

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development,
and Related Agencies
2362B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Fleischmann and Ranking Member Kaptur,

The undersigned recreational fishing and boating community members, conservation organizations, and maritime and angling businesses are committed to protecting and restoring America's Everglades. We appreciate the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies and the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies' long-time support for Everglades restoration and look forward to continuing to work with you to advance vital Everglades and other critical watershed restoration and improvement projects in the FY24 appropriations bills. Together, through robust funding for the programs outlined below, you can play a vital role in ensuring that the Everglades is preserved as a unique ecosystem for all Americans to enjoy while also helping to create green jobs.

Last year, Congress made a historic investment to advance Everglades restoration projects, increasing federal funding for the Army Corps of Engineers' South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) Program to \$447 million in FY23, a \$97 million increase over FY22. America's hunters, anglers, and recreational boaters are grateful for the bipartisan support for the Everglades and this landmark investment.

We have a unique opportunity to see the biggest ecosystem benefits of Everglades restoration actualized, with some of the largest and most important Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects underway. The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir is the keystone project for CERP and the Army Corps recently broke ground on the reservoir with construction scheduled to be completed in 2030. To complete the EAA Reservoir and keep pace with state investments, Congress should significantly increase funding for Army Corps Everglades restoration efforts over the coming years. Such an investment will allow the Corps to accelerate construction of already-authorized Everglades restoration projects that will protect drinking water supplies, enhance wildlife habitat, create thousands of jobs, and provide a much-needed boost to Florida's tourism, real estate, and outdoor economy. Additionally, according to the federal government's own estimates, investing more federal dollars now will save American taxpayers over \$2 billion on the overall cost of Everglades restoration.

To keep pace with state investments, sustain this cost-saving approach, and create conservation-oriented jobs, we request that the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies appropriate no less than \$725 million for SFER in FY24. Annually funding SFER at this amount from FY24 – FY25 will allow the Army Corps of Engineers to execute contracts for authorized projects on the CERP Integrated Delivery Schedule. These funding levels will not only lead to timely completion of Everglades restoration projects, but it will lead to the creation of over 65,000 jobs, per USACE Jacksonville's estimates.

Recreational fishing and boating have a \$23.3 billion economic footprint in Florida and support over 92,211 jobs, and the beating heart of that outdoor recreation economy is the Everglades system. Now

more than ever, it is critical that we invest in the restoration of this system and, in turn, provide a boost to this unique and vibrant economy. Your continued support and commitment to the Everglades will ensure a bright future for Florida's outdoor recreation industry and the millions of anglers and boaters from around the world who visit this iconic and productive location. We look forward to working with you to restore and conserve one of America's most unique and diverse ecosystems.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association

B.A.S.S. (Bass Anglers Sportsman Society)

Boat US

Bonefish & Tarpon Trust

Brunswick

Captains for Clean Water

Coastal Conservation Association Florida

Fly Fishers International

Guy Harvey Foundation

International Game Fish Association (IGFA)

Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

National Deer Association

National Marine Manufacturers Association

Pure Fishing

Shimano North America Fishing

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership