TAKE THE NEXT BIG STEP IN THE MASSIVE SUGAR LAND DEAL. THE WATER BOARD OKAYS NEGOTIATING WITH US SUGAR FOR 180,000 ACRES CRUCIAL FOR THE EVER GLADE RESTORATION, AND IT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES HAD THEIR SAY. THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF SUGAR CANE LIKELY TO CHANGE HANDS. AND FLORIDA EVERGLADES RESTORATION, THE \$1.7 BILLION DEAL ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR SET TO STEAK A STEP FORWARD FOR THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT. IT'S A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY. THE DEAL HAS SUPPORTERS AND CRITICS. WE BELIEVE IT'S AN IMPULSE BUY. AND PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITIES AROUND OKEECHOBEE BEARING THE LOSS OF SUGAR JOBS ALSO SEE OPPORTUNITY. WE HAVE NOT HAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DUE TO LACK OF LAND. WE COULD NEVER GET SUGAR OFF OF THE LAND, SO WE COULD SURVIVE. WATER MANAGERS PROMISE HELP FOR THE GLADES COMMUNITIES AND INCLUSION, AND THE WATER BOARD UNANIMOUSLY BACKS THE US SUGAR DEAL, AND GIVES THE OKAY TO START NEGOTIATING, AND SOUTH BASED CITY COMMISSIONER CITY JOHNS SON PLEASED THE CITY LEADERS WILL BE INVOLVED. GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE THEIR LEADERSHIP TO BE AT THE TABLE REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THIS PROJECT. THIS IS A DREAM COME TRUE FOR EVERYBODY WHO HAS STRUGGLED WITH EVERGLADES RESTORATION. AND THEY HOPE TO FINALIZE THE US SUGAR DEAL BY NOVEMBER. CHUCK WEBER FOX 29.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **THE STATE IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO ACQUIRING ALL OF LAND NEEDED FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION.**

06/30/2008

Fox 4 News at 10 PM - WFTX-TV

[Return to Top](#)

Fox 4 News at 10 PM - WFTX-TV

THE STATE IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO ACQUIRING ALL OF LAND NEEDED FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION. THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT TOLD ITS LAWYERS TO BEGIN DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS TO PURCHASE THE ASSETS OF UNITED STATES SUGAR CORPORATION. THAT INCLUDES THE 187-THOUSAND ACRES OF LAND NEEDED FOR THE RESTORATION IN THE EVERGLADES. OFFICIALS HOPE TO HAVE A FINAL AGREEMENT IN THE NEXT 2-MONTHS, AND THE SALE CLOSED BY NOVEMBER. EVERGLADES RESTORATION

---

## **FILTER TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES. 12**

**00 48(there are**

06/30/2008

NewsChannel 5 at 11 PM - WPTV-TV

NewsChannel 5 at 11 PM - WPTV-TV

A MASSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT THAT WILL IMPACT SOUTH FLORIDA FOR YEARS TO COME, IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO COMPLETION. THE GOVERNING BOARD FOR THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT APPROVED A RESOLUTION THIS MORNING CARVING OUT A GAME PLAN FOR THE BLOCKBUSTER PROPOSAL TO BUY OUT US SUGAR. DETAILS OF THE PLAN CALL FOR THE SALE TO BE 1 POINT 75 BILLION DOLLARS. US SUGAR WILL HAVE SIX YEARS TO PHASE OUT OPERATIONS. 187 THOUSAND ACRES WOULD BE ACQUIRED, MUCH OF WHICH WOULD BE TURNED INTO MARSH TO ACT AS A FILTER TO RESTORE THE EVERGLADES. 12:00:48(there are a lot of moving parts here, its a complex transaction a lot of people are gonna need to be involved> WATER MANAGERS WILL NEGOTIATE A CONTRACT OVER THE NEXT 75 DAYS. A DEAL COULD BE INKED BY THE END OF THE YEAR. A COUPLE'S LONG JOURNEY TO HAVE A FAMILY IS FINALLY OVER. THEY'RE HOME TONIGHT AFTER TRAVELING THOUSANDS OF MILES TO PICK UP THEIR SONS.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## **\$1.75bn deal to save Everglades**

06/30/2008

Environmental Data Interactive Exchange

[Return to Top](#)

## Kate Martin - Environmental Data Interactive Exchange

Florida's rapidly-shrinking Everglades have been thrown a lifeline by a \$1.75bn deal agreed by state authorities.

State Governor Charlie Crist last week unveiled a strategy to rescue the world-famous wetlands which will see state authorities buy nearly 300m square miles of wetlands - an area almost the size of New York City - from the United States Sugar Corporation.

The aim of the scheme is to restore the 'River of Grass', a river that flows from Lake Okeechobee into Florida Bay, and safeguard the St Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries.

Announcing the scheme, Governor Crist said: 'We have an opportunity to provide the critical missing link in our restoration activities.

