

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development,
and Related Agencies
331 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kennedy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development,
and Related Agencies
416 Russell SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
531 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
522 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chair Feinstein, Chair Merkley, Ranking Member Kennedy, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

The undersigned recreational fishing and boating community members, conservation organizations, and maritime and angling businesses are committed to protecting and restoring America's Everglades. We appreciate the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies and the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies' long-time support for Everglades restoration and look forward to continuing to work with you to advance vital Everglades and other critical watershed restoration and improvement projects in the FY23 appropriations bills. Together, through robust funding for the programs outlined below, you can play a vital role in ensuring that the Everglades is preserved as a unique ecosystem for all Americans to enjoy while also helping to create green jobs.

Last year, Congress made a historic investment to advance Everglades restoration projects, increasing federal funding for the Army Corps of Engineers' South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) Program to \$350 million in FY22, a \$100 million increase over FY21, and investing almost \$1.1 billion in SFER as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. America's anglers and recreational boaters are grateful for the bipartisan support for the Everglades and this landmark investment.

We now have a unique opportunity to see the biggest ecosystem benefits of Everglades restoration actualized, with some of the largest and most important Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects underway. The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir is the keystone project for CERP and is not able to utilize funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In order to complete the EAA Reservoir and keep pace with state investments, Congress should significantly increase funding for Army Corps Everglades restoration efforts over the coming years. Such an investment will allow the Corps to accelerate construction of already-authorized Everglades restoration projects that will protect drinking water supplies, enhance wildlife habitat, create thousands of jobs, and provide a much-needed boost to Florida's tourism, real estate, and outdoor economy. Additionally, according to the federal government's own estimates, investing more federal dollars now will save American taxpayers over \$2 billion on the overall cost of Everglades restoration.

To keep pace with state investments, sustain this cost-saving approach, and create conservation-oriented jobs, we request that the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies appropriate no less than \$725 million for SFER in FY23. Annually funding SFER at this amount from FY23 – FY25 will allow the Army Corps of Engineers to execute contracts for authorized projects on the CERP Integrated Delivery Schedule. These funding levels will not only lead to timely

completion of Everglades restoration projects, but it will lead to the creation of over 65,000 jobs, per USACE Jacksonville's estimates.

We request that the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriate no less than \$50 million to the EPA National Estuary Programs (NEP). The NEPs are designed to build consensus among federal, state, private industry, nonprofits, and citizens of their program areas and help fuel restoration and maintenance of estuaries across the United States, including Florida. Strong funding for this program is not only an investment in the Everglades, but coastal economies and communities across the nation.

Recreational fishing and boating have a \$23.3 billion economic footprint in Florida and support over 92,211 jobs, and the beating heart of that outdoor recreation economy is the Everglades system. Now more than ever, it is critical that we invest in the restoration of this system and, in turn, provide a boost to this unique and vibrant economy. Your continued support and commitment to the Everglades will ensure a bright future for Florida's outdoor recreation industry and the millions of anglers and boaters from around the world who visit this iconic and productive location. We look forward to working with you to restore and conserve one of America's most unique and diverse ecosystems.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Angler Action Foundation
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Captains for Clean Water
The Everglades Foundation
Fly Fishers International
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
International Game Fish Association
Izaak Walton League of America
Minority Outdoor Alliance
National Deer Association
National Wildlife Federation
The Nature Conservancy
North American Falconers Association
Outdoor Industry Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership