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Rivers Coalition Resolution

Supporting the "Protect Florida Act"/ U.S. Bill HR 3324

WHEREAS, Congressman Brian Mast (FL Dist. 18) recently introduced the proposed 'PROTECT Florida Act' HR 3324 which directs the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to prioritize human health and safety when balancing the needs of the Central & South Florida Project system; and

WHEREAS, The PROTECT Florida Act modernizes a federal statute written in 1948 called the C&SF Project, which outlined seven "priorities", but left it up to the USACE to decide how to "balance" among them. In 1948, when very few people lived in Florida health and the environment may not have been issues but today, with 21 million people, there is a need to update the outdated C&SF Project priorities; and

WHEREAS, The PROTECT Florida Act is a reintroduction of the Stop Harmful Discharges Act (HR 6700) Congressman Mast filed in summer 2018. Since then, Congressman Mast has gathered input from all interested stakeholders, language has been added to address concerns about the protection of tribal rights, providing the natural system with the clean water it needs. The language was also vetted to ensure it won't further slowdown the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan efforts and that the bill would work as intended; and

WHEREAS, The USACE creates operating manuals for where the water goes based on these priorities and the PROTECT Florida Act would assist the USACE with these priorities. The USACE is underway with a revised operating manual known as the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). The PROTECT Florida Act may provide greater certainty that the USACE was protecting the people of Florida when redesigning operating schedules like LOSOM.

Therefore be it resolved:

The Rivers Coalition representing 103 organizations with over 350,000 members that live along, work, or otherwise benefit from the St Lucie River and Estuary, and the Indian River Lagoon supports the proposed PROTECT Florida Act HR 3324.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 27TH DAY OF June 2019 by its Members.