'I can envision no better gift to the Everglades, or the people of Florida, or to our country than to place in public ownership this missing link that represents the key to true restoration.'

Robert Buker, president and CEO of the United States Sugar Corporation, added: 'This is a watershed event in national conservation history, and a paradigm shift for the Everglades and the environment in Florida, one that would have been inconceivable in years past. Yet, here we are.'

State officials said the acquisition would enable them to store and clean water on a scale never before contemplated, dramatically cutting pollution and creating vital reserves for dry periods.

One of the major benefits will be eliminating the need for 'back-pumping' water into Lake Okeechobee from the Everglades Agricultural Area to meet water supply needs, a process which can significantly affect water quality.

In a statement on their website, local campaign group Friends of the Everglades said they had spent years calling for the purchase of the land to protect it.

'Our efforts, and yours, with the help and foresight of Governor Crist and the new board of the South Florida Water Management District are apparently paying off. This is an historic turn in the course of Everglades restoration,' they said.

The Everglades has shrunk to half the size it was a century ago following the draining of marshland for agriculture, development and flood control.

Send to a friend

Their email address

Your Message

Enter number above (anti-spam)

(We will not record this email address)

Send to a friend Printer friendly

Link to this page

Simply copy and paste the HTML below to link to this story

Link to this page Comment

Source: edie newsroom

This story is tagged as:

government| North America | USA | water pollution | water saving | wetlands

Click on a keyword to see more stories on that topic

Faversham House Group Ltd 2008. edie news articles may be copied or forwarded for individual use only. No other reproduction or distribution is permitted without prior written consent.

---

## **SWEET DEAL FOR KEYS**

07/01/2008

Key West Citizen

O'Hara, Timothy

[Return to Top](#)

Benefits of U.S. Sugar purchase to reach reef

BY TIMOTHY O'HARA -Citizen Staff

South Florida water managers are meeting today with property appraisers, the first step in a historic \$1.7 billion purchase of nearly 300 square miles of sugar cane fields from the United States Sugar Corp. The move is seen as a monumental step to restoring natural water flow through one of the nation's environmental wonders — the Florida Everglades — and to reduce agricultural pollutants that cause environmental trouble as far downstream as the Florida Keys reef tract.

Gov. Charlie Crist announced the historic purchase at a June 24 press conference in Palm Beach County.

Nutrient runoff and pollution from the sugar fields has long been a sore subject for conservation groups and government agencies working to protect the Everglades ecosystem, which includes Florida Band and the Keys reef tract.

Runoff from the Everglades Agriculture Area — much of it owned by the United States Sugar Corp. — is blamed for harmful algal blooms that deplete water of oxygen and smother marine life, including coral. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary officials and Keys conservation groups reveled in the news Monday when the South Florida Water Management District board voted to begin negotiating terms of the deal, which include allowing U.S. Sugar to continue production on the 187,000 acres for the next six years.

Crist described the deal as the largest environmental land acquisition in Florida history. The state has agreed to borrow up to \$1.7 billion to purchase the area, which would guarantee the land will not be developed.

The "detailed and confidential purchase agreement" negotiations could last for up to 75 days, said water district spokesman Randy Smith. He said the ultimate purchase price and agreement will depend on the appraisals, and will require approval by the district's board.

The proposed agreement between the Water Management District and U.S. Sugar involves the public purchase of nearly 300 square miles spanning four South Florida counties.

The land would be used to re-establish part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades through a managed system of storage and treatment, Smith said.

The district, together with the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development,

said it will work closely with communities surrounding the Everglades Agricultural Area on an economic transition that could make the area more open to different forms of environmental tourism.

"I am absolutely thrilled," said Audubon's Tavernier Science Center Research Director Jerry Lorenz, who has been conducting roseate spoonbill studies in the Everglades for years. "This was absolutely critical."

Lorenz said he does not believe the purchase will take away money from other aspects of the roughly \$10 billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project, which he described as stalled.

"This could be the project that jump-starts the project," Lorenz said. "This could open a whole new set of windows."

Benefits of the purchase include increases in water storage to reduce harmful freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida's coastal rivers and estuaries, delivery of cleaner water to the Everglades and preventing thousands of tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades, Florida Bay and waters surrounding the Keys.

"There is an interconnected system that runs from central Florida to the Everglades to our local waterways," said Chris Berg, and outreach coordinator with the Keys chapter of The Nature Conservancy. "This is the best news to come out about Everglades restoration in years."

tohara@keysnews.com

---

## **Crist Discusses Job Loss Due To The Sugar Land Deal**

07/01/2008  
WPEC-TV

WPEC

People in the Glades ... still reeling over last week's announcement that the "sweet life" is coming to an end. The state will buy out U.S. Sugar corporation to make way for a major piece of the everglades restoration project , so about 1700 people will likely lose their jobs.

CBS 12 caught up with Governor Charlie Crist during his Monday visit to West Palm Beach to ask him about the job loss. All of the affected employees work in the corporation's cane fields, headquarters, and citrus plant... along with its milling and refining facilities.

But the Governor insists the state can and will help replace those jobs.

"It's about a six year transition. It gives us plenty of time to develop potential working opportunities for the people in the affected areas. Eco-tourism comes to mind. I have tasked the head of the state office of tourism, trade and economic development to step and help make sure those people are taken care of and they will be." said

The shutdown is expected to hit cities like Clewiston, Belle Glade and Pahokee especially hard because most of the dollars earned and spent in those communities are linked to U-S sugar.

Executives with U-S Sugar say they're working on incentives to encourage employees to stay with the company until it closes six years from now.

[Return to Top](#)

---

## County weighs ban on new rock mines

07/01/2008

Palm Beach Post - Online

PAUL QUINLAN

[Return to Top](#)

PAUL QUINLAN-Palm Beach Post

WEST PALM BEACH Palm Beach County commissioners will consider a temporary ban on new rock mines in the county's western farmlands to ensure that no additional blasting occurs in the territory of any Everglades restoration plan that takes shape following the state's purchase of U.S. Sugar Corp.

The commission Monday asked its legal staff to bring a draft ordinance back for consideration by late July or early August. The ban would take the form of a one-year moratorium on any uses of farmland that would require a board vote, which could cover expansions of some existing mines.

The prospect of resurrecting a mining moratorium in the county comes as the South Florida Water Management District works to negotiate the details of its proposed purchase of U.S. Sugar's 187,000 acres. The state hopes to use the land to restore the long-lost link for water to move between Lake Okeechobee and Florida Bay.

Commissioner Karen Marcus said water district Executive Director Carol Wehle encouraged putting a ban in place while the district completes the land deal and revises its restoration plans.

'I think they appreciate the help,' Marcus said.

In recent months, before the U.S. Sugar deal became public, the commission approved about 11,000 acres of new mines in western Palm Beach County, some of which may lie in the path of a restored Everglades. Then Wehle and her agency refused to take a stance on those decisions, despite pleas from environmentalists.

The commission previously called for a less sweeping ban on new mining permits until a study of the environmental effects of rock mining in the sugar region could be completed, but a legal challenge prevented that ban from taking effect.

With a hearing on the issue fast approaching, commissioners voted unanimously Monday to repeal that earlier ban on the grounds that it had been rendered obsolete.

Commissioners Burt Aaronson and Mary McCarty were absent during discussion of both mining questions at the end of Monday's zoning meeting. Of the remaining five, only Commissioner Bob Kanjian objected to the staff's working to draft a new mining moratorium, saying it would rob the commissioners of their decision-making responsibilities.

'I hope that we don't really take a serious look at a moratorium on anything, quite frankly,' Kanjian said. 'That's our job. Our job is to make decisions up here.'

---

## Good news arrives for Everglades' alligators

06/30/2008

Arizona Daily Sun

SHEILA MADRAK

[Return to Top](#)

SHEILA MADRAK-Arizona Daily Sun

While flying at night over south Florida one can experience the sharp contrast between sprawling beach towns and cities and the darkness that is Everglades National Park. A southbound plane into Fort Lauderdale will dip slightly as it turns towards the east coast allowing window-seated passengers to see the harsh line that separates light from dark. The development of south Florida has literally pushed as far as it legally can to the edge of the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States, and the effects have been significant. Historically, water in Florida flowed from the Kissimmee River in central Florida to Lake Okeechobee and southward to the estuaries of Biscayne Bay, the Ten Thousand Islands and Florida Bay ([www.nps.gov/ever](http://www.nps.gov/ever)). This moving sheet of water defined the ecosystems of the southern half of the state and covered nearly 11,000 square miles ([www.nps.gov/ever](http://www.nps.gov/ever)). With the settlement and development of south Florida, everything changed. Wetlands were originally drained and dredged to create agricultural land which eventually became the vast and contiguous communities we see today. Thus far, the Everglades have paid a steep price for this development. Nearly 50 percent of the original wetlands no longer exist and many unique species are facing their demise, including: manatee, Cape Sable seaside sparrows, Miami blackheaded snakes, wood storks, and the beloved Florida panther. Countless other species are facing declines of up to 90 percent of historic populations including many wading birds, such as egrets, herons, and ibises. The encroachment of humans on these wetlands has also proved devastating for populations of American crocodiles and alligators; each population facing their own suite of problems. Stories about the Everglades have been bittersweet as far back as I can remember. Discussions of its beauty and deterioration have been in the news for more than 20 years. I was a south Floridian for a period of time while attending graduate school in Boca Raton, Fla. During that time, I was fortunate to have an insider's view of the Everglades; walking through areas that visitors can only view from boardwalks and trails. The quiet beauty of the Everglades impressed me like few things have. I felt the loss that the Everglades have experienced and I've since hoped for a return to the way things were. Now, Everglades inhabitants and enthusiasts (like me) received the best news they have had in years a glimmer of hope that the Everglades wetlands may be restored and that some of the damage could be mitigated. Florida Governor Charlie Crist, the self-proclaimed 'Everglades governor,' held a news conference on June 24 to announce a \$1.75 billion deal to purchase lands owned and operated by the U.S. Sugar Corporation 187,000 acres to be exact. The area is just south of Lake Okeechobee and researchers are hoping to reestablish the north-south flow of water and restore the Everglades in ways that many would not have dreamed possible in their lifetimes. This Everglades deal and hopefully subsequent restoration success would prove that no project is too big to undo some of the damage that we humans have done to our environment! Here's hoping that the Everglades deal is the first of many undertakings in our world to help restore natural habitats and fragile ecosystems. Bravo! Sheila V. Madrak can be reached for comments, questions and suggestions at [animal.instincts08@gmail.com](mailto:animal.instincts08@gmail.com).

