Independent peer-reviewed science again calls into question the SFWMD's EAA reservoir design

76% more flow south expected, but only 11% more treatment provided

STUART, FL- Dr. William J. Mitsch, Director of Florida Gulf Coast University's Everglades Wetlands Research Park, published an updated review of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) reservoir design in the peer-reviewed scientific journal Ecological Engineering calling into question the adequacy of the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) proposal.

In the report, Dr. Mitsch notes: “There is insufficient detail on water quality in the plan relative to water volume and flow. The flow south to the Everglades will increase by 76% but the project shows only an 11% increase in treatment wetlands of 6500 acres to improve water quality directly. This is totally inadequate to insure that clean water will be delivered to the Everglades.”

“I estimate an additional minimum of at least 43,000 acres of treatment wetlands will be needed to treat the water flowing south and have recommended previously that 100,000 acres should be set aside for treatment wetlands. In ecological engineering, as in all fields of engineering, a safety factor of two is reasonable to ensure that the wetlands meet our goals of water quality.”

“A change in leadership in the state of Florida after the November 2018 elections and especially in the leadership of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has led to renewed public optimism for major improvements in water quality management and for Everglades restoration in south Florida. It is therefore timely that this review of the advantages and shortcomings of the original 'EAA (Everglades Agricultural Area) Reservoir Plan' now be widely
This is hardly the first time scientists outside of the SFWMD have called into question the EAA reservoir design. As noted by Friends of the Everglades executive director Alex Gillen: “The EAA reservoir design is clearly inadequate and does not have enough stormwater treatment to meet water quality standards as designed. In a May 2018 report, the Army Corps stated there is a ‘high risk of non-compliance with water quality standards’ based on the current reservoir design. In WRDA 2018, Congress instructed the Army Corps to address this report before constructing the reservoir and it hasn’t been addressed. In 2017, Everglades Foundation funded scientists said there needed to be between 13,000 and 38,500 acres of new stormwater treatment areas. When spending $2 billion dollars of taxpayer money, we don’t just get to ignore the overwhelming scientific consensus that much more stormwater treatment is needed to meet water quality standards.”

Friends of the Everglades is a nonprofit founded in 1969 by renowned journalist, author, and environmental activist Marjory Stoneman Douglas dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring the only Everglades in the world.

Funding to support the report from Dr. Mitsch was provided by Friends of the Everglades.

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Friends of the Everglades
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