

**CITY OF MARATHON, FLORIDA
RESOLUTION 2016 -64**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARATHON, FLORIDA, IN SUPPORT OF EXPEDITING AUTHORIZATION, APPROPRIATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND COMPLETION OF EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECTS THAT RESTORE ESSENTIAL WATER FLOW AND ENHANCE WATER STORAGE TO THE FLORIDA BAY, ALL NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE FLORIDA BAY, A CRITICAL PART OF THE EVERGLADES ECOSYSTEM AND THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the coastal waters of Marathon include the Florida Bay, small areas of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, all within the larger area of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS); and

WHEREAS, all waters of the Florida Keys are dependent on the health of the Everglades ecosystem as the primary source of fresh water and foundation for the nearshore estuarine environment and Florida Bay. These crucial areas provide a unique and critical habitat for numerous plants and animals, including many federal and state protected, endangered, and or threatened species., such as the bottlenose dolphin, Florida manatee, small tooth sawfish, green sea turtle, hawksbill turtle, spoonbills, pelicans, egrets, piping plover, and the American crocodile; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Bay which feeds into the FKNMS, is the primary receiving water body from the central and northern Greater Everglades Ecosystem., Its delicate balance is heavily influenced by changes in quality, quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows; and

WHEREAS, the construction of water control infrastructure within the Everglades throughout the 20th century has harmed the health of the Bay and other connected coastal regions by altering the natural water flow in the region. This has resulted in a greater than 50% reduction in flows through the central Everglades and dramatically reduced distribution of critical fresh water flows south TO Shark River and Taylor Sloughs, natural features of the Everglades that provides freshwater into numerous tributaries that feed the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, restoration of freshwater through the Everglades ecosystem and into Florida Bay is critical for the health of Florida's estuarine ecosystems, recharge of the Biscayne aquifer with potable water, and Sea level rise resiliency, and;

WHEREAS located between the mainland and the Florida Keys, the Florida Bay lies, 80% within the boundaries of Everglades National Park and approximately 20% within the boundaries of the FKNMS, both dependent on clean and adequate water flows; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys as well as the entire State's economy is dependent on the health of the Florida Bay and FKNMS. Both support the multi-billion dollar fishing and tourism industry of South Florida. Florida Bay alone comprises a significant portion of the coastal Everglades recreational fishing industry worth \$880 million annually and commercial shrimp and stone crab fisheries worth more than \$80 million annually; and

WHEREAS, the ecosystem of the Florida Keys including Florida Bay generate \$200 million dollars in state sales tax attracting over 4 million visitors and over \$4.5 billion in economic activity annually; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Bay is approaching dangerous ecological conditions similar to the 1987-1990, ecological disaster from hypersaline conditions in the Florida Bay that led to massive sea grass die off and devastating algal blooms. The lack of freshwater flow, coupled with a severe drought year in 2015 has dramatically placed the Florida Bay at risk due to excessively high salinity. This high salinity is contributing to significant seagrass die-off zones currently estimated at 50,000 acres, approaching the levels of 1987-1990 when approximately 67,000 acres of seagrass died within the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, without intervention and restoration of freshwater flow, harmful algae blooms that are likely to result from excessively high levels of sea grass die off this upcoming summer and fall, will result in severe damage to the environment and economy requiring multi-year recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council urges all of the responsible entities -- the Federal government, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the State of Florida (State), and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) -- to expedite the completion of CERP, including the authorization of and appropriations for all CERP projects, as well as the completion of foundational projects authorized prior to CERP ("pre-CERP"); and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council urges the expedited authorization, appropriation, and completion of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), specifically projects that will restore freshwater flows to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, a subset of CERP projects that includes both water quality treatment and conveyance projects that will significantly improve restoration of the Everglades by providing and conveying freshwater flows from Lake Okeechobee to the central Everglades estimated at 210,000 acre-feet per year and restoring sheet flow to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council requests that the Federal government, the Corps, the State, particularly the SFWMD, prioritize and expedite the completion of CERP and pre-CERP projects in the southern end of the system that are already planned and authorized but have not yet been completed including Modified Water Deliveries, the C-111 South Dade Project including contracts 8 and 9, C-111 Spreader Canal Western project, along with all operational actions that can be taken now to improve water flow to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council supports expediting the CERP planning project for additional EAA storage (“EAA Storage & ASR/Decomp Phase 2”) and combining this planning effort with the planning for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council requests that the Federal government, the State of Florida and SFWMD expedite the acquisition of all lands in the EAA south of Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River basins, and system-wide, which are determined to be necessary for the implementation of CERP projects; and