---

## **The Governor of Florida Saves the Everglades Ecosystem With a Million Dollar Deal**

07/01/2008  
WTVX-TV

[Return to Top](#)

Governor Charlie Crist came to an agreement with representatives of U.S. Sugar to buy the companys property in the Everglades, located at the southern end of Lake Okeechobee, the heart of this ecosystem.

Negotiations are still underway but spokesperson for the state, said that a deal will be signed in September. Once implemented, U.S. Sugar will have six more years to cultivate the land before operations are closed.

Crist said that the deal is as monumental as the creation of the first national park in the country, Yellowstone.

This means that if we succeed, and I think we will, this would be the largest acquisition for conservation ever mad in the history of Florida, said Crist.

The land will be used to restore the natural flow in the reservoir after years of agriculture and construction. The agriculture in the region has long been considered an obstacle to the restoration of the region because of the fertilizers and other contaminants used on the land, all which block the natural flow of the water.

The agreement would not end the production of sugar in the Everglades. At least 100,000 acres of land are used by other companies that will continue to produce sugar.

The CEO of U.S. Sugar, Robert Bucher, said that the agreement is monumental, but added that he is sad to see his business close. He employs 1,700 workers.

We built a company that is now a pillar in the Florida agricultural community, said Bucher. For that reason I feel sadOn the other hand, I am proud of what we are doing here.

Bucher said that the companys decision had nothing to do with money, although he admits that the sugar sector has been battling in recent years to keep up with cheaper foreign imports.

David Guest, an attorney that has been working for years for the restoration of the Everglades, and an adversary of U.S. Sugar, said that Tuesdays announcement was a victory.

---

## **What becomes of Clewiston?**

06/30/2008

St. Petersburg Times - Online

[Return to Top](#)

By Kris Hundley-St. Petersburg Times

CLEWISTON The day after U.S. Sugar delivered a seismic shock to this town on the southern edge of Lake Okeechobee, things seemed strangely the same, yet different. Like a close relative had just died and nobody had quite come to grips with the loss.

Robert Coker, the company's senior vice president, was still barreling down the halls of U.S. Sugar's Tara-like headquarters.

Joel Granville, a machine operator at the company's mill, was high-tailing it home on his bike at the end of the afternoon shift.

And Butch Wilson, laid off in October after 32 years at U.S. Sugar, was behind his desk as curator of the Clewiston Museum, a shrine to the town sugar built. But for the second day in a row, Wilson was besieged by reporters, wanting his take on news that his former employer had agreed to sell all its assets to the state of Florida for \$1.75-billion. 'We always thought we were privileged to live in a small town, with a company that was so self-sufficient and created such a diversity of jobs,' said Wilson, 57. 'It's just a shock they decided to sell to the environmentalists.' Coker, built like a bulldog with tenacity to match, has been battling for U.S. Sugar's interests on the local, state and federal levels for 26 years. A graduate in political science from Florida State University, he married the daughter of Clewiston's long-time mayor. For years he was known around town as 'Mindy's husband.' Offered a post as 'director of nothing important' at U.S. Sugar at age 23, he felt like he'd died and gone to heaven. 'I thought the guys there were at the top of the pole,' he said.

Now Coker, 49, is at the top of that pole, and he just maneuvered a deal to do away with the whole shebang in about six years. U.S. Sugar's nearly 300 square miles will become the missing link in the state's comprehensive Everglades restoration project.

Coker denied the company caved in to environmentalists, who recently forced U.S. Sugar to stop back-pumping water from its fields into Lake Okeechobee. 'For their level of conviction that we have horns and a tail, we have the same level of conviction that we've done what's right and reasonable,' he said.

Nor was U.S. Sugar ready to give up on agriculture in South Florida, where it cultivates 187,000 acres in sugar cane and citrus. Coker said the company, which reportedly had revenues of \$398-million last year, has been profitable all but one year during his career. And the recently passed federal farm bill, which guarantees domestic sugar growers 85 percent of the U.S. market, should be a boon for all farmers. 'There's absolutely a future for agriculture in Florida,' he said.

