



**SUGAR CANE GROWERS COOPERATIVE OF FLORIDA**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**INDEPENDENT, THIRD PARTY SHOULD NEGOTIATE EVERGLADES RESTORATION**

*Belle Glade, Fla. – March 25, 2010 –* The following statement was released today by George H. Wedgworth, president and CEO of Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida regarding the controversial proposed acquisition of U.S. Sugar Corp. lands.

“Nearly two years after Gov. Charlie Crist announced his vision of a “flowway” to reconnect the Everglades by acquiring all the assets of U.S. Sugar Corp. for \$1.75 billion, it has become clear that the only way to have real progress on Everglades restoration is to have an independent, scientific, knowledgeable and well-intentioned third party drive a process that is free of politics and self-serving interests.”

Wedgworth said, “Through the various iterations of the deal, the governor’s agencies have revealed their backward attempts to use the deal to manipulate science rather than properly using science to drive a deal. The only result of their actions will be to further delay real restoration projects like those developed through CERP.”

A recent series of newspaper articles and editorials have come to the same conclusion:

Damien Cave & Don Van Natta wrote in the *The New York Times*: “Documents and interviews suggest that the price tag and terms of the deal could set back Everglades restoration for years, or even decades... State officials acknowledged that U.S. Sugar was “pretty much in the driver’s seat” and that the water management district will end up with six disconnected parcels, including all of its citrus groves..... some of that land, which has been ravaged by canker, a plant disease, is useless for restoration... In the meantime, more than a dozen projects under way as part of a 10-year-old federal and district restoration effort have been suspended or canceled in anticipation of the cost of the United States Sugar deal.”

Mike Thomas, an avid environmental columnist for the *Orlando Sentinel* wrote: “This is a true fiasco. The old plan to save the Everglades — the one that was forever in the making and finally got under way — was put on hold for Charlie's plan.”

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*Orlando Sentinel* March 24, 2010 editorial: "It's not viable any more. Not by a long shot. It's overpriced, unaffordable and, by itself, won't rejuvenate the Glades. The state needs to renegotiate the terms of its deal with U.S. Sugar, or opt out altogether."

*South Florida Sun-Sentinel* March 24, 2010 editorial: "Unfortunately, it didn't take long before what was said to be a breakthrough became a boondoggle. Once a boon for the environment, the deal is now plagued by growing, and very legitimate, concerns that the big beneficiary of the sale will be U.S. Sugar and not the Florida Everglades... BOTTOM LINE: Drop current U.S. Sugar deal."

Wedgworth concluded that science should drive decision-making for the Everglades in order for the ecosystem to benefit. "That won't happen unless a credible, independent party is brought in to examine what is ideally suited for the Everglades. Otherwise restoration efforts will suffer at the hands of political science and self-serving special interests."

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