



Instead of using the land to store, then cleanse, 60+ BILLION gallons of polluted Lake O water until the Reservoir is online, the District enters into a new lease with the Fanjuls of Florida Crystals in a secret back-room deal for \$59 an acre per year for the next 8 years - and will send that filth to both coasts of Florida.

November 8, 2018



The Honorable Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

On behalf of The Everglades Foundation, I am writing to strongly protest the illegal, shameful and undemocratic action this morning by your appointees at the South Florida Water Management District to extend leases now scheduled to expire for acreage owned by the State of Florida that has been designated for construction of the Everglades reservoir.

In a breathtaking effort to thwart the public will, less than 48 hours after a statewide election during which you repeatedly and personally assured the people of Florida of your commitment to protecting Florida's environment, it appears that your appointees at SFWMD have been engaged in secret negotiations with Florida Crystals to extend these leases for the growing of sugar cane through the year 2027, a fact we just learned yesterday through a public records request.

Under the cover of night, SFWMD amended its agenda to change the item from a general discussion to call for a vote on a lease that was not published until after 9:00 p.m. last night. The deception and lack of transparency by a government agency is alarming. As a businessman, you should be embarrassed by the terms accepted by your appointees, allowing Florida Crystals to terminate the lease for convenience with one year's notice but not affording SFWMD the same right, and not allowing the site to be used for temporary storage in the interim before full-scale implementation of the reservoir project.

Your appointees ignored the urgent request of Governor-elect Ron DeSantis and U.S. Representative Brian Mast (R-Stuart) to delay any action until the Governor-elect could be briefed on the matter. Your office was aware of our concerns about this matter but did nothing to intervene. Considering this, I must conclude that your administration is complicit in this illegal maneuver that benefits a single sugar company over the interests of the people of Florida, who own the land in question.

If the administration is not, I ask that you publicly denounce the action taken today by SFWMD's Governing Board and demand the resignations of the entire Governing Board and Executive Director Ernie Marks.

Sincerely,

Eric Eikenberg
Chief Executive Officer



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PRESS RELEASES

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NOV 07 2018

Mast, DeSantis Urge South Florida Water Management District To Delay Decision On Extension Of EAA Southern Storage Reservoir Land Lease

Stuart, FL – U.S. Congressman Brian Mast (FL-18) and Governor-Elect Ron DeSantis tonight issued the following statement after learning that the South Florida Water Management District plans to hold a vote tomorrow, November 8, 2018, on extending the land lease with New Hope Sugar Company, a subsidiary of Florida Crystals, for land authorized to be used for the EAA Southern Storage Reservoir:

“Given that the current lease does not expire until March and because we did not receive enough advance notice on this proposed vote to ensure that this extension would not delay construction of the EAA Southern Storage Reservoir, we urge the South Florida Water Management District to delay their planned vote tomorrow. The EAA Southern Storage Reservoir is a critical component of Everglades Restoration and our joint efforts to prevent harmful algal blooms. We will not support any lease extension that could delay the construction of the reservoir in direct contradiction of the intention of both the United States Congress and Florida Legislature.”

BACKGROUND:

The South Florida Water Management District Meeting agenda can be found **here** (<https://apps.sfwmd.gov/webapps/publicMeetings/viewFile/18649>). The proposed lease extension can be found **here** ([https://sfwmd.mycusthelp.com/webapp/_rs/\(S\(gbyr15z3ppwlyiffnwx3obq\)\)/RequestArchiveDetails.aspx?rid=4328&view=2](https://sfwmd.mycusthelp.com/webapp/_rs/(S(gbyr15z3ppwlyiffnwx3obq))/RequestArchiveDetails.aspx?rid=4328&view=2)).

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<https://mast.house.gov/2018/11/mast-desantis-urge-south-florida-water-management-district-to-delay-decision-on-extension-of-eaa-southern-storage-reservoir-land-lease>

PUBLISHER

GLEN NICKERSON

PHONE: 941-207-1010

FAX: 941-484-8460

OPINION

GONDOLIER SUN EDITOR

NATHAN LANE

PHONE: 941-206-1138

nlane@venicegondolier.com

SUN NEWSPAPERS

OUR VIEW

Water district drops post-election bomb

OUR POSITION: *The South Florida Water Management District may have sabotaged Ron DeSantis' promise to expedite a fix for Lake Okeechobee runoff.*

S kulduggery. That's the best word we can think of for the underhanded actions of the South Florida Water Management District's last-minute lease agreement with Big Sugar.

The water district, whose entire board was appointed by Gov. Rick Scott, approved a lease for land scheduled to be used as a south reservoir for Lake Okeechobee's algae-infested water runoff. The lease puts land, targeted to provide relief to Southwest

Floridians plagued by blue-green-algae this past summer, under the control of New Hope Sugar Co., a subsidiary of Florida Crystals, until 2027. The lease, at a cost of about \$1 million a year, provides acreage for farming, according to a story by Tyler Treadway, of Treasure Coast Newspapers.

To be transparent about our angst, there is a clause that might allow Hope Sugar to sell or lease enough land for the reservoir, with four months notice. The whole process, however, is nothing but a headache to the next governor, likely Ron DeSantis who favors the reservoir and made it a campaign promise.

What makes the board's action even more stinging, is the fact the approval of

the lease might actually be illegal. It seems, according to Treadway, the board added the topic to its agenda at 9 p.m. the night before it met. Giving less than 24 hours notice would undermine Florida's Sunshine laws.

U.S. Rep. Brian Mast, R-Palm City, had told board members he and DeSantis wanted to be briefed on the proposal before it was approved to assure it presented no "additional hurdles" to the reservoir, according to the Treadway article. The article went on to say after the vote, the congressman said it was "frustrating to be sideways with them on this, but it's not surprising."

Mast fears the federal government might hesitate to

pony up its half of the \$1.8 billion reservoir cost because of the lease.

The Everglades Foundation has asked Gov. Scott to demand the resignations of the board members. Its executive director wrote: "I must conclude your administration is complicit in this illegal maneuver that benefits a single sugar company over the interests of the people of Florida . . ."

According to Treadway, Kimberly Mitchell, executive director of the Everglades Trust, is threatening a suit to stop the lease.

Board members who voted for the lease say they have done nothing wrong. The land must be used for farming, according to a state law. And,

they argue that acting on the lease quickly will allow the district to stock rock and fill dirt at the site for work that must be done in the dry season.

We agree with one critic who called the action a "post-election double-cross."

It would be hard to believe Gov. Scott knew nothing of the pending lease deal. It surely raises the question of whether or not his hand-picked board followed through on policies he favored in his eight years as governor. And that raises fear in our book of how Scott will represent Florida's best interests in Congress, despite his campaign face of a person who put our environment over special interests.