So why would one of the nation's largest agribusinesses consider closing up shop?

Coker sidestepped the question, saying it was his 'fiduciary responsibility' to bring Gov. Charlie Crist's surprise November buyout offer before U.S. Sugar's directors. The board, which includes relatives of Charles Stewart Mott, who founded the company in 1931, had dismissed another suitor's offer of \$575-million in 2005 and again last year. But Coker, who said he never spoke directly to Crist about the deal, had a feeling the state could come up with an acceptable figure. 'When the governor's got something on his mind, he can be pretty specific,' Coker said. 'There are people who may have underestimated him in the past.' After the holidays, U.S. Sugar's employees began intense negotiations with state and South Florida Water Management District officials. Talks were so top-secret, Coker didn't even tell his wife. The sugar people wanted an all-or-nothing deal. 'They couldn't just come in and buy 25,000 acres of citrus groves or sugar cane,' Coker said of properties which include a sugar refinery, citrus processing plant and a 120-mile railroad. 'All the assets are an integral part of our business.' The state still needs to get an appraisal of U.S. Sugar's holdings. And details of a lease-back arrangement, which will keep the company going for at least six years, need to be worked out. Then U.S. Sugar will morph from big boss to tenant farmer. Coker downplayed the transition. 'We're going

to continue investing in this business through the last harvest,' he said. 'We've got to work every day like we're going to be here for the next 20 years.' Sitting on a worn bench in front of Local 57 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Tom Owens said he understood the sale was the best option in a no-win situation. 'Robert Buker (U.S. Sugar's president) told us the state made an offer that was close to fair market, and they could have come in and taken our land anyway," said Owens, a mill mechanic for 22 years. 'The company has been battling this since '94 and the Everglades Forever Act.' Owens said managers started cutting back on capital outlays at the mill about four months ago, but everybody chalked it up to general belt-tightening that had seen union membership sliced in half to 500. Despite the layoffs, workers expected to die or retire at the plant, where wages were double what they could earn elsewhere in town. 'Used to be you couldn't beg, borrow or steal one of these jobs," said Owens, 44. 'You had to wait until somebody passed away.' Greg Thompson, in his first year as union president after 19 years as a power plant operator, said workers were happy to hear promises there would be no layoffs for six years. And though the union hasn't negotiated severance, Thompson expected it will match the year's salary being offered to non-union hourly employees. Salaried employees will get two years' pay.

Long-time employees will also be able to cash in shares they've accrued in the company. Valued earlier this year at about \$200 each, shares will jump to about \$350 a share when the transaction closes. But nobody's predicting a boom of sugar-millionaires.

Even many veteran white-collar workers have amassed fewer than 1,000 shares. And a 12-year mill worker had fewer than 150 shares. 'Some people will do fairly well, and they deserve it,' Thompson said of the payout. 'People are wondering if it's enough for them to pick up and move somewhere else.' The best scenario, according to Thompson, the union president, would be for another manufacturer a food processor maybe to take over U.S. Sugar's state-of-the-art mill and refinery complex the day after the last crop of cane passes through.

At corporate headquarters, Coker spins out a similar fantasy. Maybe the refinery, the largest in the world, could be retooled to turn sorghum or switchgrass into fuel, he said. 'The technology of alternative energy will catch up with the economics,' said Coker, admitting U.S. Sugar tried and failed to make a go of ethanol. 'I could see this area becoming a major player with its open land and transportation infrastructure.' But that was speculation about a rosy ending on a summer's day when afternoon rain clouds were piling up overhead.

Joel Granville, 31, has worked at the mill, seven days on, two days off, for a dozen years. Pedaling home Wednesday, he paused before the storm.

---

## **Workers key in Fla. land deal**

07/01/2008

Knoxville News-Sentinel, The

[Return to Top](#)

## Knoxville News-Sentinel

With as much fanfare and publicity as possible, Florida Gov. Charlie Crist and representatives from U.S. Sugar and the South Florida Water Management District announced that the state would purchase 187,000 acres of land, plus equipment, a railroad spur and a mining operation from U.S. Sugar for about \$1.7 billion.

Those who have long seen the sugar cane and agricultural lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area as the 'missing link' between Lake Okeechobee and the 'River of Grass' were euphoric about the purchase, seeing it as the way to re-create the water flow between the lake and the Everglades via a managed system of reservoirs and wetlands.

It is certainly an environmental coup of epic proportions, and we applaud the transaction.

But, for the 1,700 U.S. Sugar workers who depend on this company for their livelihood, it is quite a different story, despite the planned six-year transition and the company's payouts to its employees.

District Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle told reporters that the district would work with the local community, the Florida tourism people and those in economic development to create an economic strategy. That's all well and good, but this isn't an economically booming area to begin with.

The state got what it wanted with a link between the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. Now it's time for the state and its leaders, both within the Florida Legislature and Congress, to step up and make sure that new life for the Everglades doesn't signal the death of the economy just north of it.

Post your comment

(Requires free registration.)

