

PATRICK E. MURPHY
18TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1517 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3026
FAX: (202) 225-8398
www.patrickmurphy.house.gov



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

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July 14, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
231 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Mikulski and Vice Chairman Shelby:

I respectfully write to urge you to follow the House of Representatives' lead and pass the Energy and Water Appropriations Act prior to adjourning for the August recess.

The passage of the Energy and Water Appropriations Act by the U.S. House of Representatives marks a monumental step forward in the ongoing efforts to provide relief to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.

Included in this final bill is \$65.5 million for Everglades restoration efforts, with \$38 million of that funding going towards the C-44 Indian River Lagoon South Project, which was prioritized in the President's budget.

Once completed, the C-44 project will reduce the harm to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon by providing large water storage and treatment areas. Currently, the first phase of C-44, a vital component of the Indian River Lagoon South project, is under construction. The \$38 million funding included in the Energy and Water Appropriations Act will allow the Corps to begin the second and most important phase of the project.

121 SW PORT ST, LUCIE BOULEVARD
ROOM 187
PORT ST. LUCIE, FL 34984
PHONE (772) 336-2877
FAX (772) 336-2899

2300 VIRGINIA AVENUE
ROOM 200A
FORT PIERCE, FL 34982
PHONE (772) 489-0736
FAX (772) 464-8392

2000 PGA BOULEVARD
SUITE A3220
PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL 33408
PHONE (561) 253-8433
FAX (561) 253-8436

171 SW FLAGLER AVENUE
STUART, FL 34994
PHONE (772) 781-3266
FAX (772) 781-3267

Even though securing this funding request is most welcomed, overall Everglades restoration funding has continued to be dramatically slashed in recent years. That is why I put forward an amendment to better support the Corps' construction account without raising the cost of the underlying bill by one cent. The amendment passed the House, adding \$1 million for ongoing Corps construction projects in addition to the \$38 million for the C-44 project in the bill.

This additional support can allow the Corps to more effectively finish its work on vital projects such as the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, which is already almost 90 percent completed. This project will restore more than 40 square miles of river-floodplain ecosystem, including almost 20,000 acres of wetlands. Once completed, more water will be stored north of Lake Okeechobee, naturally filtering more water so it is cleaner before it reaches the lake or the estuary system and helping to reduce the amount of harmful discharges released into the St. Lucie Estuary.

Taken together, Everglades projects will improve the water quality throughout the Everglades system, including our local waterways. Moreover, additional funding to keep these vital projects moving forward makes sense fiscally, as these projects provide a three-to-one return on investment.

I urge you to swiftly follow suit in passing this critical funding measure. We must ensure the health of our waterways, which are vital not only to the environment and economy but to the public health of our region.

Sincerely,


Patrick E. Murphy
MEMBER OF CONGRESS