

OCTOBER 2, 2013  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

# **16 COUNTIES | ONE VOICE** *for South Florida's Ecosystem*

**1st Annual Lobby Day**  
**Federal Advocacy Briefing**

## ABOUT THE COUNTY COALITION/16 COUNTY ECOSYSTEM SUMMIT

The County Coalition is a multiple County based advisory group organized primarily for the purpose of providing the general public, the South Florida Water Management District, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Legislature, and various groups and committees with a body which will present a variety of issues dealing with the health and welfare of the lakes, estuaries, and riverine systems consisting of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and Lake Worth Lagoon, and all of the bodies of water connected thereto.

Every year in December, the County Coalition hosts the "16 County Ecosystem Summit" where representatives from each of the 16 counties that comprise the South Florida Water Management District gather to discuss and adopt shared legislative priorities associated with the health and welfare of the ecosystem.

The 16 counties collectively represent nearly 8 million Floridians and are represented by 12 Congressional members in the United States House of Representatives as well as by Senator Bill Nelson and Senator Marco Rubio.

The following legislative priorities were adopted in December 2012. On October 2, 2013 representatives from the 16 counties will jointly advocate for these shared priorities at the first annual lobby day.

**ITINERARY – UPDATED 9/24/13****Wednesday, October 2, 2013**

- 9:00 a.m. 16 County Lobby Day Kick-Off Meeting /Press Briefing (Public Meeting)
- Gathering of representative from the 16 counties, distribution of any remaining materials/coordination
- Discussion of priorities of the lobby day with members of the press
- Location: The Florida House on Capitol Hill, Number One Second Street Northeast (see brochure last page)
- 9:30 a.m. Meeting with Governor Scott's Washington Office – Mr. Doug Calloway, Director of Federal Affairs and Elizabeth Rojas, Deputy Director of Federal Affairs
- Discussion of the priorities of the 16 counties
- Location: The Florida House on Capitol Hill, Number One Second Street Northeast
- 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Individual County Lobbying Meetings: Each county will discuss shared talking points included in this packet in their individual meeting as well as issues unique to their county.
- 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m. Everglades Caucus (Public Meeting)
- Location: Cannon House Office Building, 340
- New Jersey and Independence Avenues, SE, Washington, D.C., 20515
- Co-Chairs Congressman Alcee Hastings and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart
- Introduction of issues water quality/restoration/environmental issues unique to each county participating
- Overview of each of the shared legislative priorities
- Discussion
- Members and Staff from the Florida Congressional Delegation and Senator Nelson and Senator Rubio will be invited*
- 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Individual County Lobbying Meetings

# PRIORITIES – OVERVIEW

## 2012-2013 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES of the County

### Coalition: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

Glades · Hendry · Highlands · Lee · Martin · Okeechobee · Osceola ·  
Palm Beach · St. Lucie · Broward · Charlotte · Collier · Miami-Dade ·  
Monroe · Orange · Polk

### #1 Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD)

Increase annual appropriation for rehabilitation of the HHD to accelerate project completion

### #2 Kissimmee River Restoration

Continued appropriations to complete restoration

### Other important priorities:

- Funding necessary to complete St. Lucie C-44 reservoirs/STA complex
  - Congressional authorization of the Caloosahatchee River, C-43 West Reservoir
  - An updated Water Resources Development Act to include authorization for other crucial elements of ecosystem restoration
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## #1 Priority: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

### HERBERT HOOVER DIKE REHABILITATION

#### BACKGROUND

The USACE continues work on Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD), the 143-mile structure surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Since 2007, the USACE has made a significant investment, over \$300 million, in projects designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic failure of the aging structure.

The HHD is listed as one of the nation's dams in most need of repair and is a USACE (USACE) top priority. There are currently 16 dams in the nation listed "in most need of repair" in the USACE Dam safety program; HHD is one of them. The lake provides drinking water for communities around the lake and to the more than 6 million people living along the lower east coast and as a source of irrigation for the agricultural industry.

#### STATUS

The current regulation schedule for the lake is limited, due to dike integrity, resulting in extreme fluctuations between damaging freshwater releases to tide and dramatic water shortages. The USACE is working to rehabilitate the dike system, including installing a cutoff wall, removing and replacing water control structures (culverts), and conducting a variety of studies and technical reviews to help ensure the safety of south Florida residents. Engineers estimate that at 18.5 feet the current dike has a 55% chance of breach. As reaches of the dike are repaired, the USACE reassesses the HHD risk compared with the other dams in the nation in most need of repair, and "reprioritizes." This process delays the completion of the HHD by reducing its priority for funding as it progresses. The HHD is critical not only for protecting surrounding communities from floodwaters, but also as the "liquid heart" of a multi-billion dollar regional restoration effort in the Everglades. HHD is unique in the number of dependencies that it has in south Florida—economy, environment, navigation, agriculture, water supply, and flood protection / public safety. For this myriad of reasons, HHD needs to maintain a high priority status for funding until it is completed. Finally, the USACE is reassessing their options to technically address the problems with the dike. Specifically, they are searching for lower cost alternatives for repair. It is essential that through this process of reassessment that they do not delay the on-going repair work and that they expedite the project to every possible extent. The President has requested \$86 M for construction in FY 14 to continue repairs to the HHD.

