Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0908

November 2, 2020

The Honorable David P. Ross
Assistant Administrator, Office of Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20460

Dear Assistant Administrator Ross:

We write in support of the State of Florida's request to become just the third state after Michigan and New Jersey to assume a Clean Water Act Section 404 program.

Florida has a proven track record of environmental protection and already has primary responsibility for other assumable federal environmental programs. Additionally, we believe the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is well positioned to evaluate Section 404 permit applications in a manner consistent with both federal and state law because of their demonstrated ability to integrate local knowledge, scientific expertise, and robust stakeholder engagement into their permitting decisions.

Assumption can benefit communities, private landowners, and rural economies by streamlining permitting processes and reducing the duplication of effort by state and federal authorities. And because Floridians care deeply about their environment and unique natural resources, these benefits can be delivered while sustaining protections for wetlands and endangered species that are no less rigorous than today under federal 404 program administration. In particular, we expect Everglades restoration efforts will benefit from expedited permit delivery timelines that will allow state and federal agencies to move forward with construction of key infrastructure more quickly than they are able to do today.

Once again, we urge your agency's approval of Florida's request to administer a Clean Water Act Section 404 program within its state boundaries. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel Webster

Michael Waltz

Matt Gaetz

Bill Posey

Neal P. Dunn, M.D.

Gus M. Bilirakis

Ross Spano