

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

RESOLUTION NO. 2011- _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT TO ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE AND HOLISTIC WATER RESERVATION FOR THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER ESTUARY THAT INCLUDES LOCATING AND QUANTIFYING SURFACE WATER WITHIN THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE AND CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHEDS THAT IS AVAILABLE TO RESERVE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER ESTUARY.

WHEREAS, the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary (CRE) is a unique natural resource with significant ecological value that provides tremendous opportunities for population and economic growth, luring year-round and seasonal residents, tourists, agriculture, recreation and business interests; and

WHEREAS, the CRE serves as a nursery ground for many commercial and recreational fish species and is also home to several threatened and endangered aquatic and avian species; and

WHEREAS, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed has been significantly altered from its natural state resulting in harmful changes to the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of flows to the estuary; and

WHEREAS, the lack of flows during the dry seasons causes significant harm to the CRE and its threatened and endangered species and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Act (NEEPA) and the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan (CRWPP) aim to minimize these undesirable flows and improve the water quality delivered to the CRE; and

WHEREAS, the District established by rule the Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) for the Caloosahatchee River in order to prevent significant harm; and

WHEREAS, since its adoption in 2001, the MFL has been violated numerous times resulting in high and harmful salinity levels in the CRE; and

WHEREAS, a Water Reservation for the CRE is a critical component of the NEEPA, the CRWPP and the MFL recovery strategy; and

WHEREAS, the CERP Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project provides a fraction of the necessary flows for protection of the CRE; and

WHEREAS, a holistic and comprehensive Water Reservation that includes reserving surface water flows in both the Caloosahatchee River Watershed and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed is necessary to protect the fish and wildlife and public health and safety of the CRE.

NOW, THEREFORE, including and incorporating the aforesaid recitals, **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District:

Section 1: In order to protect fish and wildlife and the public health and safety of the CRE and in furtherance of the NEEPA, the CRWPP and MFL recovery strategy, the District shall quantify the amount of water that can and will be created through restoration projects, distributive storage and other means.

Section 2: This quantification shall include new operational protocols that increase storage in Lake Okeechobee and any and all water within the Lake Okeechobee and Caloosahatchee River Watersheds that will become available through expired permits, changes in land use, public lands acquisitions, restoration projects, etc.

Section 3: In conjunction with establishing a water reservation for the CRE, a comprehensive and holistic accounting shall be completed through the completion of the Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan, the CRWPP Update, or any other means in order to properly locate and quantify additional fresh water in the Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee River Watersheds that is available to reserve for the protection of the CRE and ensure compliance with the MFL.

PASSED and ADOPTED this ___ day of _____, 2011.

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT, BY ITS GOVERNING BOARD

BY: _____
Chair

ATTEST:

BY: _____
District Clerk / Secretary

Approved as to form:

BY: _____
Office of Counsel