Comments are the sole responsibility of the person posting them. You agree not to post comments that are off topic, defamatory, obscene, abusive, threatening or an invasion of privacy. Violators may be banned. [Click here for our full user agreement.](#)

---

## **Water managers aide Reyka murder weapon search**

07/01/2008

WPTV-TV

Dubetz, Danielle

[Return to Top](#)

Reported by: Danielle Dubetz -WPTV

Sgt. Chris Reyka POMPANO BEACH, FL -- Divers are hoping to "up their odds" of finding the weapon used to kill Broward Sheriff's Office Sargeant Chris Reyka. "We're prepared to search every lake and canal in Broward County until we find the evidence," said Jim Leljedal with B.S.O.

Monday the Broward County Sheriff's Office was at it again, searching a residential lake near the 800 block of North Powerline Road for the most valuable piece of evidence... the gun that was used to kill Sgt. Chris Reyka.

"This lake is located just a short distance from where Sgt. Reyka was murdered so we think this is a good logical place we should be searching," Leljedal said.

Sgt. Reyka, from Wellington, was shot in a Pompano Beach Wallgreens' parking lot last August when investigators say he got out of his patrol car to inspect a suspicious vehicle.

Detectives haven't named suspects, but say arrests in connection with other drug store robberies were significant to the case. In the meantime, the search for evidence continues.

Investigators say they've searched many bodies of water more than 20 times. Monday's effort turned up nothing but they'll keep looking.

"We're prepared to take as long as it takes," said Leljedal.

The Sheriff's Office says this lake was filled with hydrilla, a thick underwater weed that made it difficult to search. The South Florida Water Management District stepped up, cleared the weeds, making the job of the Broward County Sheriff's Office much easier.

"It's going to mean our divers searching inch by inch of that lake," Leljedal said.

The Sheriff's Office says while they could prosecute without the weapon they intend to keep looking until they find it.

They're hoping the gun will enable them to name a suspect.

---

## **BSO divers search Pompano lake for clues in deputy's slaying**

07/01/2008

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Clark, Kevin

[Return to Top](#)

By Macollvie Jean-François and Kevin Clark | South Florida Sun-Sentinel

POMPANO BEACH - A Broward Sheriff's Office dive team searched a lake for evidence Monday, in hopes of finding clues in the unsolved murder of Sgt. Christopher Reyka. The items found — bottles, a crowbar, random debris — did not seem promising.

That's the typical result of numerous tips the agency has followed up in the 11 months since Reyka was slain. But the agency remains resolute in its quest to find the killer.

"We're keenly aware that it's been almost a year," Sheriff's spokesman Jim Leljedal said. "But that's not deterring us. It's just making us more determined. This case is the most important pending case that we have."

Reyka, 51, was shot dead Aug. 10 in the parking lot of a 24-hour Walgreens at 960 S. Pompano Parkway. The 18-year law enforcement veteran had been checking license plates for possible stolen vehicles. He left behind a wife and four children.

One of those tips led divers to Esquire Lake, 801 N. Powerline Road, on Monday. The lake is less than two miles from the shooting site, and runs behind the Pinnacle Village residential community. Dive Team members first searched it Thursday, and are expected to continue looking this week, Leljedal said.

The dive team has wanted to search the lake for weeks, but had to wait for the South Florida Water Management District to clear it of potentially dangerous vegetation.

He would not say specifically what evidence they were looking for.

In the past, authorities have asked the public to help them find the gun used in the case, a suspicious car and the stolen license plate Reyka entered into his computer moments before he was killed — Florida tag F168UJ.

Deputies have reviewed tips and have been rechecking leads for any clues missed the first time around.

In December, deputies arrested three robbery suspects, one of whom told them the gun used to kill Reyka may have been dumped in a canal just east of I-95. The divers surfaced with three guns, but none was the murder weapon.

Reyka's case has been featured on America's Most Wanted, but to no avail.

To help keep the case fresh in people's minds, numerous memorial services, fundraisers and other events have been held to honor Reyka and other slain law enforcement officers.

Dive team excursions such as Monday's also encourage people not to forget the unsolved slaying, Leljedal said. And any piece of information that may jog people's memories should be reported.

"It may be some obscure piece of information, or something someone just didn't think was important," Leljedal said. "That might be the break."

"This is a case that we are bound and determined to solve," he added. "We're just going to continue until we can make an arrest."

Crimes Stoppers has a \$267,000 reward available for information that leads to an arrest. The Broward Sheriff's Office asks anyone with information on the shooting death of Sgt. Reyka to call Broward Crime Stoppers at 954-493-8477 (TIPS) or log on to [www.browardcrimestoppers.org](http://www.browardcrimestoppers.org).

Macollvie Jean-François can be reached at [mjfrancois@sun-sentinel.com](mailto:mjfrancois@sun-sentinel.com) or 954-385-7922.

---

## Financially, state is betting against a major hurricane this year

07/01/2008

Orlando Sentinel - Tallahassee Bureau  
Deslatte, Aaron

[Return to Top](#)

Aaron Deslatte | Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE - For the second consecutive year, Florida's policymakers are betting the state won't be hit by a major hurricane.

Gov. Charlie Crist and the Florida Cabinet had told the state's risk managers to find potential buyers for as much as \$11 billion in bonds that would be needed to pay claims if the state is racked by a Katrina-sized hurricane.

But with financial markets in tatters, state money managers say they've struck out.

"The terms that we are getting are just outrageously expensive," said Jack Nicholson, director of the state's hurricane catastrophe fund.

Translation: The state now will hope for the best.

For the past two summers, Florida has tried unsuccessfully to shift risk from the catastrophe fund to private markets.

The fund sells discounted reinsurance to private carriers -- allowing them, theoretically, to pass the savings on to consumers. The Legislature dramatically expanded the fund in 2006, leaving it liable for as much as \$29.1 billion this year if a massive storm should strike Tampa or Miami.

If that happens, Florida would have to sell bonds to help insurers pay claims. But with about \$8 billion in cash and the expectation the state could sell a maximum of \$10 billion in bonds, officials fear a possible \$11 billion shortfall.

The catastrophe fund faces "its highest potential liability ever" at a time of "global financial markets that have been exceptionally volatile and fragile," financial adviser John Forney wrote to state officials in mid-June.

To unload some of that risk, Florida asked experts from firms such as Lehman Brothers and JP Morgan Chase to shop for reinsurance or to set up advance bonding agreements that a buyer would have to honor after the storm.

The cheapest reinsurance they could find would cost taxpayers \$1 billion this summer -- and cover less than half of that \$11 billion gap.

The bonding option would cost at least \$280 million -- just to reserve the right to sell \$5 billion in bonds.

The catastrophe fund can cover its losses if Florida takes a mid-sized hit, or even a series of storms as in 2004 that don't directly hit the biggest markets.

"They are in good shape for a lot of storms," said Sam Miller, with the Florida Insurance Council.

"It's just that monster storm that's real problematic."

Aaron Deslatte can be reached at [adeslatte@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:adeslatte@orlandosentinel.com) or 850-222-5564.

---

## Hunt for Reyka gun goes on

07/01/2008

Miami Herald

Beasley, Adam

[Return to Top](#)

BY ADAM H. BEASLEY-Miami Herald

More videos Aug. 10 -- a solemn date etched in the minds of almost every Broward Sheriff's Office employee -- inches closer every day.

The first anniversary of Sgt. Chris Reyka's slaying is less than six weeks away, and his killer or killers still have not been brought to justice.

"It would be nice to clear this case before the anniversary," BSO spokesman Jim Lejdedal said.

The BSO's work continued Monday morning.

Under a hazy, humid sky, sheriff's divers returned to the murky depths of a lake Monday, determined to find the gun that was used to shoot Reyka five times outside the Walgreens at 960 S. Powerline Rd. in Pompano Beach.

The missing 9mm appears to be the biggest obstacle preventing detectives from making an arrest in one of the county's most infamous unsolved murders.

The search ended for the day just after 1 p.m., with nothing substantial found.

Divers will likely return later this week as they arduously comb the weed-choked lake behind the Pinnacle Village complex of townhomes at 801 N. Powerline Rd. in Pompano Beach.

Esquire Lake is just up the street from where Reyka was ambushed in the Walgreens parking lot during the middle of the night.

The lake is also across Powerline Road from "The Hole," the dead-end Northwest Ninth Street neighborhood that was home to Timothy Johnson -- who police say masterminded a series of drugstore holdups that have made him a "person of interest" in Reyka's slaying.

According to a search warrant filed in Broward County court in February, Johnson's brother, Allen Johnson, told detectives in December that four guns, including the one used to shoot Reyka, were first buried near his apartment, then dumped in a canal.

According to the affidavit, Allen Johnson led detectives in December to a canal where they recovered three of four guns he said were used in the robberies.

Timothy Johnson has not been charged with the Reyka killing.

He remains held without bond in BSO lockup on a range of felony charges, including armed robbery and aggravated assault with a firearm.

Divers Monday felt their way around about 40 feet below the surface. Visibility was not good.

It was worse before the South Florida Water Management District killed a dense forest of 30-foot-tall hydrilla plants that made it nearly impossible to maneuver and see.

"This isn't the first time we dove. We dove many times before," Lejdedal said. ``We'll

dive every lake and canal in Broward County if we have to."

Visibility was about 10 feet -- until the divers began digging through the lake's bottom for clues. Then it became next to zero, meaning deputies will essentially have to crawl through the entire lake blind to search for the weapon.

At least six deputies were working the scene, one at the bottom of the lake, another near the surface and four deployed beside a blue tent on the shore.

They unearthed a crowbar and plenty of bottles and cans -- but no weapon.

