

**A RESOLUTION OF THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COUNCIL SUPPORTING THE ACQUISITION OF LANDS
WITHIN THE EVERGLADES AGRICULTURAL AREA SUFFICIENT TO RESTORE
THE EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA BAY**

December 9, 2008

Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1990 to provide for the protection of the spectacular marine resources surrounding the Florida Keys, and

Whereas, the Congress and President of the United States determined that these resources were the underwater equivalent of the tropical rainforests, and

Whereas, the statute establishing the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary conveyed to the Sanctuary the responsibility of managing all impacts affecting these resources whether generated from within or from outside the boundaries of said Sanctuary, and

Whereas, it has been determined that restricted freshwater flows through the Everglades ecosystem has caused significant and sustained damage to the resources of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, including to patch reefs and to the nursery grounds of spiny lobster, shrimp and reef fish, and

Whereas, the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC), its members and staff of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary have fully participated in efforts to provide for the restoration of the Everglades ecosystem for the tenure of its history beginning with the first SAC Chair, the late George M. Barley, and

Whereas, for over two decades the Florida Keys and Florida Bay have periodically experienced massive algae blooms and related marine resource mortality associated with improperly managed freshwater flow that occurs to our north, and

Whereas, the work of the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force have all determined that restoring the proper quality, quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows through the Everglades is critical to restoration of the ecosystem, and

Whereas, it has been determined that up to 130,000 acres of land is needed for water storage, treatment and conveyance to move water from Lake Okeechobee into the Everglades, and

Whereas, Florida Bay and the coastal estuaries continue their path of ecological decline due to lack of freshwater flow, and

Whereas, a monumental opportunity exists to provide lands necessary to provide for sufficient storage, treatment and conveyance of freshwater flows to the Everglades, Florida Bay and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in the form of an offer of sale by United States Sugar Corporation to the State of Florida of lands it owns within the Everglades Agricultural Area, and

Whereas, the Governor of Florida, the Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District are currently in negotiations with U.S. Sugar regarding a contractual agreement to secure the lands for purposes of restoring the Everglades Ecosystem, and

Whereas, successful acquisition of these lands will provide an unprecedented opportunity, previously unthinkable due to the scope of the acreage required to provide sufficient benefits, to move restoration goals for the Everglades ecosystem, including Florida Bay and the Sanctuary, forward in an expeditious manner.

Therefore, the Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary requests the Sanctuary Superintendent convey to the Executive Director, Chairman and Governing Board members of the South Florida Water Management District; the Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the Florida Governor our support for the acquisition of sufficient lands within the Everglades Agricultural Area to provide for the restoration of adequate quality, quantity, timing and distribution of freshwater flows through the Everglades ecosystem including Florida Bay and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Passed unanimously on this date: December 9, 2008.

The Council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.