



June 17, 2020

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator – Florida

The Honorable Senator Rick Scott  
U.S. Senator - Florida

The Honorable Greg Steube  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 17<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 23<sup>rd</sup> District

The Honorable Brian Mast  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 18<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Frederica Wilson  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 24<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Francis Rooney  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 19<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 25<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 20<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 26<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Lois Frankel  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 21<sup>st</sup> District

The Honorable Donna Shalala  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 27<sup>th</sup> District

The Honorable Ted Deutch  
U.S. Representative – Florida, 22<sup>nd</sup> District

**Re: Support for Advancement of C&SF Project Update Study**

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The South Florida Regional Planning Council, representing Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties, would like to express its strong support for undertaking a Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project Update Study (“Resiliency Study” or “Restudy”) and provision of funding for the Restudy in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fiscal Year 2021 Work Plan. This restudy is needed to assess the full extent of South Florida’s aging water management infrastructure and integrate the potential impacts of sea level rise and generally higher water tables into the engineering and design of improved flood control features.

As the Mayors of Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties noted in their June 4, 2020 letter (enclosed herewith), moving forward with the reevaluation of the C&SF Project given existing and future challenges such as sea level rise, increased flooding events, extreme weather, a growing population, and the threat to the economy if these challenges are not addressed, is of utmost importance. We are delighted that the South Florida Water Management District has agreed to serve as a local sponsor for the Resiliency Study, and with the advancement of the Section 216 Initial Appraisal Report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (“USACE”).



We are pleased to add our support to this important request and thank you in advance for doing everything you can to secure funding for this critically needed study. It is difficult to overstate the importance and necessity of funding the Project Resiliency Study in the USACE's Fiscal Year 2021 Work Plan. Addressing South Florida's flood risk and ensuring improved flood control features and service throughout the region well into the future is essential to South Florida's resiliency, economic recovery and growth, and quality of life. Tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure decisions by the public and private sectors depend on the C&SF Project continuing to function as well or better than it has for the last seven decades.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue. Please contact me and our Executive Director Isabel Cosio Carballo if we can provide you with additional information, support, or otherwise be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Daniella Levine Cava  
Chair, South Florida Regional Planning Council

Enclosures

cc: Mr. R.D. James  
Assistant Secretary of the Army-Civil Works  
Department of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite  
Chief of Engineers / Commanding General  
Headquarters  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
331 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Maj. Gen. Diana M. Holland  
Commander  
South Atlantic Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
60 Forsyth Street SW, Room 10M15  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8801

Col. Andrew Kelly  
District Commander  
Jacksonville District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
701 San Marco Boulevard  
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

Mr. Chauncey Goss  
Chairman of the Governing Board  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Mr. Drew Bartlett  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406



June 4, 2020

Senator Marco Rubio  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rick Scott  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Greg Steube  
521 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
1114 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Brian Mast  
2182 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Frederica Wilson  
2445 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Francis Rooney  
120 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20002

Representative Mario Diaz-Balart  
404 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Alcee L. Hastings  
2353 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
114 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Lois Frankel  
2305 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Donna Shalala  
1320 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Ted Deutch  
2447 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Urgent Advancement of the Central and South Florida Project Update Study**

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We write to express our counties' continued, unified support for a Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project ("C&SF Project" or "Project") Update Study ("Resiliency Study" or "Restudy") to address immediate priorities and a more extensive, longer-term reevaluation of the C&SF Project. We urgently seek your assistance to ensure funding of this Study in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Work Plan, and we also wish to commend two recent developments that mark significant milestones towards these goals. As mayors of the four counties of Southeast Florida, we are actively investing in flood risk mitigation and planning for sea level rise, but these investments rely upon concurrent improvements to the C&SF Project.

Importantly, the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) recently agreed to be the local sponsor of the C&SF Resiliency Study at its March 12 meeting. The USACE and SFWMD are already long-term partners in the operation of the C&SF Project, but this additional affirmation is critical.

