

Please Contact Gov. Crist and Ask Him to Veto SB 2080

May 31, 2009

PLEASE SHARE THIS WIDELY AND IMMEDIATELY!

Without delay, please contact Gov. Crist and ask him to veto SB 2080. Express your opposition to giving authority to approve or deny consumptive use permits, environmental resource permits, and variances to the executive directors of Florida's five individual water management districts, eliminating the current governing board approval process. If passed, this new law would fly in the face of years of legislative restructuring aimed at creating water management districts with voting governing boards that promote good water policy. For years, citizens all over Florida have complained that Florida's water management districts are perfect examples of taxation without representation but SB 2080 makes it even worse by removing almost any opportunity for taxpayers to be heard. In our opinion, SB 2080 is a blatant attempt to silence advocates for common sense water resource management in Florida.

Phone: (850) 488-7146

Fax: (850) 487-0801

Office of Governor Charlie Crist

State of Florida

The Capitol

400 S. Monroe St. Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Background information:

This bill was initially supported by conservationists across the state because it finally raised Florida-friendly landscaping to prominence. Senate Bill 2080 was passed in the final hours of the regular legislative session after damaging amendments were added. PCEC seriously questions whether most legislators were

even aware of the last minute additions and their potential for unintended consequences to Florida's water resources. It is likely that they thought they were voting for a move to make our shared goals of water conservation more likely.

The eleventh hour amendments are a slap in the face to Florida Native Plant Society and other conservation activists who have worked long and hard to get this kind of legislation passed. Now, this previously good bill has been hijacked and used to cover up a very devious plan that sharply reduces opportunities for citizens and local government planners to have input into the permitting process.

What this bill does:

1. Eliminates the checks and balances on District executive directors' decisions on consumptive use permits, variances and other withdrawals.
2. Suppresses the ability of the public and local governments to express their concerns about consumptive use and environmental resource permitting.
3. Eliminates the basic structure and functions originally and carefully designed over a period of many years in the creation of Florida's water management districts. The new structure created by SB 2080 will fly in the face of years of legislative restructuring aimed at creating Districts with voting governing boards that promote good water policy.
4. Eliminates the collective diversity, wisdom and local area balance inherent in a voting governing board.
5. Vests virtually unlimited authority in the five individual water management district executive directors in their respective districts to allow water withdrawals. This authority will foster bias, favoritism, and a high potential for abuse and squelching of opposing opinions regardless of validity.
6. Favors development and growth special interests for increased and unnecessary water withdrawals to the detriment of meaningful conservation efforts, local resources development, and comprehensive growth planning.
7. A district water czar with too much power and the potential for serious and unintended consequences will result from this

delegation of power to just one person in each of the five water management districts. Each of these government employees would be given the power in their district to approve and fund water projects costing taxpayers in the billions of dollars that involve hundreds of miles of pipelines and treatment plants designed to take water from Florida's rivers and other sources. This kind of power should not be the sole purview of one individual.

For these reasons, the Putnam County Environmental Council strongly urges you to contact Gov. Crist and request that he veto Senate Bill 2080. In our opinion, SB 2080 is a blatant attempt to silence advocates for common sense water resource management in Florida.

PCEC acknowledges the assistance of PCEC member Terry Brandt, Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, for his help in writing this Action Alert.

Karen Ahlers, President
Putnam County Environmental Council, Inc.
Post Office Box 1836
Interlachen, FL 32148
Phone: 352-475-1936 or 352-546-3560
Fax: 352-475-1078

OSFR supports this e-mail in solidarity, protecting the water resources in the state of Florida.

Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson
President of Our Santa Fe River, Inc.
460 SW Riverland Ct.
Ft. White, FL 32038
Phone : 1-386-454-4446 or 1-352-232-3906
www.oursantaferiver.org
