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Poll: Florida Voters Recognize Direct Connection Between Clean, Sustainable Water Supply & Everglades Protection

Floridians Strongly Support Everglades Restoration Funding, Growth Management

Tallahassee, Fla. -- (Feb. 28, 2011) — A solid majority of Florida voters indicate that the state's economic progress is tied to the sustainable supply of freshwater and recognize that maintaining funding for Everglades restoration is critical to their own well being.

A recent survey of registered voters conducted on behalf of the Everglades Foundation by The Tarrance Group, indicates widespread opposition—55 percent to 40 percent--to significant reductions in funding for Everglades restoration. The recently released budget proposal recommends a 66 percent cut in Everglades restoration project funding, from \$50 million in 2010 to \$17 million in the upcoming fiscal year. Everglades funding hit a high during the administration of former Governor Jeb Bush--ranging from \$100 to \$200 million annually from 2002-2006.

Polling results indicate that 84 percent of these voters rank as "very important" the freshwater drinking resource supplied to one in three Floridians by the Everglades. About two-thirds of Florida voters indicate that restoring the Everglades is an "extremely important" or "very important" issue to them personally.

"To grow Florida's economy and attract new employers, we have no other choice but to increase our supply of freshwater," said Kirk Fordham, CEO, Everglades Foundation. "One of the primary benefits of Everglades restoration is the increased availability of water for both our growing population and the environmental assets that support so many of our key job-creating industries. Voters know that you cannot afford to shortchange Everglades restoration. To do so, jeopardizes the very water supply that supports their households."

At the same time, Florida voters believe the state should continue to play a significant role in managing new development to protect our rivers, lakes, streams and beaches from pollution.

The poll, conducted by the Alexandria, Virginia-based Tarrance Group, was completed February 13-14, 2011. Dave Sackett, one of the Republican polling firm's founding partners, serves as the pollster for Senate President Mike Haridopolos, the Republican Party of Florida, Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, and Congressmen Tom Rooney, Dennis Ross, John Mica, Cliff Stearns, Rich Nugent, Dan Webster, Gus Bilirakis and Bill Posey. The telephone survey interviewed a random sample of 607 likely voters across the state. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.1 percent.

Other Voter Survey Findings

- 82 percent are more likely to support funding because one in three Floridians depends directly on the Everglades for their daily supply of freshwater. If the Everglades are not restored, the state's water supply will be jeopardized.
- 79 percent are more likely to support funding because Florida needs to attract new businesses and industries to the state to create jobs and strengthen the economy. This cannot be done without access to a stable water supply.
- Opposition to cuts in funding for Everglades restoration is widespread throughout the state with a majority of voters in the Miami, West Palm Beach, Orlando and Tampa media markets opposed to funding cutbacks.
- 81 percent agree that the state of Florida needs to manage new development to protect our rivers, lakes, streams and beaches from pollution.

About the Everglades Foundation

The Foundation's position is that the health of the Everglades is not only vital to the environment, but also to the economy and quality of life in South Florida. The organization has assembled a team of scientists, policy experts and communications professionals and works with partners on several fronts to educate, advocate and litigate--when necessary--to advance Everglades restoration. In addition, the Foundation provides grants to like-minded local, national and international organizations and collaborates with other business, civic and environmental groups to form coalitions and set priorities to move restoration initiatives forward.

About Florida's Relationship with the Everglades

More than seven million people live in the Everglades watershed and depend on its natural

systems for their livelihood, food and drinking water. Florida's agriculture, boating, tourism, real estate, recreational and commercial fishing industries all depend on a healthy Everglades ecosystem that supports tens of thousands of jobs and contributes billions to our economy. Its waters flow through the Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Biscayne National Park and John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. Together, these parks draw several million visitors each year, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to Florida's tourism economy.

About the Everglades Foundation Mission

The Everglades Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit, charitable organization dedicated to protecting and restoring one of the world's unique natural ecosystems that provides economic, recreational and life-sustaining benefits to the millions of people who depend on its future health. Since 1993, the Everglades Foundation has played a leadership role in advancing Everglades restoration through the advancement of scientifically sound and achievable solutions. The Foundation seeks to reverse the damage inflicted on the ecosystem and provide policymakers and the public with an honest and credible resource to help guide decision-making on complex restoration issues. For more information, please visit www.evergladesfoundation.org.

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