



Florida State Capitol
209 House Office Building
401 South Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
March 3, 2017

March 20, 2017

Dear Natural Resources and Public Lands Subcommittee,

The Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association supports House Bill 761 as written.

As residents and local for charter business owners in the Florida Keys, we understand that increased storage, treatment, and conveyance of water south of Lake Okeechobee and into the Florida Bay is critical to maintain the future health of our estuary and our economy. We continue to deal with the extremely harmful effects of inadequate freshwater flow into Florida Bay due to an inadequate water management system. For the past two years, we once again experienced the hyper-saline water, seagrass, sponge, and fish die-off and algal blooms within our local waters. We currently still have an algal bloom in Florida Bay. These events are not only creating adverse conditions for the wildlife, they are also having an extremely negative impact on our fishery and businesses. As guides, we are providing an invaluable service to our economy and understand firsthand how this current situation is having an impact on our tourist based economy that is dependent on a healthy environment.

Purchasing land in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) to build reservoirs to store and send water south, will not only allow the Florida Bay access to an additional fresh water supply, but also offer a solution to reduce harmful discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries to the east and west of the Lake.

This EAA Reservoir Project has been a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan since its inception. It has a dedicated funding source in Amendment 1 and the time is now to move this piece of legislation forward to maintain the economy of Monroe County.

We urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association

Steve Friedman, *Commodore*
Ted Wilson, *Vice Commodore*
Drew Moret, *2nd Vice Commodore*
Barry Hoffman, *Treasurer*

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Representing all members of the Association