



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

OCT 28 2003

The Honorable Les Brownlee
Acting Secretary of the Army
Office of the Under Secretary of the Army
102 Army Pentagon, Rm. 3E732
Washington, DC 20310-0102

Dear Secretary Brownlee:

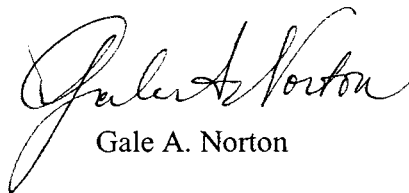
The Department of the Interior appreciates the tremendous effort of the Jacksonville District of the Army Corps of Engineers to develop the programmatic regulations to implement the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (Plan). We appreciate the extra opportunities afforded to the public, and all stakeholders, to participate in the development of the regulations.

Issuance of the final programmatic regulations is an important and significant step toward a restored Everglades. Along with the Assurances of Project Benefits Agreement, which was signed by the President and the Governor of Florida in January 2002, the programmatic regulations prescribe processes to ensure that the Everglades natural system environment will once again receive the appropriate quantity, timing and distribution of water. Restoration is clearly defined and procedures are set forth to adaptively manage the implementation of the Plan so that it may be adjusted as new information is developed.

We are pleased that the programmatic regulations recognize the role of Interior and its agencies in the Plan's implementation. We look forward to working with the Army on the guidance memoranda, the pre-CERP baseline, and the joint development of interim goals. As steward of one-half the remaining Everglades, we pledge to work closely with our Federal and State partners to ensure that the goals and purposes of the Plan are achieved.

The Department believes that the final programmatic regulations fully meet the legal requirements of Section 601(h)(3)(C) of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. As a result, I concur with your issuance of the final programmatic regulations.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Norton