#### BENEFIT

The health, safety and welfare of south Florida residents are central to the need for federal funding assistance. Not only is the dike integrity crucial to the citizens of south Florida, but the inability to handle excess stormwater has become an all too frequent impact to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries. The massive amounts of stormwater released from Lake Okeechobee carry pollutants and upset the delicate salinity balance of our coastal ecosystems, resulting in a die-off of environmentally significant plants and animals, blooms of undesirable blue green algae and warnings posted by the State Health Department. Additionally, much of south Florida economy is based on a healthy viable ecosystem.

#### REQUEST

**The 16 counties request the annual appropriation for rehabilitation of the HHD be increased to accelerate project completion.**



## #2 Priority: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

### KISSIMMEE RIVER RESTORATION

#### BACKGROUND

The Kissimmee River once meandered for 103 miles through central Florida. Its floodplain, reaching up to three miles wide, was inundated for long periods by heavy seasonal rains. Wetland plants, wading birds and fish thrived there. Prolonged flooding after hurricanes in the 1940s had severe impacts on people living in the region. As part of the federal Central and Southern Florida Project (intended to lessen flooding and temper South Florida's weather extremes), the Kissimmee River was cut and dredged into a 30-foot-deep straightaway: the C-38 canal. While flood control benefits were achieved, significant environmental consequences were also noted. Waterfowl numbers fell more than 90 percent and Bald Eagle nesting declined by 75 percent. Wading birds also declined along the river and floodplains. After extensive research, planning and coordination, Congress authorized in 1992 a joint state-federal project to restore ecological integrity to a 22-mile section of the channelized river while maintaining regional flood protection.

#### STATUS

Construction for environmental restoration began in June 1999 and will be complete in 2015. This will backfill another 9 miles of canal and restore flow to 16.4 additional miles of the river. To provide the continuous water flows necessary to fully implement river restoration, work is also under way to increase storage capacity in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes – the headwaters of the river system.

#### BENEFIT

When restoration construction is completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2015, 40 square miles of Kissimmee River and floodplain ecosystem will be affected, including almost 25,000 acres of wetlands and 40 miles of historic river channel. Following the construction work, appropriate hydrology will be applied to the physically restored portions of the river in order to fully realize the restoration objectives.

#### REQUEST

**The 16 counties request continued appropriations to complete restoration of the Kissimmee River.**

## Important Priority: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

### COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN/INDIAN RIVER LAGOON-SOUTH: C-44 PROJECT

#### BACKGROUND

Surface waters of the northeast Everglades naturally flowed south to the Everglades, west to Lake Okeechobee and east to the Indian River Lagoon, the most diverse estuary in North America. Projects constructed in the 1950s diverted surface waters into canals and into the St. Lucie Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon. As a result, billions of gallons of freshwater are wasted daily to the Atlantic Ocean. During large surface water discharge events such as the events of summer 2013, the water quality of the lagoon and surrounding estuary are severely impacted, harming aquatic plants and animals, and requiring restrictions for human contact.

The \$1.36 billion IRL-S component of the CERP was authorized as part of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act to help address these negative impacts. IRL-S includes 170,000-acre feet of storage in reservoirs and stormwater treatment areas (STAs). The State of Florida has already spent over \$422 million for the planning, design, land acquisition, and initial construction of the IRL-S project. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), in partnership with Martin County, has purchased 100% of the land necessary to construct the 12,000 acre \$330 million C-44 project in Martin County, which is currently under construction. Local voters in Martin County voluntarily approved special tax referendums that have committed over \$75 million to assist in the purchase of land necessary to implement the IRL-S project.

#### STATUS

The C-44 project has been proceeding ahead of schedule and the first phase is scheduled to be complete in March 2014. Harmful releases continue to flow into our fragile St. Lucie Estuary. These recent impacts again stress to our community why it is so important to move forward with completing the C- 44 project. Florida's Governor Rick Scott has recently committed to \$40 million towards Contract 3 of the C-44 project. However the President's FY 2014 Budget assumes that the start of construction of the second C-44 Contract will be delayed into FY 2015. It is uncertain when in 2015 the second contract will be awarded. It was scheduled to start on August of 2014 (late in FY 2014). However, now the contract for the now-delayed Second Phase of the C-44 (reservoir, pump station, and discharge canal) will be awarded in FY 2015, because of the assumptions in the President's budget for FY 2014. Estimated cost of this second contract is \$270 million, and the work was to have been completed in October of 2017.

