

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan announced today a federal commitment of \$500,000 to help improve water quality in Phillippi Creek and Sarasota Bay. The funds were requested by Buchanan in April and made part of the fiscal year 2008 Interior and the Environment Appropriations bill passed by the House Appropriations Committee.

“Phillipi Creek is so polluted the health department has warned people not to fish or swim there,” said Buchanan. “Seepage from old septic tanks is polluting the creek, which flows into Sarasota Bay and its estuaries. This funding will help the county connect moderate income homes to a central sewer system. It will help reduce pollution, protect public health, and help restore our natural resources.”

“We are most gratified that Congressman Buchanan is championing this vital project,” said Sarasota County Commission Nora Patterson, Chair of the Sarasota County Commissioners. “The Sarasota community is committed to a comprehensive clean up of Sarasota Bay. These dollars, combined with local public investment, will help make connecting to central sewer affordable to people who are struggling.”

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Executive Director Mark Alderson said, “This funding helps address one of the most significant environmental issues facing Sarasota County.”

The Phillippi Creek Septic System Replacement Program is underway to replace septic systems and connect approximately 15,400 homes and businesses to central sewers. The \$166 million, 11-year project includes the construction of collection systems, associated pumping stations, transmission facilities, program management, and early hook up incentives. A total of 1,280 connections have been completed.

Sarasota County residents have approved taxing themselves to provide up to \$28 million for the project. The federal government has already provided more than \$5 million and the state has provided \$6 million for the project.