Slowing the search is the summer heat. Deputies wear a skintight wet suit and about 80 pounds of equipment as they dive through the sun-warmed waters.

They would often emerge after a half-hour shift soaking wet -- from sweat.

"Divers will tell you they'd rather dive in cold water than the hot water we have here," Leljedal said.

In addition to the gun, investigators are looking for the getaway car used after the gunman fired the fatal shot.

It is not the department's first dive in search of the gun and car. There have been at least 20 around Broward County in the year since the shooting.

Miami Herald staff writer David Smiley contributed to this report.

---

## **Search fails to find gun in Broward deputy's death**

07/01/2008

Palm Beach Post

Jordan, Don

[Return to Top](#)

By DON JORDAN and MICHAEL LAFORGIA-Palm Beach Post

POMPANO BEACH — An underwater search for a gun used in the shooting death of Broward County sheriff's Sgt. Chris Reyka came up empty Monday.

A half-dozen divers spent Monday morning combing the bottom of Esquire Lake in the Pinnacle Village community on North Powerline Road. The search of the small lake ended at 1 p.m., when the dive team was called to investigate a body found floating in a canal near South Cypress Bend Drive.

The search Monday was the latest effort to locate evidence in Reyka's death.

"It's one of dozens we've done over the past five months," said Broward County Sheriff's Office spokesman Jim Leljedal, who called the Reyka investigation "the highest-priority case that we have."

In April, Broward investigators scoured a canal near Pompano Beach for the gun used to kill the 51-year-old husband and father from Wellington.

A witness has told investigators that friends of a gang charged in a series of late-night drugstore hold-ups in Broward and Palm Beach counties had buried the gun and later dumped it in a canal.

The lake, near 801 N. Powerline Road, is 2 miles from where Reyka was shot while investigating a suspicious car parked outside a Walgreens in August.

The team worked from under a blue tent Monday. Dive gear and bottled water lined the lake's steep western shore. A few residents of the affordable rental housing

community looked on from behind a tall, white, metal gate surrounding the lake. Pinnacle Village was once the home of the Holiday Lakes Apartments, a failed subsidized housing community that was torn down in 2003.

The sheriff's office wanted to search the lake weeks ago but was unable to dive because of an abundance of hydrilla plants, Leljedal said.

"The vegetation was so thick, we weren't able to see anything or dive safely," he said.

At the sheriff's office's request, the South Florida Water Management District cleaned Esquire Lake of the invasive nuisance plants.

Sheriff's divers might return to the lake this week, weather and caseload permitting, Leljedal said.

---

## **Miami-Dade projects up for federal funding**

06/30/2008

South Florida Business Journal

[Return to Top](#)

Two projects in Miami-Dade County are to receive \$10.8 million under legislation passed by the U.S. House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

The funding will be brought to the House floor next, and then to the House/Senate Conference.

Of the \$10.8 million, \$10.3 million was allocated for the Miami River Dredging Project, which will allow the Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management, along with federal, state and local partners, to complete the restoration of the navigation channel's authorized depth and width.

The project, primarily funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with local sponsors led by Miami-Dade County, removes contaminated sediments that have made the federal channel narrower and shallower. No comprehensive maintenance dredging has been performed since the river was improved for navigation in the 1930s. Miami-Dade said the contractor has dredged slightly more than 50 percent of the river, and completion of the project is scheduled for April 2009 at a total estimated cost of \$88 million.

The other \$500,000 is to go to the completion of the Biscayne Bay Water Quality Model. The county said the project represents the second phase of an ongoing partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to evaluate the effects of the Central and Southern Florida water canals on Biscayne Bay. Funding will help develop a series of predictive numerical models designed to assist resource managers by mimicking the hydrodynamics, water quality and ecology in Biscayne Bay in response to proposed changes to land use and freshwater distribution.

U.S. Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Mario Diaz-Balart sponsored the legislation.

---

## **Conservation Groups Plan Legal Action to Prevent the Extinction of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow**

06/30/2008

E-wire

[Return to Top](#)

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Jun. 30 -/E-Wire/-- The Center for Biological Diversity, Florida Biodiversity Project, and Natural Resources Defense Council today notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that they will challenge the agency's failure to adequately protect the critical habitat of the highly endangered Cape Sable seaside sparrow.

The sparrow has been listed as an endangered species since 1967 and is found only in small areas of Everglades National Park and a corner of the Big Cypress National Preserve. In 1999, the species was declared in imminent jeopardy of extinction because of degradation of its Everglades habitat, which had resulted from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water-management practices.

The Endangered Species Act requires designation and protection of endangered species critical habitat. Twenty-five years ago the Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the sparrows designated critical habitat was insufficient to ensure its recovery and survival; in 2003, in response to a petition by conservation groups, a federal court ordered the Service to revise the sparrows critical habitat. The Service finalized its revised designation in November 2007. Incredibly, the agency actually reduced the amount of habitat, notwithstanding the fact that the best available scientific data established that more habitat protection was necessary if the sparrow was to survive.