#### BENEFIT

The C-44 component of the Indian River Lagoon project will greatly reduce polluted runoff into the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon. The project also brings significant economic benefits, including over 800 jobs. The health of our waterways is essential to Martin County's economy, much of which is dependent on a viable coastal ecosystem.

#### REQUEST

**The 16 counties request funding necessary to complete St. Lucie C-44 reservoirs/STA complex.**

## Important Priority: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

### C-43 PROJECT

#### BACKGROUND

Estuaries such as the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary (CRE) rely on a balance of fresh and salt water conditions for survival of seagrasses and oysters. Unfortunately, the CRE endures adverse impacts at both ends of the spectrum. Specifically, due to extensive historical modifications to its watershed, the CRE receives the lion's share of adversity in both dry times and wet times from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule. In wet times, as the CRE is experiencing now, the Caloosahatchee River is the largest and most utilized discharge route. Essentially, by "managing" the system, the watershed of the CRE is expanded to include Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River, more than double its natural size. During these times, the CRE and the near shore of the Gulf of Mexico are "blown out" with brown, nutrient laden water. In dry times, when minimal base flows are needed for freshwater grasses, the CRE is often cutoff 100% – zero water releases. In fact, there are instances when the CRE is essentially severed at Ortona Lock so that all flows east return to Lake Okeechobee for water supply interests. Granted, estuaries are resilient to natural flood and drought conditions and often bounce back to productivity. Yet, when subject to numerous "extreme" events for extensive durations, year to year, meaningful recovery is unlikely.

The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir project will improve the timing, quantity and quality of freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary. The Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir will help ensure a more natural, consistent flow of fresh water to the estuary. To restore and maintain the estuary during the dry season, the project will capture and store basin stormwater runoff, along with a portion of water discharged from Lake Okeechobee, and water will be slowly released into the Caloosahatchee, as needed. This project also will provide secondary benefits once the needs of the estuary are met, along with recreational benefits.

#### STATUS

The Record of Decision was signed and submitted to Congress in April 2011. Construction is dependent upon congressional authorization.

#### BENEFIT

Dozens of studies and plans have documented the harmful environmental damage to the CRE. However, the same level of scrutiny has not been applied to the corresponding economic damage to Southwest Florida, and its coastal communities. Now, local governments, business leaders, hotel associations, real estate groups and other stakeholders are partnering together in Southwest Florida to quantify the economic value and impact that is at stake. Here are a few facts that demonstrate the value of the natural resources in Southwest Florida (Collier/Lee Counties): \$4.3 billion in economic activity from tourism; Creating 85,000 jobs; \$400 million in bed tax, sales tax, and local tax revenue; \$147 billion in real estate value; \$1.9 billion in property tax revenue.

#### REQUEST

**The 16 counties request Congressional authorization of the Caloosahatchee River, C-43 West Reservoir.**



## Important Priority: 16 County Ecosystem Summit

### AUTHORIZATION OF THE 2013 WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA)

#### BACKGROUND

The Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) of 2013 (S. 601 as passed by the United States Senate) provides for the conservation and development of water and related resources, authorizes the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes. WRDA will advance the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and authorize projects with Chief's Reports, such as the Caloosahatchee River C-43 Project, Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetland, C-111 Spreader Canal; Broward County Water Preserve Areas and potentially the Central Everglades Planning Project.

#### STATUS

The United States Senate approved WRDA (S. 601) through an overwhelming bi-partisan vote of 83-14 on May 15, 2013. On September 11, On September 19, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee passed its bipartisan Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), H.R. 3080, without opposition by voice vote. WRRDA is based on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). It is anticipated that WRRDA will be brought to the House floor in October.

#### BENEFIT

The Water Resource Development Act legislation is critical in addressing the nation's water infrastructure needs, which is vital to the safety, environmental protection and economic development of state and local economies and restoration of America's Everglades.

