

September 17, 2012

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor of Florida
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Sent via email to: rick.scott@eog.myflorida.com

Re: Funding for Florida's Water Management Districts

Dear Governor Scott:

As former Governing Board members of Florida's water management districts, we write to you with a simple request: Restore funding for Florida's water management districts to effectively manage our water resources for the environment, people and to supply the needs of Florida's future industry and business expansion.

Florida's water management districts were established to provide regional water solutions to implement flood protection, manage water supplies, and restore our ecosystems through a watershed approach. Water in Florida cannot be managed on a local basis, as was proven in southwest Florida during the water wars of the last decade - ultimately resolved through regional cooperation and investment of district funds, which helped leverage cooperative efforts by local governments. Water cannot be managed solely on a state-wide basis because regional expertise is necessary to implement solutions.

In a region susceptible to great extremes in weather- from hurricanes and floods to droughts, our 18.8 million residents and businesses rely on water management districts to effectively manage flooding and to ensure abundant water supply for their livelihoods and recreation. With the possibility of climate change contributing to more weather extremes such as drought and sea level rise threatening Florida's freshwater resources, it is all the more urgent to invest now in solutions so that the people and new businesses coming to Florida can be assured of a clean water supply.

Protecting and restoring Florida's treasured ecosystems drive our economy. For example, a recent study showed that for every dollar invested in Everglades restoration, approximately four dollars of economic benefits are generated. Our state is blessed with incredible freshwater systems and habitats from America's Everglades to the St. Johns River and from our freshwater springs to the rivers that emerge from the Green Swamp. Expediting progress on restoration projects means more jobs, more tourism, and more money for our state.

As our limited resources are strained by a growing population in the coming years, adequately funding water supply development through water storage projects, alternative water supplies, water conservation programs and reclaimed water projects is vital for a sustainable future.

Restoring our treasured ecosystems to provide both an ecological and economic lift to Florida must be expedited. To maximize the benefits from ecosystem restoration projects, our water management districts must conduct the necessary science and monitoring programs as well as operations and maintenance to implement these projects. Water should not only be abundant but be clean; thus water quality projects are critical. Finally, our water management districts must be able to capably manage their public lands as stewards for the public good. Restored well managed ecosystems support a quality of life that is singular to Florida attracting people and business.

While our water management districts have different maximum total millage rates, one thing is for certain; regional water solutions are a bargain for property owners in Florida. By planning for the necessary improvements in water quality and quantity and paying for those improvements, the population benefits. In order to effectively manage our water resources, water management districts need to adopt budgets that are based upon science and best professional judgment planning for future water quality and quantity.

In 1976 Florida voted to tax themselves to establish regional water management and the water management districts. We think that support is still there. The recent reduction in water management districts budgets saved property owners a minimal amount. For example, a Miami-Dade property owner of a \$150,000 home paid \$62.40 in 2011. This year, with a rolled-back millage rate, the same owner would pay \$42.89, a savings of less than \$20. We think the average Floridian would rather pay a little more for water management solutions today than have to pay for much more expensive projects later.

We would like to complement the Legislature for lifting the revenue caps last session. We urge you to consider restoring adequate funding for our state's water management districts for Florida's economy, environment, and future. One option would be to allow some discretion for each of the five Governing Boards to adopt millage rates need to accomplish their core mission. Our children and grandchildren will thank you.

Sincerely,

(signatures waived to expedite delivery)

Clay Albright
St. Johns River Water Management District

Eric Buermann
South Florida Water Management District

Pamela Fentress
Southwest Florida Water Management
District

John Finlayson
Suwannee River Water Management District

David Flagg
Suwannee River Water Management District

John Flanigan
South Florida Water Management District

Sandra Grey
St. Johns River Water Management District

Pat Hardin
St. Johns River Water Management District

Reid Hughes
St. Johns River Water Management District

Susan Hughes
St. Johns River Water Management District

William Kerr
St. Johns River Water Management District

Jim Martin
Southwest Florida Water Management
District

Heidi McCree
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George Willson
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District