

# **LAKE OKEECHOBEE REGIONAL COMPACT**

**WHEREAS**, each of the 164 municipalities and 19 counties located within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program study area in Central and South Florida have substantial water quality challenges that critically impact the sustainability, economic vitality, and growth of each of their communities (hereinafter the “Lake Okeechobee Regional Community”); and

**WHEREAS**, since the start of construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike in 1932, the flood control and water delivery system that serves Florida’s urban and agricultural interests has substantially impacted the natural ecosystem and threatened essential wildlife habitats; and

**WHEREAS**, the Central and Southern Florida Project significantly altered the landscape of the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie, and Caloosahatchee watersheds, and forever changed the way water is managed throughout Central and South Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, the Florida Everglades and its coastal estuaries are an internationally unique ecosystem, a national treasure, and a critical component of Florida’s economy; and

**WHEREAS**, restoration of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed, the Everglades ecosystem, and coastal estuaries are vital to Florida’s future by protecting Florida's environment, economy, and water supplies; and

**WHEREAS**, each of the effected local governments face both unique and analogous water challenges requiring regional cooperation as a consequence of environmental, ecological, and economic interdependence; and

**WHEREAS**, the 164 cities and 19 counties located within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program study area play a major role in protecting local water quality and reducing stormwater runoff; and

**WHEREAS**, only together can the Lake Okeechobee Regional Community effectively address the myriad of longstanding water issues shared by their local governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Lake Okeechobee Regional Community is wholly resolved to improving regional water conditions and mitigating future impacts to water quality through abiding local initiatives and indelible collaborative planning;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY EACH LOCAL GOVERNING AUTHORITY WITHIN THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE REGIONAL COMMUNITY:**

**SECTION 1:** That each local government shall work in close collaboration with other parties to this compact to develop a strategic plan utilizing the best available science, emphasizing regional sustainability and vitality, remaining sensitive to the limitations of local

resources, and acknowledging the diverse economic, ecological, and environmental challenges each community faces.

**SECTION 2:** That each local government shall work in close collaboration with other parties to this compact to develop a joint policy position urging the United States Congress and the Florida Legislature to take special actions, including passing legislation that recognizes the unique vulnerabilities of Lake Okeechobee and the surrounding Everglades and estuarine systems, and to further a joint policy position that includes specific recommendations regarding the allocation of federal and/or state funding.

**SECTION 3:** That each local government shall work in close collaboration with other parties to this compact in developing joint position statements on proposed State legislation including but not limited to: land management, stormwater runoff, septic to sewer programs, and allocation of state and federal resources.

**SECTION 4:** That each local government shall work in close collaboration with other parties to this compact in drafting conceptual state and federal legislation for maintaining infrastructure, mitigating runoff from urban and agricultural lands, and improving water quality of and water flows through Lake Okeechobee, Everglades and coastal estuaries.

**SECTION 5:** That each local government shall commit appropriate staff resources and expertise within budget constraints as part of a Regional Planning Team with other parties to this compact. Staff resources shall be dedicated towards developing and implementing a Regional Action Plan, understanding therefore no local government will work ex parte or contra to the mutually adopted resolution of all parties to this compact. This does not limit local governments to advocating for projects or policies that are only mutually agreed upon by all parties.

**SECTION 6:** That the adopted Regional Action Plan shall, at a minimum, include the following components:

(a) A list of those local and regional projects and programs all parties to this compact mutually agree are critical to Everglades restoration, protection and improvement of local water supplies and water quality, enhancement of natural area and the economic vitality of our communities.

(b) Local Projects/Programs: Septic maintenance and septic to central sewer programs; local fertilizer ordinances and fertilizer education programs; stormwater BMPs; agricultural BMPs; golf course BMPs.

(c) Current Regional Projects: The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the projects identified on Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) including, but not limited to, Rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike; Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP); C-43 West Basin Reservoir; C-44 Reservoir; Tamiami Trail Bridging Project; Lake Okeechobee Watershed Planning Project; and the Kissimmee River Restoration Project.

**SECTION 7:** That each local government shall commit to participating in an annual regional summit, including the opportunity to host a congress with other parties to this compact in furtherance of the resolutions stated herein and for so long as the parties to this compact are resolved to its purpose.