

Senator Rob Bradley: Stay the Course on Everglades Restoration

Florida Senator Rob Bradley is getting pressured from conservatives to stop supporting the controversial SB10 Bill that wastes billions and kills jobs.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- By Henry Dean, former executive director of both the St. Johns River and South Florida Water Management Districts

In 2000, I was proud to be part of the historic development of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, which brought together Republicans, Democrats, environmentalists, scientists, and agricultural advocates to develop one of the most extensive plans to save any watershed on the planet.

Now, the progress of that plan appears to be at risk and Florida simply cannot afford to get sidetracked from a plan that has yet to provide many benefits to Florida's "River of Grass" as well as the Lake Okeechobee system. For these reasons, this week I joined nearly 60 water experts statewide in signing a letter urging our governor and top legislative leaders to stick with the plan and finish the work.

This far along in the process, Florida can't afford to get distracted by hastily conceived proposals that could do more harm than good. We need to complete projects that were approved more than 15 years ago based on three decades of well-documented science.

I, along with these water experts, fully support key projects designed to deliver maximum benefits as early as possible, including the [Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan \(CERP\)](#), Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), Kissimmee River Restoration Project and repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike along Lake Okeechobee. Deviating from the science-based schedule would cause significant delays and hinder restoration goals.

This summer's algae blooms along the Treasure Coast prove we can't take environmental issues lightly or gamble with ideas not vetted by scientists and water experts closest to the subject. We need to listen to the professionals, not politicians attempting to appease a vocal minority.

Buying land south of Lake Okeechobee for water storage serves the needs of a few but isn't the solution to discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries to the east and west. Farmers



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have already given up 120,000 acres for Everglades restoration, much of it still undeveloped because of funding constraints. We don't need more land. We need more progress.

A better course of action is the Lake Okeechobee Water (LOW) project, which is part of CERP. It calls for additional water storage north of the lake — where more than 95 percent of the water comes from — water quality treatment facilities and underground water storage. If, in the future, additional storage is needed south of the lake, existing and planned reservoirs on public land could be deepened to 12 feet to increase storage without buying additional farmland.

This isn't just a South Florida issue. I know cities and counties across the state have long lists of environmental needs but, unfortunately, not the money to fund projects. Conservation dollars must be distributed statewide. They can't just go to the Everglades area.

Our state leaders should take notice of the diverse mix of scientists, water policy experts, marine biologists and others who support finishing the plan as envisioned. Switching gears now would waste taxpayer money, disregard established science and, in the end, impede results vital to the Everglades' future.

We have a plan. We have commitments for state and federal funding. Now we need the patience and resolve to it get done.

Henry Dean

Florida Senator [Rob Bradley](#) is getting pressured from conservatives to stop supporting the controversial SB10 Bill that wastes billions and kills jobs. Their website is www.FloridiansAgainstWaste.org

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