

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (R-FL 13) announced today that the House has passed legislation authorizing funding to improve water quality in Sarasota Bay. The "House Water and Resources Development Act" (H.R. 1495) would provide \$10 million in federal funding for the Sarasota Bay Restoration Project 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."

Groundwater from failing septic systems has resulted in high concentrations of fecal coliform in various surface waters in Sarasota County and drainage basins, such as Phillippi Creek. The funding secured by Buchanan would help replace septic systems and connect approximately 25,000 low to moderate income homes and businesses to a central sewer system in the Phillippi Creek basin and Sarasota Bay area.

"We are incredibly pleased that Congressman Buchanan has thrown his full support behind the goal of removing pollution from our bays and estuaries," said Nora Patterson, chair of the Sarasota County Commission. "Sarasota County has really stepped up to the plate with local funding to remove failing septic systems and federal assistance of this magnitude will mean a great deal to all Sarasota County residents."

Sarasota County has designated \$28 million in infrastructure surtax funds to help pay for the removal of obsolete and/or malfunctioning septic tanks. The estimated \$166 million project includes the construction of the collection systems, associated pumping stations, required transmission facilities, program management, engineering, and an early hook-up incentive.

Sarasota Bay was designated by Congress as an "estuary of national significance" in the Water Quality Act of 1987.