

SFWMD

**Compiled by: South Florida Water Management District**  
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MIAMI

CBS

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CHANNEL 4 NEWS

2009-05-15

06:21:58

73,000 ACRES OF FARMLAND WILL NOW BE USED FOR EVERGLADES RESTERRATION. THE DEAL WAS APPROVED YESTERDAY TO BUY THE LAND FROM THE U.S. SUGAR CORPORATION. THE \$536 MILLION DEAL WILL ALLOW WATER TO BE NATURALLY CLEANED AND STORED BEFORE FLOWING INTO THE EVERGLADES.

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TAMPA

FOX

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CHANNEL 13 NEWS

2009-05-15

12:18:37

5:51.

FOR TODAY, WIDELY SCATTERED THUNDER SHOWERS LATER ON THIS AFTERNOON.

TOMORROW, AN INCREASE IN THOSE THUNDER SHOWERS I DO BELIEVE. BUT AGAIN THE TIMING AFTERNOON. SKYTOWER OMNI 7 DAY FORECAST. 30, 40 AND UP TO 50 PERCENT RAIN CHANCES ON SUNDAY ASK AND MONDAY AS THAT FRONT NEARS. WE'RE GOING TO HOLD ON TO 30, 40 PERCENT CHANCE EVEN AS WE MOVE ON THROUGH THE WEEKEND AND INTO MOST OF NEXT WEEK. SO, YOU ASKED ME EARLIER, A LITTLE EARLY TO GET BIG THUNDERSTORMS, BUT SINCE WE NEEDED RAIN SO BAD, WE'LL TAKE THE EARLY START. WE CERTAINLY WILL. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, HOWARD.

YOU KNOW HURRICANE SEASON HOW IT OFFICIALLY STARTS IN COUPLE WEEKS NOW. HILLSBOROUGH ANIMAL SERVICES IS

ADDING TWO NEW PET SHELTERS THIS YEAR. SHIELDS MIDDLE SCHOOL IN RUSKIN AND BOTTLES IN NORTH TAMPA WILL NOW BE AVAILABLE IN IN ADDITION TO SICKLE HIGH SCHOOL IN BURNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL. HOWEVER, YOU UR ASKED TO ONLY USE A SHELTERS AS LAST RESORT. IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THOSE SHELTERS SXRGS HOW YOU CAN MAKE DONATION TOO, LOOK ON SEEN ON TV SECTION OF WWW.MYFOXTAMPABAY.COM.

A DEAL TO BUY 73 THOUSAND ACRES OF U.S. SUGAR AND EVERGLADES IS APPROVED.

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT VOTED FOR 6 TO 1. IT IFS PART OF THE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROJECT. IT WILL COST THE STATE \$536 MILLION. THE ORIGINAL DEAL WOULD HAVE PURCHASED ALL OF THE COMPANY FOR NEARLY \$2 BILLION. BUT BUDGET CUT BACKS MADE THAT

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## **Florida Water Managers OK Phased Buy of U.S. Sugar Land**

05/15/2009

Environment News Service

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WEST PALM BEACH, Florida, May 15, 2009 (ENS) - The South Florida Water Management District Governing Board has approved a revised strategy to acquire vast stretches of land from the United States Sugar Corporation for Everglades restoration.

The Board had sought ways to address current economic challenges while preserving the environmental vision of this historic purchase.

With these lands, the state agency is expected to re-establish a natural flow-way from Lake Okeechobee through the River of Grass to Florida Bay. Such a flow-way would preserve the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries from destructive discharges, eliminate hundreds of tons of phosphorous fertilizer pollution and recharge groundwater systems.

The amended agreement, approved last week by U.S. Sugar's Board of Directors, provides for the initial purchase of 73,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee, with options to purchase another 107,000 acres when economic and financial conditions improve.

"Benefits of this acquisition to the Everglades and Florida's coastal estuaries are immense, providing us the opportunity to restore a unique and treasured ecosystem in ways not previously envisioned," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann on Wednesday after the vote.

Under the approved agreement, which is subject to financing, the district district would take ownership of approximately 73,000 acres of land and its improvements for a purchase price of \$536

million, including 33,000 acres of citrus lands and 40,000 acres of sugarcane lands.

At slightly less than appraised value, the revised purchase reduces the immediate public investment by 60 percent, or \$800 million, and annual debt service payments by an estimated \$65 million from an earlier agreement between the state and the company.

That original agreement, approved by the board on December 16, 2008, would have enabled the state to acquire more than 180,000 acres of land for \$1.34 billion, contingent upon financing and affordability.

In view of the economic downturn, the two parties on April 1, 2009, agreed to work on a revised framework that would allow for the completion of the transaction in affordable steps.

Under the revised agreement, closing on the 73,000 acres would take place in 2010, within 90 days after court validation of the bonds to finance the acquisition.

