CITY OF FORT MYERS
Randall P. Henderson, Jr.
Mayor

City of Palms

September 8, 2015

Mr. Michael Sharp, Director
Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth Street N.W., Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: The Proposed Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Sharp:

As Mayor of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, I support and endorse the proposed Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Restoration Project put forth by the Caloosahatchee River Restoration Consortium. The Caloosahatchee River Restoration Consortium is a non-governmental organization, public, academic and private partnership that includes the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association "RiverWatch", Florida Gulf Coast University, University of Florida, Johnson Engineering, Inc., and Sea & Shorline LLC with start-up funding from Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District. This specific project is aimed at the revitalization of approximately 600 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) (i.e. Tape grass, *Vallisneria americana*) in the upper estuary of the Caloosahatchee River which has been virtually decimated in the last two decades.

Since the City of Fort Myers lies at the epi-center of this restoration project, our continued downtown rejuvenation is directly connected to the health and vitality of the Caloosahatchee River. I encourage you to also consider the proposal, economic value and impact on the City of Fort Myers. A minimum of at least 26 high-paying jobs would be created by this project with a potential of hundreds of jobs restored and preserved in our regional economy and the renewed health of the major waterways, beginning with the Caloosahatchee River. Sport fishing, eco-tourism, hospitality, and the resort industry along with related tourism jobs are expected to be preserved as a result of SAV. Eco-tourism is one of our largest industries with thousands of jobs directly dependent on the health of the aquatic habitat in the Caloosahatchee Estuary, which lies at the center of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary. The proposed Tape grass renewal project will improve water quality and restore fish and wildlife habitats within the very important J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge System, one of the Nation's most visited Wildlife Refuges.

Based on a conservative estimate of a 10% success rate or 60-acres of Tape grass beds restored, the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program Director estimated $1,595,000,000 in ecosystem services from the SAV project. The ecosystem services renews our living shoreline habitat in the

2200 Second Street • Fort Myers, Florida 33901 • (239) 321-7020 • Fax (239) 344-5908
www.cityftmyers.com • e-mail: mayorhenderson@cityftmyers.com

upper estuary, creates fisheries, nursery and migratory waterfowl foraging habitats, and supports commercial fisheries for blue crabs and bait shrimp. Tape grass beds also improve water quality through nutrient uptake, binding and stabilizing sediments, wave attenuation and production of oxygen through photosynthesis. Tape grass beds are known to provide habitat for at least 44 species of fish as well as many crustaceans, mollusks, and other macroinvertebrates.

The goal of the SAV project is to establish protected founder colonies of Tape grass within the upper estuary and its' tributaries, thereby restoring critical fish and wildlife habitats. The restoration and revitalization of Tape grass in the upper estuary consists of planting and establishing 16 to 20 large "founder colonies" throughout the estuary at locations where moderate to dense Tape grass beds were historically documented. This restoration approach has been recommended by researchers and aquatic ecologists from Chesapeake Bay to Charlotte Harbor (Hoffacker 1994, SFWMD 2000, Bortone and Turpin 2002, Ceilley et al. 2012). Revitalized Tape grass will directly improve critical foraging habitats for both the federally-endangered manatee and the small-tooth sawfish. The project will also enhance restoration efforts in conjunction with the C-43 reservoir construction for maintaining minimum flows and levels for the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

Public education and outreach will be a key element of this project to educate boaters, fishermen, tourists, and the general public about the importance of restoring SAV beds in the Caloosahatchee River.

The SAV project is ideally suited for the goals and objectives of the Gulf of Mexico Benefit Fund and Restore Act Fund arising out of the criminal and civil penalties from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill whose impact to the ecology and economies of the entire Gulf of Mexico are well documented. A restoration of the seagrass and fisheries habitat and endangered marine mammals and sea turtles foraging sites will be a direct result from the proposed Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

CITY OF FORT MYERS

Randall P. Henderson, Jr.
Mayor

cc: William P. Mitchell, City Manager

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-42

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT MYERS, FLORIDA, ENDORSING AND SUPPORTING THE SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION RESTORATION PROJECT AS PROPOSED BY THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER RESTORATION CONSORTIUM; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS: The Caloosahatchee River Restoration Consortium is a non-governmental organization, public academic, and private partnership that includes the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association "RiverWatch", Florida Gulf Coast University, University of Florida, Johnson Engineering, Inc., and Sea & Shorline LLC with start-up funding from Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District; and

WHEREAS: The Caloosahatchee River Restoration Consortium has proposed the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project aimed at the restoration and revitalization of approximately 600 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation known as Tape grass, (*Vallisneria americana*) in the upper estuary of the Caloosahatchee River which has been virtually decimated in the last two decades; and

WHEREAS: Tape grass beds improve water quality through nutrient uptake, binding and stabilizing sediments, wave attenuation and production of oxygen through photosynthesis; and

WHEREAS: Tape grass beds are known to provide habitat for at least 44 species of fish as well as many crustaceans, mollusks, and other macroinvertebrates; and

WHEREAS: The City of Fort Myers lies at the epi-center of the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project and the continued downtown rejuvenation is directly connected to the health and vitality of the Caloosahatchee River; and

WHEREAS: A minimum of at least 26 high-paying jobs would be created by the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project with a potential of hundreds of jobs restored and preserved in the regional economy

and the renewed health of the major waterways in the area, beginning with the Caloosahatchee River; and

WHEREAS: Eco-tourism is one of the largest industries with thousands of jobs directly dependent on the health of the aquatic habitat in the Caloosahatchee Estuary, which lies at the center of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary; and

WHEREAS: Based on a conservative estimate of a 10% success rate or 60 acres of Tape grass beds restored, the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program Director estimated $1,595,000,000 in ecosystem services from this project; and

WHEREAS: The Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project will also enhance restoration efforts in conjunction with the C-43 reservoir construction for maintaining minimum flows and levels for the Caloosahatchee Estuary; and

WHEREAS: The proposed Tape grass renewal project will improve water quality and restore fish and wildlife habitats within the very important J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge System which is one of the Nation's most visited Wildlife Refuges.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FORT MYERS, FLORIDA, that

1. City Council hereby endorses and supports the proposed Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration Project.

2. A certified copy of this resolution shall be mailed to Michael Sharp, Director, Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1133 Fifteenth Street N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20005.

3. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-42

PASSED IN PUBLIC SESSION of the City Council of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, this 8th day of September, A.D., 2015.

Aye	Teresa Watkins Brown
Aye	Johnny W. Streets, Jr.
	Terolyn P. Watson
Aye	Michael Flanders
Aye	Forrest Banks
	Thomas C. Leonardo Council Members

APPROVED this 8th day of September, A.D., 2015, at 7:28 o'clock p.m.

Aye	Randall P. Henderson, Jr Mayor

FILED in the Office of the City Clerk this 8th day of September, A.D., 2015.

Marie Adams
Marie Adams, MMC
City Clerk

I DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE AND FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL THEREOF ON FILE IN MY OFFICE. WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF SAID CITY THIS 14th DAY OF September, A.D. 2015

Marie Adams
CITY CLERK, CITY OF FORT MYERS, FLORIDA