



Florida Cattlemen's Association

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The Florida Senate
Committee on Appropriations
201 The Capitol
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Agricultural Water Policy plays a vital role in agriculture. Through their programs and projects Florida agriculturists play a vital role in protecting our states water resources. Their efforts on both water quality and water quantity issues benefit all citizens of, and visitors to our great state. Agriculture is the single largest land use in Florida and the Department is uniquely positioned to work closely with land owners to develop and implement focused restoration programs vital to Florida's environment and the agriculture industry.

The Department requested \$5 million in springs funding, \$10 million in Northern Everglades funding and \$1.7 million in water supply planning that was fully funded in the House budget, but not funded in the Senate Budget. The Florida Cattlemen's Association supports the House position on these issues and encourages the Senate to include funding for these projects to ensure that water quantity and quality conditions improve in the springs and Lake Okeechobee. The long term health of our water resources is essential to a thriving and productive agriculture industry, and its continued contribution to the Florida economy.

In addition to the preservation of our water resources, the preservation of our agricultural land base is also vitally important to the State's continued success. The Department requested \$10 million in funding for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. This program, through permanent easement acquisitions, protects agricultural lands in the path of development so that Florida will continue to maintain a viable agricultural sector as part of the State's economy, while allowing its citizens the opportunity to continue to enjoy rural landscapes and open space. The House budget included \$15 million in funding for this program, while the Senate budget did not include any funding. The Florida Cattlemen's association supports the House position on this issue as well, and encourages the Senate to include funding for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

In order to ensure the economic viability of agriculture and expand the State's effort to preserve open space and natural areas; I ask you to seriously consider matching the House's funding levels for the Office of Agriculture Water Policy's earlier mentioned projects, and the House's funding levels for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

Thank you for your Consideration,

Wes Williamson
Florida Cattlemen's Association President

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