We are also extremely pleased to note the recent advancement of the Section 216 Initial Appraisal Report by USACE. It identifies many of the existing and future challenges facing the system, including population growth, land development, extreme weather, and sea level rise. It correctly concludes that these challenges require a reevaluation of the C&SF Project, in addition to long-term improvements. An appendix to the Report highlights many of the resilience strategies and flood reduction projects already being advanced by our four counties.

The importance of the C&SF Project to our region cannot be overstated; as evidenced by recent flood events and recurring drought, its function is fundamental to South Florida's environment and economy. Our region relies extensively upon the C&SF Project for flood protection for six million people, the preservation of water supplies, and ecological value, but the Project is nearly 70 years old. Physical conditions have changed, including a markedly-altered landscape, the booming economics of dense urban areas, and evolving hydrologic conditions (especially increased rainfall intensity and rising seas) that strain the existing system's ability to move and discharge stormwater. Moreover, climate projections indicate that conditions will change even more significantly over the coming decades, further increasing the stress on the Project and its ability to function adequately.

We stand ready to support USACE and SFWMD as they work towards initiation and completion of the Study. Please stand with us and support appropriate funding for the Restudy in the Fiscal Year 2021 Corps of Engineers Work Plan to begin this critical effort. Please contact us if you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Dave Kerner  
Mayor, Palm Beach County



Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor, Miami-Dade County



Dale V.C. Holness  
Mayor, Broward County



Heather Carruthers  
Mayor, Monroe County

CC: Mr. R.D. James  
Assistant Secretary of the Army—Civil Works  
Department of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite  
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General  
Headquarters  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
331 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Maj. Gen. Diana M. Holland  
Commander  
South Atlantic Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
60 Forsyth Street SW, Room 10M15  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8801

Col. Andrew Kelly  
District Commander  
Jacksonville District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
701 San Marco Boulevard  
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

Mr. Chauncey Goss  
Chairman of the Governing Board  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Mr. Drew Bartlett  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

**SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL COUNCILMEMBERS, EX OFFICIOS**  
**January 2020**

Daniella Levine Cava, *(Chair), Commissioner, Miami-Dade County*

Steve Geller *(First Vice Chair), Commissioner, Broward County*

Mario J. Bailey, *(Second Vice Chair), Governor's Appointee Miami-Dade County*

Samuel Kaufman, *(Treasurer), Commissioner, Key West*

Beam Furr, *(Secretary), Commissioner, Broward County*

Greg Ross *(Immediate Past Chair), Mayor, Cooper City*

Patricia T. Asseff, *Governor's Appointee Broward County*

M. Margaret Bates, *Commissioner, Lauderhill*

Michelle Coldiron, *Commissioner, Monroe County*

Joseph Corradino, *Mayor, Village of Pinecrest*

Jose "Pepe" Diaz, *Commissioner, Miami-Dade County*

Cary Goldberg, *Governor's Appointee Broward County*

Jorden Leonard, *Council Member, Bay Harbor Islands*

Jean Monestime, *Commissioner, Miami-Dade County*

David Rice, *Commissioner, Monroe County*

Michael Udine, *Commissioner, Broward County*

Sandra Walters, *Governor's Appointee Monroe County*

-----

Isabel Cosio Carballo, *Executive Director*

Sam Goren, *Legal Counsel*

-----

**Ex Officio Members**

Jason Andreotta, *Florida Department of Environmental Protection*

Laura Corry, *South Florida Water Management District*

Dat Huynh, *Florida Department of Transportation, District Six*



**Executive Committee**

Hon. Daniella Levine Cava, Chair  
Hon. Steve Geller, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair  
Mario J. Bailey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair  
Hon. Samuel Kaufman, Treasurer  
Hon. Beam Furr, Secretary  
Hon. Greg Ross,  
Immediate Past Chair

**Councilmembers**

Patricia Asseff  
Hon. M. Margaret Bates  
Hon. Michelle Coldiron  
Hon. Joseph M. Corradino  
Hon. Jose "Pepe" Diaz  
Hon. Quentin "Beam" Furr  
Cary Goldberg  
Hon. Jordan W. Leonard  
Hon. Jean Monestime  
Hon. David Rice  
Hon. Michael Udine  
Sandra Walters

**Ex-Officio Members**

Jason Andreotta, DEP  
Laura Corry, SFWMD  
Dat Huynh, FDOT

**Executive Director**

Isabel Cosío Carballo, MPA

**Legal Counsel**

Samuel S. Goren, Esq.  
Goren, Cherof, Doody &  
Ezrol, P.A.