U.S. Sugar would lease back the 40,000 acres of sugarcane lands from the district at \$150 per acre for seven years, with provisions to extend up to 20 years. The lease would generate a minimum of \$40 million in revenue and avoid more than \$11 million in land management costs during the first seven years.

U.S. Sugar would be required to pay all property taxes and assessments, control the land for exotic and invasive plants and implement Best Management Practices to prevent pollution.

The district may terminate portions of the lease and begin using the acreage for restoration under a "takedown" schedule, including all of the citrus lands with 12 months' notice, and 10,000 acres of sugarcane lands with two years' notice within the first 10 years.

Should the district exercise the purchase option, all property would be available for approved and funded restoration projects.

The amended agreements allow for the continued operation of the U.S. Sugar Corporation's mill and refinery, keeping 1,700 direct jobs for at least another decade and sustaining regional agriculture.

Florida Governor Charlie Crist was pleased with the outcome of the vote, saying, "I want to express my appreciation to the Governing Board for their courage in taking the historic step today to acquire land that is essential for the restoration and revival of the Everglades."

"By gaining access to hundreds of square miles of prime property," he said, "the River of Grass and the wildlife that depend on it face a brighter and more secure future."

Robert Coker, senior vice president, public affairs for U.S. Sugar commended the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District, saying, "We look forward to working in partnership with the State and the South Florida Water Management District in moving forward to close this transaction and implement Governor Crist's bold vision for restoring the

Everglades ecosystem."

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## **Governor Thanks SFWMD for Everglades Money**

05/15/2009

WPBF-TV

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Governor Thanks SFWMD For Everglades Money  
Water Managers Agree To Spend \$536 Million  
POSTED: 8:26 pm EDT May 14, 2009

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. -- Gov. Charlie Crist was in West Palm Beach on Thursday to shake a few hands who helped make one of his pet projects become reality.

He stopped by the South Florida Water Management District headquarters to thank water managers for approving his Everglades restoration deal. It's a \$536 million plan to buy 73,000 acres of land from U.S. Sugar.

WPBF News 25 tried to ask him about his decision this week to run for the U.S. Senate.

"Listen, we'll have plenty time for politics later," Crist said. "I'm focused on being the governor of Florida and thank these people for their great work with the Everglades; that's what I care about."

Crist is seeking to fill the Senate seat Republican Mel Martinez is leaving after just one term in office.

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## **A Better Glades Deal**

05/16/2009

St. Petersburg Times

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The scaled-down proposal for restoration of the Everglades that South Florida water managers approved this week shows that pragmatism is not always the enemy of the ideal.

The state was forced to cut its buyout of U.S. Sugar farmland because of declining tax revenues. But the leaner deal that emerged is more affordable to taxpayers, easier to manage and still ambitious enough to jump-start the revival of Florida's River of Grass.

The fourth and latest strategy falls far short of the vision Gov. Charlie Crist outlined last year. It calls for the state to spend \$536 million for 73,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land. While the scale of the buyout is less than half what the governor originally proposed, it is a manageable price in this down economy. And the sizeable swath of farmland will allow the decadeslong restoration effort to begin anew.

Florida was looking at years, anyway, to line up federal and state funding for the restoration work. State and federal officials also need time to engineer the water projects. Under the new deal, the South Florida Water Management District would still have options to purchase the remaining 107,000 acres. The deal includes an exclusive, three-year option to purchase the property at a fixed price of \$7,400 an acre, and the first right of refusal for the seven years following should U.S. Sugar get another offer. The company has agreed to pay three times the price Crist originally negotiated to lease back the farmland and be responsible for controlling pollution on the property.

The deal vastly improves on the terms Crist outlined only 11 months ago in other ways as well. By phasing in the land purchase, the state has time to act as the economy recovers. That should help ensure that the water management district does not get distracted from overseeing South Florida's water supply as it pursues the Everglades work.

The phase-in also gives the farming communities in the Lake Okeechobee basin time to retrain workers and build a new tax base. And the deal extends until June 2010 the deadline Florida has to back out should the revenue picture worsen.

The state's approval also sends the right signal to Washington. President Barack Obama has shown a commitment to restore the federal government as an equal partner in the Everglades cost-sharing plan. His 2010 budget unveiled this month bumped Everglades spending to \$279 million, on top of the \$183 million provided in March and another \$96 million in federal stimulus money. By the district moving forward with the land buy, the state demonstrates its own commitment to strengthening its partnership with the federal government. That is the only way, over the long haul, this restoration plan will work.

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## **U.S. SUGAR DEAL, 'GLADES BENEFIT**

05/17/2009

Sun Sentinel

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The Legislature allotted \$50 million for Everglades restoration, boosting the state's investment since 2001 to \$900 million. Adding contributions from the South Florida Water Management District and the federal government, more than \$2 billion has been provided to buy sensitive nearby lands and restore water flow to the River of Grass.

