

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

RESOLUTION NO. 16-2.3

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, OF
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR OF
FLORIDA, THROUGH EXECUTIVE ORDER AND/OR OTHER POWERS
AVAILABLE UNDER THE LAW, TO DECLARE A STATE OF
EMERGENCY AND FACILITATE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AND
OTHER AVAILABLE MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE
INDIAN RIVER LAGOON AND THE ST. LUCIE ESTUARY

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon is a diverse, shallow-water estuary stretching across 40 percent of Florida's east coast; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon is an important commercial and recreational fishery and economic resource to the state and region. The total estimated annual economic value of the lagoon is \$3.7 billion, supporting 15,000 full and part-time jobs and providing recreational opportunities for 11 million people per year; and

WHEREAS, the St. Lucie River and Estuary is an ecological jewel on Florida's Treasure Coast that is integral to the environmental and economic well-being of Martin and St. Lucie Counties. The St. Lucie River is part of the larger Indian River Lagoon system, the most diverse estuarine environment in North America with more than 4,000 plant and animal species, and

WHEREAS, extensive historical modifications to the St. Lucie River and its watershed have altered the hydrology of the region and, as a result, heavy rainfall can bring large influxes of fresh water into the St. Lucie Estuary from stormwater runoff within the basin, Lake Okeechobee releases, or both. The increased Lake water and basin discharges lower salinity levels and reduce water quality in the estuary, causing environmental and economic damage; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon is at a crisis point. The coming months could herald a slow recovery of this unique ecosystem or an imminent collapse of the estuary requiring both short and long-term solutions; and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners has supported the long-term solution of completing the Indian River Lagoon South (IRL-S) project since the authorization of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in the year 2000; and

WHEREAS, the IRL-S project is a key element of the CERP; and

WHEREAS, Martin County has acquired 45,000 acres for various CERP projects, the funding for which has been voluntarily assessed by the residents of Martin County, generating \$75 million for land acquisition costs, including \$27 million for the C-44 Reservoir Project and leveraging those funds with state dollars; and

WHEREAS, Water-related economic benefits to Martin and St. Lucie Counties total more than \$840 million annually, with an additional \$588 million in property value benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Realtors report in 2015 titled “The Impact of Water Quality on Florida’s Home Values” objectively and scientifically concluded that “the ongoing problem of polluted water in the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries has indeed resulted in a negative impact on home values”; and

WHEREAS, Florida’s voters overwhelmingly approved Amendment 1 to “fund the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to acquire, restore, improve, and manage conservation lands including wetlands and forests, fish and wildlife habitat; land protecting water resources and drinking water sources, including the Everglades, and the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams; beaches and shores; outdoor recreational lands; working farms and ranches; and historic or geologic sites, by dedicating 33 percent of net revenues from the existing excise tax on documents for 20 years”; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 at the request of and with funding from the Florida Senate, the University of Florida Water Institute completed an Independent Technical Review titled “Options to Reduce High Volume Freshwater Flows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Move More Water from Lake Okeechobee to the Southern Everglades” which specifically identified a need for additional storage south of Lake Okeechobee to address damaging freshwater discharges to the estuaries.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, THAT:

1. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners requests that the Governor declare a State of Emergency for the Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie Estuary to protect the local economy and ecosystem, including numerous endangered species located in the Estuary which are potentially harmed by the discharges from Lake Okeechobee.
2. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners requests that the State release funds to the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for temporary pumping and redirection of water to maximum capacity on SFWMD designated lands or other state lands, including but not limited to the Holey Land and Rotenberger tracts, and Water Conservation Areas.
3. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners requests that the State and Federal Government provide economic assistance to the businesses damaged by the discharges.
4. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners supports the passage of HB 989/SB 1168 “Legacy Florida,” providing dedicated funding for Everglades restoration and funding in the House and Senate to provide short and long term storage and water quality treatment options.
5. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners requests the Legislature use Amendment 1 funds for design of 507,000 acre-feet of additional storage, treatment, and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee, and for the associated purchase of identified land for said storage to redirect water that would otherwise be discharged into the estuaries, away from the estuaries, as recommended in the 2015 Independent Technical Review by the University of Florida Water Institute titled “Options to Reduce High Volume Freshwater Flows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Move More Water from Lake Okeechobee to the Southern Everglades.”
6. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners urges completion of the CERP.

7. The County Administrator shall forward this Resolution to the Governor of the State of Florida, the County's State and Federal legislative delegations and the St. Lucie County Administrator.
8. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 9th DAY OF FEBRUARY 2016.

ATTEST:


CAROLYN TIMMANN, CLERK OF THE
CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA:


ANNE SCOTT, CHAIR

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:


FOR: MICHAEL D. DURHAM,
COUNTY ATTORNEY