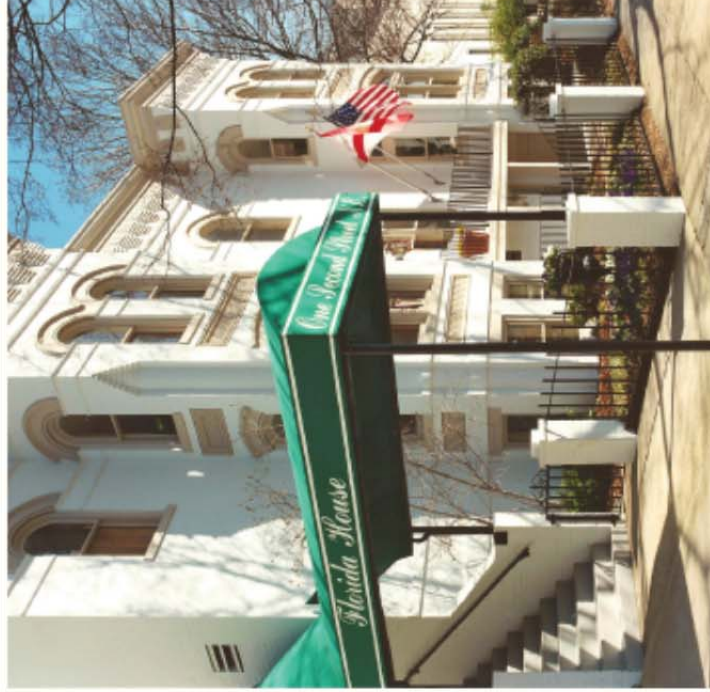
#### REQUEST

**The 16 counties request Congress pass the Water Resources Development Act of 2013.**



# FLORIDA HOUSE

On Capitol Hill



Serving Floridians in the Nation's Capitol since 1973

## FLORIDA HOUSE

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### WHAT IS FLORIDA HOUSE?

Since 1973 Florida House has served as the nation's only State embassy, offering a sanctuary for Floridians visiting Washington DC. Located in a three - story Victorian row house on Capitol Hill, Florida House offers hospitality as well as educational and cultural resources.

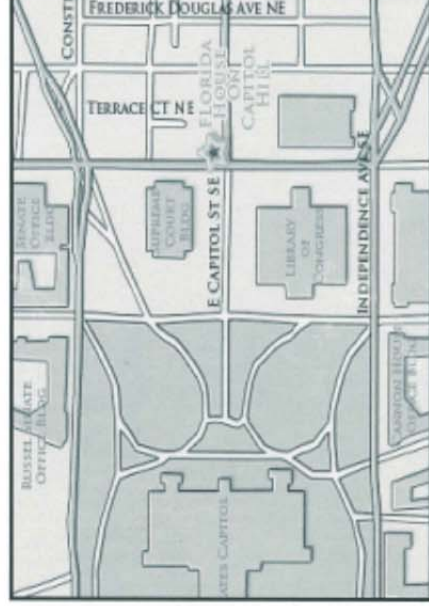
### WHAT YOU WILL FIND

|                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Fellow Floridians      | Visitor Services        |
| Educational Resources  | Meeting Space           |
| Cultural Exhibits      | Florida Orange Juice    |
| Tours of Florida House | Wi-Fi and Public Laptop |

### HOURS & LOCATION

Monday - Friday 9-5

Florida House is located at the intersection of East Capitol and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets NE along with the Supreme Court, Library of Congress and the Folger Shakespeare Library. Our remarkable location is easily recognizable by the green awning over our front doorsteps.



## WELCOME TO FLORIDA HOUSE

As First Lady of Florida and Honorary Chairwoman of our beautiful state embassy in Washington, DC, I am delighted to share the history and hospitality of Florida House with you. Since 1973, Florida House has welcomed Floridians with a glass of orange juice and in keeping with tradition still does so today. Former First Lady of Florida and Florida House founder Rhea Chiles had a vision nearly four decades ago that continues to grow. I'm proud to share her warm welcome with visitors today.

Florida House has grown from being a respite from the busy city to now engaging in educational efforts that resonate with my own passions of youth literacy, reading and education. Florida House now offers civics education and programs in partnership with the Smithsonian Institute, Kennedy Center, and other organizations. I hope that all Floridians visiting Washington, DC will stop by to take part in these meaningful programs and to feel the wonderful sense of community at Florida House.

Please enjoy a bit of Florida Sunshine during your stay in our nation's capitol!

FIRST LADY ANN SCOTT



Florida is the only state with an embassy in Washington, D.C. Founded by former First Lady Rhea Chiles in 1973, thousands of visiting dignitaries, students and those having business in Washington have been welcomed to the nation's capital with a cold glass of Florida orange juice. The beautiful three-story Victorian home, built in 1891, was purchased and is maintained solely by individual and corporate contributions. No state or federal tax dollars are used to support Florida House. The House is an ideal place to host meetings, entertain clients, meet friends or for students to learn more about Florida, Washington, DC and the federal government.