In addition, Gov. Charlie Crist successfully defended his \$536 million plan to buy 72,500 acres owned by U.S. Sugar near the Everglades. State senators, who thought the state overpaid for the land, tried to derail it by restricting the water management district's ability to finance the deal. The effort died on a 16-21 vote, preserving the governor's top priority.

The session "could've been a lot worse" for the Everglades, said Sen. Dave Aronberg, D-Greenacres. "I think the Everglades did OK, considering the difficult economic times." On another environmental front, the Legislature didn't allocate any new money for the Florida Forever land-buying program. But the state still can tap an unspent \$250 million set aside for the program in current budget year.

- Josh Hafenbrack

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## **Crist launches yet another thrilling quest**

05/17/2009

Miami Herald

Hiaasen, Carl

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Ah, Charlie, we hardly knew ye.

The lad was but a bronze blur, streaking across the bright Tallahassee firmament . . . OK, streaking isn't exactly the right word.

What Charlie did was more like scooting or possibly darting, as in darting from one job to the next -- state senator, deputy secretary of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, education commissioner, attorney general, then governor.

It seems like barely 30 months ago that he took office as Florida's chief executive, brimming with ideals and bold notions -- wait, it was only 30 months ago!

Now Charlie Crist is moving on, his sights set on the U.S. Senate, a rarely august body that more often serves as a lunch club for dim bulbs, demagogues and ditherers.

By virtue of having a pulse, Crist will be extolled as a young dynamo and embraced by the national Republican Party, which is desperate for a candidate who can appeal to that elusive under-65 constituency.

This presumes that Crist will demolish former Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio in the GOP primary, which should be easy unless the governor is unexpectedly beset by scandal, or he says something monumentally offensive during the campaign.

And Charlie's not an offensive guy. He is, in fact, relentlessly likable. Nobody in public office works harder at being eager and available. He's the political equivalent of a Labrador retriever, with table manners.

Long after Crist is gone from the governor's mansion, he'll be remembered far more for his likability than for his leadership. To say he wasn't exactly a dominant force during this year's gloomy legislative session would be charitable.

Charlie isn't one for tough talk or arm-twisting. His is not a bully pulpit, but a warm and fuzzy one.

But as he launches off on his thrilling new quest, Floridians remain stuck with brutal unemployment, a patchwork farce of a budget and an embarrassing, rudderless Legislature. The schools are drowning, crime is rising, important services are being slashed and we lead the nation in both foreclosures and mortgage fraud.

Yet, judging by the numbers, hardly anyone blames Charlie. You can't describe his presence as electrifying, but the governor definitely has a gift for appearing sincere, well-intentioned and harmless. These days, that counts for plenty with voters.

The news of his candidacy didn't gladden the hearts of Democratic leaders, who were hoping Rubio would be the Republican choice in the race to replace outgoing Sen. Mel Martinez.

A darling of the Fox News crowd, Rubio comes from the lunar Limbaugh-Cheney wing of the party. He accuses moderates such as Crist of dodging core Republican values, when what they're

actually trying to dodge is another bleak and humiliating election day.

Rubio has slammed Crist for accepting federal stimulus dollars and last week broadcast a Web video of the governor sharing a stage with President Barack Obama. Considering Obama's high ratings in the national polls, Rubio's strategy is baffling, to say the least.

Unlike Crist, the former House speaker has practically zero crossover appeal to Democrats, and he would have been a highly vulnerable opponent in the upcoming campaign.

But now the Democratic candidate, whoever that might be, will likely face a sitting governor whose durable popularity cuts across party lines. Unless he turns up in a Craigslist ad or as a wardrobe adviso to Miss California, Crist will be hard to beat.

As for a legacy, he'll be known best for his role in the ambitious but problematic project to buy land from U.S. Sugar and convert it for Everglades restoration. The latest version -- scaled down radically from the governor's original plan -- was approved last week by South Florida water managers.

If the deal closes, the state will sell bonds to raise \$536 million for 72,800 acres of cane fields and citrus groves, most of which will remain in agriculture for years. The land -- a desirable piece of the original Everglades watershed -- eventually is slated to become reservoirs and pollution-filtering marshes.

However, the plan faces lawsuits and a weak credit market that could endanger the finance structure of the purchase, not to mention the expensive reclamation work.

The sugar buyout is far from being a sure thing, and without Crist in the mix, the state might be tempted to walk away.

Crist says he wants to go to Washington because he can better serve Floridians there. I remember another nice guy who left Washington because he said it was too hard to get anything done. His name was Lawton Chiles, and he came home and ran for governor.

It all boils down to the nature of one's ambition. Crist wants to be president someday, and there's nothing wrong with that. But a term in the Senate is six years, Charlie, not two. Try to control yourself.

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