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Source: Florida Crystals Corporation

FARMERS SOUTH OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE ACHIEVE FURTHER SUCCESS IN EVERGLADES RESTORATION

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. – August 14, 2009 – In the Everglades restoration effort, farmers south of Lake Okeechobee recorded another year of tremendous success with their eco-friendly farming practices.

Employing Best Management Practices (BMPs), farmers in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) achieved 68 percent phosphorus reductions in the water leaving the region, according to the South Florida Water Management District's annual update on Everglades restoration performance. Under the Everglades Forever plan, farmers are tasked with reducing phosphorus levels by 25 percent each year – a job made increasingly difficult by the rising phosphorus concentrations in the water the farms receive from Lake Okeechobee. The tremendous success of the program has equated to an average of 54 percent phosphorus reduction over the past 14 years.

“At Florida Crystals, we were heartened by the results of the report,” said Gaston Cantens, Florida Crystals Vice President. “This is scientific data that shows sustainable agriculture and Everglades restoration go hand in hand.”

Even after the approval of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) nearly a decade ago, the only successful restoration effort to date is the EAA farmers' implementation of Best Management Practices and the stormwater treatment areas built on former sugar cane farms, which remove phosphorus in the water flowing from Lake Okeechobee through the EAA to the Everglades.

Unfortunately, without similar projects to clean the increasingly phosphorus-laden water entering Lake Okeechobee from watersheds stretching north of the lake to Orlando, the much-neglected greater Everglades system north of the EAA, the lake and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries will continue to deteriorate.

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