

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) announced today passage of a comprehensive water resources bill that invests in several regional water management and environmental restoration projects. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Buchanan secured federal funding for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Project, Lido Key Beach renourishment, maintenance dredging at Port Manatee, Charlotte Harbor watershed management, and regional water supply upgrades.

H.R. 1495, the “Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)” bill that passed the House last night provides for \$10 million in federal funding to help protect groundwater that flows from streams and creeks into the Sarasota Bay National Estuary.

“Sarasota Bay is a vital regional asset,” said Buchanan. “Groundwater from failing septic systems is polluting the Bay. By improving the quality of water that flows into the bay, this bill would help protect public health and restore this important natural resource.”

The final bill also authorizes \$9.3 million in federal funding to help pay for a \$15.1 million beach renourishment project at Lido Key Beach in Sarasota.

“Coastal erosion has been a long-term, persistent problem on Lido Key, threatening commercial and residential structures as well as public infrastructure,” said Buchanan. “A significant portion of this erosion is, in fact, caused by New Pass, a federally-maintained channel which interferes with the natural long shore movement of sand. This funding will help maintain this local gem for enjoyment today and in the future.”

The WRDA bill also includes a provision sought by Buchanan and Rep. Kathy Castor (FL-11) that authorizes the Army Corps to perform maintenance dredging of Manatee Harbor.

“Port Manatee is one of Florida’s largest deepwater ports and an economic engine that continues to grow in revenue and cargo,” said Buchanan. “Harbor maintenance dredging is critical to the Port’s continued success and its economic impact on the County and the region.”

The conference agreement authorizes the Corps to assist the Southwest Florida Water Management District with their efforts to restore water quality, hydrology, and habitat in Charlotte Harbor.

“Charlotte Harbor is the second largest open water estuary in Florida and one of the most productive estuary systems in Southwest Florida, but its health has declined,” said Buchanan. “The authorization in this bill will help protect and restore the vital natural resource.”

Finally, the bill allows \$20 million sought by Buchanan and Congressman Connie Mack (FL-14) for regional water supply interconnectivity among Charlotte, Lee, and Collier counties.

“There are insufficient safeguards in the Southwest Florida region to ensure a stable water supply in the event of an emergency or water shortage,” said Buchanan. “This project would allow the region to improve the regional interconnectivity, efficiency, and use of existing water supplies in these three counties through water and wastewater projects, programs and infrastructure.”

The conference agreement also includes authorization for major Everglades restoration projects. Congress has not passed a water resources reauthorization bill since 2000.