

10. **OLD BUSINESS**

a Water Quality Issues

ii. Staff Reports

1. Letter regarding "Water Issues" position statement

City of Sanibel Letterhead

Date

Partner/Stakeholder Title and address

Dear Stakeholder:

The City of Sanibel has prepared a statement of position regarding multiple regional water issues including the proposed purchase of U.S. Sugar lands. We are very interested in achieving a consensus on these issues with other partners and stakeholders that also seek to improve water quality and end years of excessive releases from Lake Okeechobee to our rivers and estuaries. By speaking with one voice we can surely magnify the potential for affecting critical policy decisions.

Please review the attached position statement and accompanying map and let us know if you can support and promote these efforts or if you have any suggestions on changes.

Please don't hesitate to contact me directly at (239) 472-3700 or by mail to the letterhead address.

Sincerely,

**Mayor Mick Denham
City of Sanibel**

DRAFT City of Sanibel Statement of Position on Regional Water Issues

- I. **Support Acquisition** U.S. Sugar Lands and adjacent lands south of Lake Okeechobee should be purchased or otherwise acquired in order to restore a continuous southern flow-way to the Everglades and to significantly reduce excessive water releases from the Lake to the rivers and estuaries on both coasts. The City supports the recent changes to the proposed acquisition announced November 12 by the Governor that reduces overall costs and the burden of handling infrastructure such as sugar mills and rail lines.
- II. **Retain Essential Lands** SFWMD should retain at least 80% of these U.S. Sugar owned lands to be purchased west of the Lake for the purposes of water treatment and storage before discharge into the Caloosahatchee (see attached map): **S-4 Basin Lands**; **Disston Water Control District Lands** instead of swapping or utilizing them for other purposes.
- III. **Plan Economic Redevelopment** The State needs to work with the local communities that may be adversely affected economically by agricultural conversion to develop alternative opportunities and employment in ways that do not add to the nutrient or other pollutant issues in the Lake, connected rivers or the Everglades. Any Inland Ports (at least 6 potential sites are being discussed) or other economic projects must be located in a manner that does not preclude or significantly diminish flow-way designs south of the Lake or themselves result in stormwater pollution or additional blockage of flow from new roads or rail lines. The proposed Inland Port site at Okeelanta on Florida Crystals lands south of the Lake in Palm Beach County (also called the South Bay site) is an example of a location damaging to a flow-way design that should not be carried forward. There is already some momentum for this inappropriate site with the Palm Beach County Commission and the Port of Miami. A preferable site would be current agricultural lands either west or east of the Lake that are closer to the communities affected and not in the path of the flow-way. A good Inland Port site should also not consist of wetlands or important wildlife habitat. An example of such a site is the Hilliard Brothers property in Hendry County.
- IV. **Support CRWPP** Legislative approval and funding is essential and timely for the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan (CRWPP). This plan includes the C-43 Reservoir with an STA (stormwater treatment area) and other important nutrient reduction projects within the Caloosahatchee Basin. Funding for the C-43 project with an STA needs to continue to be supported at both the Federal and State level.
- V. **Implement Critical CERP Projects** The State and Federal Government must not let the sugar lands acquisition project divert momentum from critical Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) projects, without which the southern flow-way would not function. The Modwaters, Decomp, Northern Everglades and Lake Okeechobee Restoration plans should move forward with an accelerated pace. Conversely, all funding and further action on the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) projects of CERP should be

immediately halted as cost-benefit and environmental issues have rendered this program dysfunctional and unlikely to succeed.

- VI. Secure Water Reservation for Caloosahatchee To ensure adequate fresh water inflows during dry periods, the City of Sanibel supports Lee County in its efforts to secure a “water reservation” from the SFWMD for the river and its estuary. This reservation would make it more likely to achieve desired “minimum flows and levels” (MFL’s), especially during the dry season, for the health of the river and upper estuary. These flows can be critical for fisheries and upper estuarine aquatic life that require at least some freshwater input. It will also serve to help prevent stratification and stagnation, conditions that can lead to low dissolved oxygen levels and algae blooms.**

Draft List of Partners/Stakeholders to Receive City of Sanibel Regional Water Quality Issues Position Statement Letter:

