

March 18, 2005

Senator Dave Aronberg (aronberg.dave.web@flsenate.gov)
Senator Michael Bennett (bennett.mike.web@flsenate.gov)
Senator Larcenia J. Bullard (bullard.larcenia.web@flsenate.gov)
Senator Burt Saunders (saunders.burt.web@flsenate.gov)
Representative Michael Davis (mike.davis@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Michael Grant (michael.grant@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Dudley Goodlette (dudley.goodlette@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Denise Grimsley (denise.grimsley@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Jeff Kottkamp (jeff.kottkamp@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Paige Kreegel (paige.kreegel@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Bruce Kyle (bruce.kyle@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative David Rivera (david.rivera@myfloridahouse.gov)
Representative Trudi Williams (trudi.Williams@myfloridahouse.gov)

Re: SB 1880/HB

Dear Lee and Collier County Delegations:

The Southwest Florida Watershed Council is a grassroots, multi-county coalition of individuals, organizations, agencies and businesses that have come together to address issues affecting the Caloosahatchee and Big Cypress watersheds. The mission of the Southwest Florida Watershed Council is to protect, conserve, manage and/or restore the land and water resources of these watersheds through participation and cooperation of all stakeholders in consensus building, planning, and decision making to meet the economic, natural and cultural needs for this and succeeding generations.

We are writing to you today to ask for your support of SB1880, and the equivalent House bill that is yet to be filed. Senate Bill 1880 has been filed by Senator Saunders to enhance land acquisition in South Florida. The passage of this bill will greatly improve efforts to restore the Everglades and purchase and preserve the Babcock Ranch. The Council is supportive of these two intertwined projects.

With the price of land skyrocketing throughout Southwest Florida, it is fiscally responsible to purchase land for preservation now, rather than later. The structure of the Bill will ensure that the funds set aside will only be used for projects that are already targeted for land acquisition. We can choose to accelerate this process with passage of SB1880, or we can wait for additional funds to be available, sometime in the future, when land values are much higher.

We truly appreciate all efforts you make to ensure passage of this Bill. The outcome will be a stronger and more protected South Florida.

Sincerely,

Matt Fisher, Chair
Southwest Florida Watershed Council