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Board of County Commissioners

December 15, 2008

Mr. Eric Buerman, Chair
Board of Governor's
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

RE: Proposed Acquisition of U.S. Sugar Lands

Dear Mr. Buerman:

As you and the other members of the South Florida Water Management District (the District) Governing Board meet today and tomorrow to consider the acquisition of lands owned by the US Sugar Corporation located south of Lake Okeechobee, please be advised that Polk County has significant concerns regarding the true cost and impact of the proposed acquisition. Specifically, Polk County is concerned about the cost of the debt service and environmental remediation, as well as what impact these costs will have on existing District programs.

Polk County has learned from the Florida Association of Counties that conservative estimates of these costs could double or triple the cost of the project. With regard to these additional costs, we are concerned that the District will find itself without capital to satisfy its core mission responsibilities, thus having no other alternative but to significantly reduce current programs.

Historically, local government funding and technical assistance have been the first area of the District budget cut when the agency has faced revenue shortfalls. Polk County, in partnership with the District, continues to make strides to responsibly develop water supplies in the Kissimmee Basin while providing for the protection of the region's natural resources. We are seriously concerned that the proposed funding of this single acquisition could jeopardize the implementation of the recently adopted Northern Everglades Plan, the development of groundwater resources in Southeast Polk County and other projects we are currently working on.

By this letter, Polk County requests that no vote be taken by the Governing Board until the County Commission has been briefed as to:

- The fiscal impact that the citizens of Polk County will be asked to bear, and
- Which programs, if any, may be adversely impacted or eliminated in order to finance the US Sugar land acquisition.

Respectfully submitted,



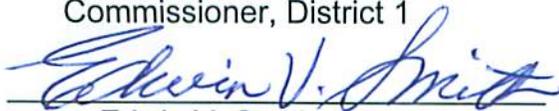
Sam Johnson, Chairman
Commissioner, District 5



Bob English
Commissioner, District 1



Randy Wilkinson
Commissioner, District 2



Edwin V. Smith
Commissioner, District 3



Jean Reed
Commissioner, District 4