Lee County

City of Fort Myers

Town of Fort Myers Beach

Cape Coral

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

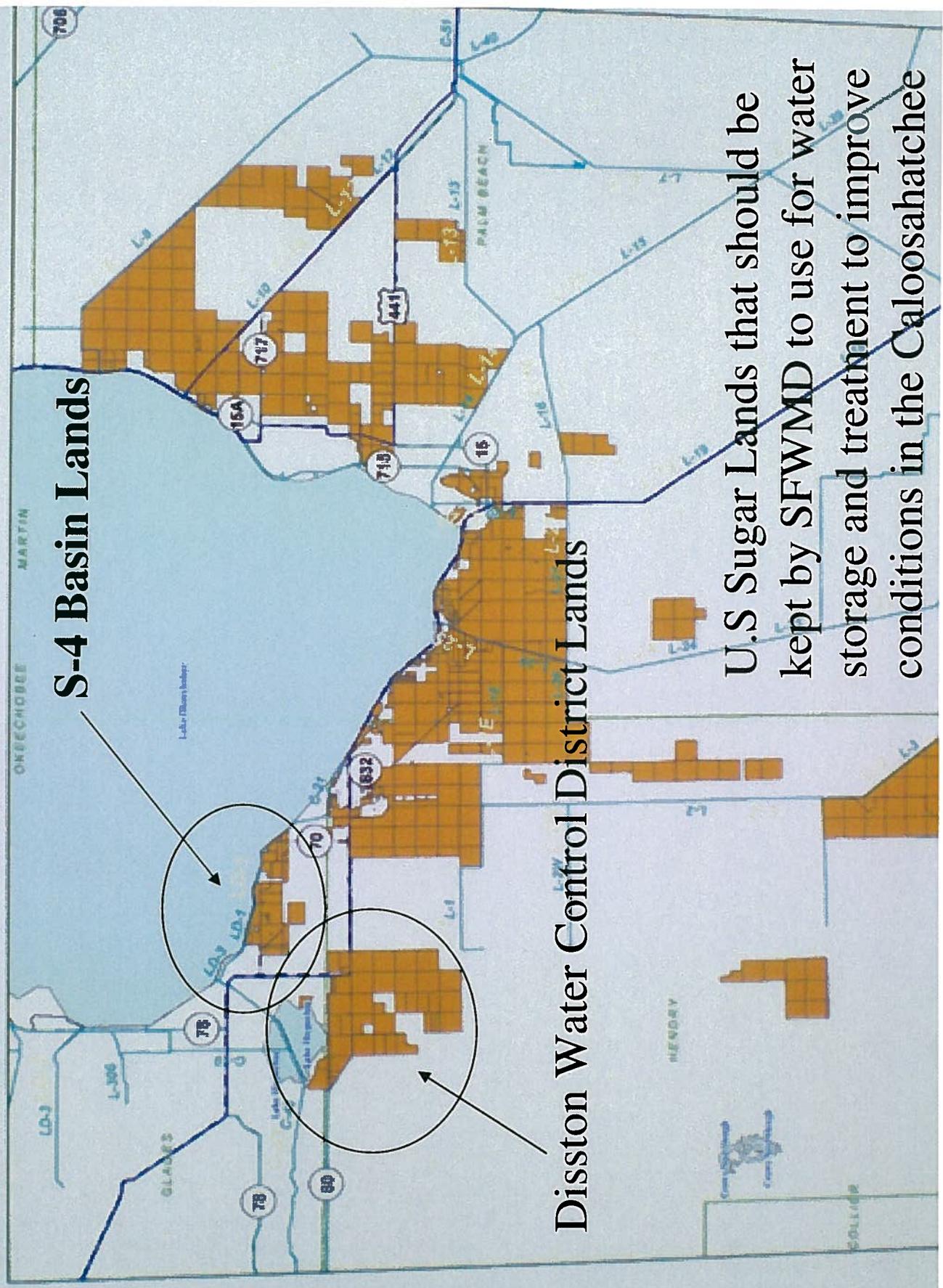
J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

PURRE (People United to Restore our Rivers and Estuaries)

Southwest Florida Watershed Council

Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (Riverwatch)



S-4 Basin Lands

Disston Water Control District Lands

U.S Sugar Lands that should be kept by SFWMD to use for water storage and treatment to improve conditions in the Caloosahatchee