

November 29, 2008

Dear Governor Crist,

As you are aware, Florida is continually struggling with water management. Droughts and improper usage put Lake Okeechobee and the state of Florida in a precarious situation. To solve this issue, certain measures are taken to inform the public and spread the word of the importance of using water efficiently. However, Florida remains a top tourist attraction, and the millions of tourists that enter our state are unaware of the necessity to preserve and conserve water. The South Florida Water Management District records that most visitors to Florida come when the rain is the scarcest, in the dry season (November to May). The question is how to educate the uninformed people of the water troubles Florida endures.

On the way down to the Florida Keys, signs line the sides of the road reminding drivers to buckle up for safety. Usually, the reminder is displayed one word per sign, and while you drive forward you read the entire message. It is an effective way to get travelers to buckle their seatbelts. The same idea, I believe, would be useful in informing tourists of water conservation. As you enter Florida, street signs would be displayed with messages such as "Conserve Our Water," "Save Water," and "Water is Valuable." Based on www.VisitFlorida.org, 65.8 million people visit the Sunshine State; that is a large audience to educate about water preservation and conservation.

The signs on the main entrance roads of the state would reach all drivers, and would be permanent fixtures. Aside from water benefits, the signs mean that the government doesn't have to finance flyers and brochures warning tourists during the budget cuts. Once the signs are installed, there is no further expense. Also, paper flyers with the "Go Green" message are often found in garbage cans or flying through the air, only to land in

rivers. Sturdy, metal signs do the same job but are more environmentally friendly.

Not only is water conservation important to South Florida but also it will gradually begin to affect everyone, since water is essential to life. Water moderates the climate, forms the landscape, and keeps us alive (Miller 306). If tourism follows the current trend on damaging the environment, the species, in effect, will suffer and begin to die out. Creative ways to spread the word need to be thought up, and this idea should be considered. It is beneficial to everyone, and the sooner the word is out, the sooner results of improvement will be evident. The number of tourists to Florida increases annually, thus the program should begin soon to reach the most people and prepare for the future. The goal would be the practice of eco-tourism, responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of the local people, as the journal “Canada and the World Backgrounder” defined.

A “last chance tourism” ideology has developed. A see-it-before-it’s-gone mindset brings millions of visitors to unique ecosystems to experience uncommon characteristics (Smith 36). Clearly, the troubles of the biomes are known but the solutions are not widely taught.

I am a 16-year-old high school junior, who wants to see my children and theirs enjoy all Florida has to offer. I believe that this proposal, though not a solution, will certainly create awareness. I hope you agree.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Beesting

Dear Governor,



**Florida water is at
stake.**

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor of Florida

Works Cited

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"What tourists leave behind: hotels, tourist transport, and related activities consume huge amounts of energy, water, and other resources, and generate pollution and wastes, often in destinations that aren't able to deal with them.

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Living in Miami, Florida the topic of water conservation is taught to students from elementary school and you never stop learning about it. In AP Environmental Science, I was able to learn the vital importance of water to the Florida ecosystem. Not only is it a very significant part of the nutrient cycle, it flows into Lake Okeechobee which provides South Florida with its water source. Also, The Everglades National Park becomes severely affected when the water systems do not function properly. Therefore, the issue of water conservation and preservation is very personal.

On a road trip crossing the state borderline, my mother and I began to discuss tourism. Hotels and attractions continually degrade the environment. Golf courses use tons of water to keep the grass lush, water parks lure in visitors, and hotels are built on the coast that destroy the stability of the land. But their use of water is never considered. Do they shut off the water while they brush their teeth? Do they take long showers? They also probably flush when it's unnecessary. These things will continue to happen only until the tourists are educated.

The question arises of how to tackle educating the public. Roads, airports, and the shore are all entrances to Florida. To reach visitors, you have to catch their attention creatively and conveniently. Billboards on the roads, posters on airport walls and cruise docks, and street signs following the "Welcome to Florida" sign.

Florida residents grow up realizing that conserving water is essential to life in this state. With Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades nearby, the topic is always in discussion. The Sunshine State remains a popular tourist attraction and those millions upon millions of visitors annually, if continuing to be uneducated, will cause irrevocable consequences. It is time to educate the public while we still have time to repair the problems and prevent any future issues.