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House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development Testimony

The Everglades and Lake Okeechobee Watershed include 16 counties and 164 cities. It has a \$2 trillion economic impact on the state and supports 55% (\$1.3 trillion) of the real estate value in Florida. For every dollar invested in the Everglades/Okeechobee Watershed, \$4 of economic benefit are produced.

Due to a century of human development, the greater Everglades ecosystem is now less than 1/2 of its original size and Lake Okeechobee fills up 6 times faster than it can be drained, resulting in massive discharges into the adjacent rivers and coastal areas. These discharges are untreated, and impact the delicate balance of fresh water/salt water in the coastal ecosystems. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, or CERP, seeks to restore balance to these delicate ecosystems, ultimately reducing harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries and sending clean water south to the marshes of the Everglades and Florida Bay.

CERP was created by Congress and the State of Florida in 2000. It includes 68 projects that will create (1) storage, treatment and flow of water southward into the marshes of the Everglades and Florida Bay; (2) storage and treatment of water entering Lake Okeechobee from the north; and (3) balancing of flows to control salinity levels between wet and dry years. CERP was set up to share costs between the State and the federal government 50/50. As of December 2016, the State had made expenditures of \$2.165 Billion and the federal government had contributed

\$1.26 billion – these figures translate to a 63/37 split overall. So, we have a lot of catching up to do on the federal end of the agreement.

In fact, three projects authorized by the 2007 WRRDA are still incomplete: (1) Site 1 Impoundment next to the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge; (2) the Picayune Strand project in Collier County; and (3) the Indian River Lagoon-South, or C-44, along the St. Lucie Canal.

Additionally, four projects from the 2014 WRRDA have not been completed: (1) C-43 West Storage Basin in LaBelle; (2) C-111 Spreader Canal on the east side of Everglades National Park just west of Miami; (3) the Broward County Water Preserve Area; and (3) the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project. Each of these projects play an essential role in the overall CERP and must be completed.

In 2016, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, or WRRDA 2016, was signed in to law with two new CERP authorizations. The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) includes 6 projects which were originally in the CERP. This \$1.9 billion project will construct a series of features to allow redirecting up to 210,000 acre-feet of Lake Okeechobee regulatory discharges southward for storage, treatment and delivery to the Water Conservation Areas and Everglades National Park. This project will also help to reduce damaging freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. CEPP includes several features, including backfilling of canals, removal of levees and roads that impede the

flow of water south and construction of another 15,000-acre Flow Equalization Basin (FEB), A-2, just west of the A-1 FEB.

The second WRRDA 2016 authorization was for completion of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project at a cost of \$626 million, which will restore over 55,000 acres of over-drained wetlands in southwest Florida and help to improve the quality, timing and distribution of freshwater flows to the Ten Thousand Island National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to these important CERP projects, the Corps is also responsible for repair and reinforcement of the Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding Lake Okeechobee. The Corps efforts to repair the Dike are essential to prevent catastrophic failure during flood periods, especially those caused by Hurricanes. This project is 100% Corps responsibility and is estimated to need \$800 million to be completed.

Table: Corps and DOI Funding for Everglades Restoration, FY2010-FY2017
(in thousands of dollars)

	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017 Proposed
DOI	79,424	70,600	99,884	66,355	70,452	62,272	64,429	63,000
<i>CERP</i>	<i>8,449</i>	<i>8,401</i>	<i>8,347</i>	<i>7,883</i>	<i>8,376</i>	<i>8,408</i>	<i>7,934</i>	<i>8,000</i>
<i>Non-CERP</i>	<i>70,975</i>	<i>62,199</i>	<i>91,537</i>	<i>58,472</i>	<i>62,076</i>	<i>53,864</i>	<i>56,495</i>	<i>55,000</i>
Corps	167,364	131,066	142,486	96,008	47,616	68,551	94,045	106,000
<i>CERP</i>	<i>119,966</i>	<i>79,860</i>	<i>57,886</i>	<i>76,212</i>	<i>38,499</i>	<i>61,001</i>	<i>69,970</i>	<i>75,000</i>
<i>Non-CERP</i>	<i>47,398</i>	<i>41,108</i>	<i>84,600</i>	<i>19,796</i>	<i>9,117</i>	<i>7,550</i>	<i>24,075</i>	<i>31,000</i>
Total	246,788	201,666	242,370	158,683	118,068	130,823	188,000	169,000

Source: Congressional Budget Justifications for the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Crosscut Budget Report for FY2015.

Despite the authorization of new projects, Corps funding for CERP has dipped since 2010 as indicated in the chart above. The authorization of CEPP is one of the most ambitious and critical projects to date and must begin as soon as possible. I strongly urge the Committee to provide strong funding for Corps construction to support the continued work on older CERP projects and Herbert Hoover Dike. I further encourage the Committee to authorize new starts so that the Corps can begin as soon as possible on building CEPP projects.

I appreciate the Committee's time today. I continue to encourage the Committee to provide robust funding for the Corps to carry out its crucial Everglades restoration duties.