Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2016

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies
2362-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20151

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Kaptur:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2017 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide funding at the levels requested by President Obama for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Interior projects relating to the Everglades and South Florida ecosystem restoration programs. We also urge the funding of other U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Interior projects relating to the Everglades and South Florida ecosystem restoration programs once resolution on these other critical projects can be reached.

The Everglades is the drinking water source for one in three Floridians and a source of jobs and economic livelihood for hundreds of thousands more. Restoring America's Everglades is not a choice between fiscal responsibility and environmental protection. In fact, it is both. Restoration encompasses exactly the kind of "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects that will help our economy. The chance to preserve this national treasure while putting in place the tools for a long-term economic recovery is a once-in-a-generation opportunity we should not let slip by.

There is little question that restoration of America's Everglades is necessary. The bridges and canals built decades ago to "tame" the River of Grass threaten a treasured ecosystem that impacts our way of life. Billions of gallons of water that help prevent salt water impingement are needed for the Everglades National Park, but instead are washed into the sea through discharges from Lake Okeechobee and an elaborate canal system that severely damage fragile coastal estuaries. This polluted water strains our fishing and tourism businesses.

As you know, this year's funding request is part of a multi-year effort to provide the necessary resources to preserve one of the great ecological treasures in our nation and to specifically move forward on construction projects that will help alleviate decades old flawed engineering. We have a responsibility to preserve this unique gift for future generations. Therefore, we urge you to fund Everglades and ecosystem restoration projects at the level requested by President Obama.

Sincerely,

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Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Curt Clawson
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress