

September 15, 2026

RE: Opposition to H.R. 9017, the Restore Florida Water Independence Act of 2026

Dear Chair Hageman and Ranking Member Hoyle,

On behalf of our organizations and our combined millions of members and supporters, we write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 9017, the Restore Florida Water Independence Act of 2026, being heard by the Subcommittee tomorrow, Wednesday, September 16. We respectfully request that this letter be included in the hearing record.

The Restore Florida Water Independence Act of 2026, H.R. 9017, would harm Florida's wetlands and push imperiled species closer to extinction and threaten surrounding communities while doing so. It effectively negates the judicial process by allowing the State of Florida to assume federal wetlands permitting authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act despite two court decisions — a March 2026 U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia decision affirming a 2024 decision by a U.S. District Judge — which held that the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service violated the ESA when the agencies approved Florida's wetlands permitting program in 2020.

Florida's vast wetlands, often called the “lifeblood” of the state, are home to the world's only population of critically endangered Florida panther, as well as many other imperiled, rare and endemic species, like the Florida manatee and wood stork. In addition to their intrinsic value, the state's wetlands and its biodiversity provide critical ecosystem services like providing drinking clean water via filtration, flood protection, food, generating tourism revenue, and more that support healthy human communities. Protecting and restoring Florida's wetlands is therefore vital to the survival of both people and wildlife alike.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose H.R. 9017. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Bird Conservancy
Animal Commons
Animal Defenders International
Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice Action
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
Florida Keys Environmental Coalition

FOUR PAWS USA

International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute

Kettle Range Conservation Group

Natural Resources Defense Council

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

Resource Renewal Institute

RESTORE: The North Woods

Save Our Sky Blue Waters

Sea Turtle Conservancy

Sierra Club

Species Unite

Western Watersheds Project

Wild Cumberland

Wild Lessons

WildEarth Guardians