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301 South Bronough Street • Suite 300 • P.O. Box 1757 • Tallahassee, FL 32302-1757 • (850) 222-9684 • Fax (850) 222-3806 • www.flcities.com

August 10, 2009

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor, State of Florida
PL 05, The Capitol Building
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

On behalf of the 410 municipalities represented by the Florida League of Cities, I write to express our support of the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) recently initiated rulemaking efforts to refine the system of classifying waters and determining their use in Florida.

The current classification system, with the great majority of waters falling into the Class III "Swimmable and Fishable" recreational category and with their associated water quality criteria, results in a system in which the same standards and criteria are applied to man-made ditches and urban stormwater conveyances as are applied to streams, lakes and springs. Because of this classification system, local governments are often forced to allocate scarce resources to make improvements to waters like ditches and conveyances (which typically have little or no human or environmental benefit) at the expense of funding improvements to lakes and streams where there exists a real likelihood of making improvements are of benefit to natural systems and or for human uses.

The current classification system has been in effect for 40 years. It was initially established well before the passage of the federal Clean Water Act or the creation of the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) program in Florida. Scientific knowledge has advanced since then, better data on surface waters are available, and water quality protection programs have changed very significantly.

Especially in this time of economic stress at both the state and local level (and also in the private sector) we believe that an examination of this antiquated classification system is warranted. More than ever, we need a system of classifying waters and determining their use that makes sense and we support the efforts of DEP.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need additional information regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,

C. Scott Dudley
Senior Legislative Advocate

cc: Michael Sole, Secretary, FL Department of Environmental Protection
Mr. Kurt Spitzer, Florida Stormwater Association, Inc.
Mike Sittig, Executive Director, Florida League of Cities