WHEREAS, to address the likelihood of additional water storage being necessary after the completion CEPP, the Marathon City Council asks that the State consider the options recommended by the University of Florida Water Institute providing land area for additional opportunities to store, convey and treat water south of Lake Okeechobee including “1) purchase of private land in the Everglades Agricultural Area (including the current U.S. Sugar land purchase option on land from other willing sellers) to use or trade for deep and/or shallow storage and treatment opportunities, 2) develop a cost sharing program for on-farm or sub-regional multi-farm shallow storage and treatment opportunities, and 3) use existing state owned wildlife management areas” (compatible with the restoration goals of those areas); and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council urges that the Corps and SFWMD aggressively study, identify and implement operational measures that will enhance water flows into Florida Bay, such as the emergency operations in 2015-2016, and supports the SFWMD’s current South Dade Investigation that is exploring the full range water management options south of Tamiami Trail. City of Marathon strongly urges that options be evaluated to optimize restoration opportunities for Florida Bay and specifically to identify short-term operational measures and conveyance to specifically deliver freshwater to the Florida Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon City Council strongly requests that SFWMD expedite the development and implementation of a recovery strategy to address the exceedances and violation of the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) Rule for Florida Bay, outline and report to City of Marathon its measures to prevent future exceedances and violations, and given the likelihood of another large algal bloom, outline contingency plans to protect Florida Bay from a complete collapse of the system or threat to human health, and that the SFWMD make compliance with the MFL Rule for Florida Bay a top priority.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARATHON, FLORIDA THAT:

1. The above recitals are hereby incorporated into this resolution as restated herein constitute the legislative findings and intent of the City Council of City of Marathon, Florida.
2. City of Marathon strongly requests that South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers look for immediate opportunities to improve the quantity, timing and distribution of water flows into Florida Bay. Cessation of human influenced impacts to the Bay must be immediate if the Bay is to recover in years rather than decades; and

3. The South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expedite the on-going Everglades restoration projects such as: Modified Water Deliveries, the C-111 South Dade Project, C-111 Spreader Canal Western project, Tamiami Trail Next Steps, Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), along with all operational actions that can be taken now to improve water flow to the Florida Bay; and
4. The South Florida Water Management District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expedite water storage planning and corresponding land acquisition south of Lake Okeechobee, such as the EAA Storage & ASR/Decomp Phase 2 (Component G, GG of the Integrated Delivery Schedule for CERP) in an effort to look for new water to add to the freshwater flow to Florida Bay; and
5. The City's federal and state lobbying teams advocate for acquisition of all lands in the EAA south of Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River basins, and system-wide, which are determined to be necessary for the implementation of CERP and CEPP projects; and
6. The City strongly supports necessary prioritization of CERP, CEPP, and all ancillary projects required to restore historic quality, quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows to the Everglades Ecosystem, the Florida Bay, and the waters surrounding the Florida Keys. However all elements of these plans must be initiated and implemented immediately. A delay in development and implementation of any element may cause related delays in development and implementation of other elements. The City strongly states that any delays that can be avoided through expeditious planning are absolutely unacceptable.
7. The City Clerk shall furnish copies of this resolution to:
 - U.S. Senator Bill Nelson
 - U.S. Senator Marco Rubio
 - U.S. Representative Carlos Curbelo, District 26
 - Florida Governor Rick Scott
 - Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner
 - Florida House Speaker Steve Crisafulli
 - State Senator Dwight Bullard, District 39
 - State Representative Holly Raschein, District 120
 - U.S. Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District Commander Col. Jason Kirk
 - U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell
 - Chair, South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, Daniel O'Keefe
 - Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District Peter Antonacci
 - Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Jon Steverson
8. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

**PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARATHON,
FLORIDA, THIS 9th DAY OF AUGUST, 2016.**

THE CITY OF MARATHON, FLORIDA



Mark Senmartin Mayor

AYES: Bartus, Coldiron, Kelly, Zieg, Senmartin
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

ATTEST:



Diane Clavier, City Clerk

(City Seal)

**APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY FOR THE USE AND RELIANCE OF THE
CITY OF MARATHON, FLORIDA ONLY:**



David Migut, City Attorney