

HM 539

2006

## 1 House Memorial

2 A memorial to the President of the United States and the  
3 United States Congress, urging the prompt enactment of  
4 legislation to authorize funding to construct the Indian  
5 River Lagoon Restoration Project and the development of a  
6 comprehensive plan to assist in the implementation of the  
7 Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan.

8  
9 WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary  
10 encompass the most biologically diverse estuary in North America  
11 that is recognized for national significance in the National  
12 Estuary Program, and

13 WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary  
14 have been and continue to be severely degraded by excessive  
15 freshwater discharges, nutrients, and sediments from Lake  
16 Okeechobee and the drainage canals constructed by the Central  
17 and Southern Florida Flood Control Project, and

18 WHEREAS, the State of Florida has a long history of  
19 supporting local, state, and federal programs to improve the  
20 environmental health of the Indian River Lagoon and the St.  
21 Lucie Estuary, the health of which is critical to the economic  
22 and social environment of Florida and the nation, and

23 WHEREAS, the support of the State of Florida includes  
24 forming and funding the St. Lucie River Issues Team and the  
25 Indian River Lagoon Restoration Task Force and providing 50  
26 percent of the cost of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration  
27 Plan projects, and

28 WHEREAS, local government partners, including the Nine  
29 County Coalition for the Responsible Management of Lake

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30 Okeechobee and St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries, are  
31 implementing urban stormwater quality retrofit projects, funding  
32 over \$100 million to restore the Indian River Lagoon and the St.  
33 Lucie Estuary, and

34 WHEREAS, water being released into the Caloosahatchee River  
35 westward from Lake Okeechobee has introduced too much fresh  
36 water into the Caloosahatchee River and its estuaries, causing  
37 great damage to the aquatic life in that fragile system, and

38 WHEREAS, local voters in Martin County voluntarily approved  
39 a special sales tax referendum for healthy rivers that raised  
40 over \$50 million to assist in the purchase of the land necessary  
41 to implement the Indian River Lagoon Restoration Project, and

42 WHEREAS, the State of Florida has enthusiastically endorsed  
43 Congressional authorization of the Indian River Lagoon  
44 Restoration Project, and

45 WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon Restoration Project, after  
46 numerous bureaucratic delays, has now undergone full  
47 administrative review and is ready for Congressional  
48 authorization and subsequent funding and construction, and

49 WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon Restoration Project is the  
50 first of over forty major components of the Comprehensive  
51 Everglades Restoration Plan that require Congressional  
52 authorization, and

53 WHEREAS, Congressional authorization of the Indian River  
54 Lagoon Restoration Project will pave the way for Congressional  
55 authorization of the other major components of the Comprehensive  
56 Everglades Restoration Plan, and

57 WHEREAS, Lake Okeechobee is the gateway to America's  
58 Everglades and the largest freshwater lake in the southeastern

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59 United States, and

60 WHEREAS, the health of Lake Okeechobee is vital to the goal  
61 of restoring America's Everglades, and

62 WHEREAS, the recent catastrophic hurricanes have caused  
63 massive pollution of the lake's waters and destroyed essential  
64 plant life within the lake, and

65 WHEREAS, the recent catastrophic hurricanes have made it  
66 extremely difficult to maintain the level of the lake without  
67 damaging releases into the Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie  
68 Estuary and the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and

69 WHEREAS, on October 10, 2005, Governor Jeb Bush announced  
70 the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan, an initiative by  
71 the State of Florida to accelerate the recovery and restoration  
72 of Lake Okeechobee, and

73 WHEREAS, the people of the United States, and the  
74 generations of Americans to follow, deserve the environmental  
75 and economic benefits of the restoration of America's Everglades  
76 that will be derived from the implementation of the entire  
77 Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, NOW, THEREFORE,

78  
79 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

80  
81 That the State of Florida urges the United States Congress  
82 to pass, without further delay, the pending legislation to  
83 authorize the Indian River Lagoon Restoration Project and  
84 requests the President of the United States to sign that  
85 legislation into law and further requests the President to work  
86 with the Congress to develop and enact a comprehensive planning  
87 and funding initiative to be implemented in coordination with

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88 | the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan announced by  
89 | Governor Bush on October 10, 2005.

90 |       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
91 | dispatched to the President of the United States, to the  
92 | President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the  
93 | United States House of Representatives, and to each member of  
94 | the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.