



February 7, 2022

SITUATION BRIEF #1 **SENATE BILL 2508**

Florida Senate files suspicious legislation threatening Everglades restoration and protections for Florida's waters

THE SITUATION

On February 4th, the Florida Senate filed a suspicious piece of legislation that poses a major threat to Everglades restoration and clean water progress.

[Senate Bill 2508](#) was filed late on a Friday evening (a political red flag) as a “budget conforming bill” (a bill that amends the Florida Statutes to provide for specific changes in the general appropriations bill), however it included major policy changes, not your typical conforming budget language. This bill will be heard one time in the Senate on Wednesday, February 9th, in front of the full Senate Appropriations Committee.

The bill does a lot of other things, most of which appear to be bad news for South Floridians, but our major concern is that **it deprioritizes the EAA Reservoir and reduces measurable gains made in the public and transparent LOSOM process.**

Several of the harmful provisions in SB 2508:

- Prioritizes agricultural water supply over reducing harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee.
- Inserts competing priorities that will result in an increase of harmful discharges if implemented.
- Handcuffs the SFWMD and conditions use of funds for Everglades restoration on the SFWMD asking the Corps for changes to the lake regulation schedule. [Lines 167-172]
- Modifies SB 10 so that state funds are authorized to be used for several projects, instead of just the EAA Reservoir. This threatens to further delay and dilute funding for the reservoir. [Lines 338-339]
- Codifies a rule that has been unchanged since 2001 into law, preventing the SFWMD from updating it. The rule gives preferential treatment to agriculture in times of water shortage, requiring all other users to make significant cutbacks before the same is required of agriculture. [Lines 270-273]

BACKGROUND

The EAA Reservoir and the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) are two of the most important components in the big picture solution to South Florida's water crisis. Together, they reduce the harmful discharges that fuel toxic algae blooms and send more water south to the Everglades and Florida Bay.

The EAA Reservoir is the "heart of Everglades restoration" and one of Governor DeSantis's explicit priorities for restoring Florida's environment, as he reiterated in a press conference held last week in the Everglades.

A daunting yet collaborative 3-year LOSOM process resulted in a new balanced lake operations plan that provides almost a 40% reduction in harmful discharges to each coast, a 3x increase in water flowing south to the Everglades and Florida Bay, and even an increase for agricultural water supply.

SB 2508 threatens all of the progress made to protect Florida's waters and is yet another case of bad water policy that will lead to incalculable economic and environmental losses that harm all Floridians.

WHAT'S NEXT?

There is a Senate committee meeting on Wednesday, February 9, which will be the only opportunity for public comment on this bill. We are expecting a bill analysis to be released before the meeting which will give more insight into the provisions and what it all means.

Captains is keeping a tight grip on the situation and actively communicating with our networks. As the situation quickly evolves, we will keep you updated on action opportunities and developments.

CONTACT

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