Via email: [GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com)

June 18, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor, The State of Florida  
PL 05 The Capitol  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

RE: Preservation of Sadowski State and Local Housing Trust Funds from Veto

Dear Governor DeSantis,

Thank you for your leadership in securing full appropriation of the Sadowski State and Local Housing Trust Funds. You have achieved what many thought impossible.

We ask that you please keep these funds whole so that they can be deployed to meet Florida's affordable housing needs. These needs have been always pressing and now are greatly amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of employment and livelihoods of so many Floridians.

Thank you again for your leadership over these years and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

Daniella Levine Cava  
Chair

cc Shane Strum, Chief of Staff  
Isabel Cosio Carballo, Executive Director



# The Miami Herald

## Brightline commuter plan panned by mayor and Tri-Rail, but advances into county talks

[BY DOUGLAS HANKS](#)

JUNE 02, 2020 08:26 PM , UPDATED JUNE 02, 2020 08:41 PM

Tri-Rail and Miami-Dade's mayor said it would cost the public too much to accept [Brightline's proposal](#) to collect about \$60 million a year to operate a county commuter line between Miami and Aventura.

But county commissioners still endorsed asking the administration to negotiate a better deal with the for-profit rail company to create the line once planned as a coastal Tri-Rail route.

"Maybe this isn't going to work at the end. They have to present a case to us," said Commissioner Rebeca Sosa. "Go. Work. Sit down. Bring us a plan."

By a lopsided vote, commissioners authorized the Gimenez administration to negotiate for a five-station line. Only Barbara Jordan and Xavier Suarez voted no.

The decision keeps alive Brightline's strategy to secure a relatively quick agreement with the Gimenez administration for a project that would end Tri-Rail's plans to use the private tracks to launch its own commuter rail along the urban corridor to Palm Beach. Brightline submitted a framework for negotiations that includes subsidies from Miami-Dade that even supporters called too expensive to consider.

"I am supportive of commuter rail," said sponsor Sally Heyman, whose commission district includes a planned Brightline station in Aventura. "But not at all costs."

In a letter to the commission, Tri-Rail director Steven Abrams predicted a "substantial" savings if Miami-Dade tapped the tax-funded rail line to launch commuter service instead of the for-profit Brightline. Abrams also said Brightline, which shut down its existing express trains during the coronavirus emergency, won't focus on the working-class people who ride Tri-Rail.

The board that runs Tri-Rail "is also concerned that a private entity operating a commuter rail service will not offer ticket prices that the average person can afford," Abrams wrote. He asked the commission to allow Tri-Rail to submit a competing proposal to Miami-Dade for the tracks.

The commission resolution gives Gimenez 90 days to try to reach a Brightline agreement, the second major transit deal on his administration's plate as it pursues a [monorail development deal](#) between Miami and Miami Beach with Genting and partners.

The county is also pursuing bids to build a new rapid-transit bus line in South Dade and is getting ready to invite bids for a rail line to Miami Gardens as part of a frenzy of transportation spending in a year when Gimenez and half the commission prepares to leave office.

Brightline, which plans to rebrand into Virgin Trains after its service resumes, sees the Miami-Dade project as a prime candidate for federal stimulus dollars tied to passenger rail lines like the company's. While not approved by Congress, the Invest in America bill would add about \$6 billion to a federal rail program that could slash the local dollars needed for the Brightline project.



“Our timing is very sensitive,” Brightline executive Jose Gonzalez told commissioners during the online meeting.

The company circulated letters of support from developers and business groups along the proposed line, which would include stops in Wynwood, El Portal and Florida International University’s Biscayne Bay campus.

“We’re really excited this opportunity has arisen for all of the potential stations,” said David Polinsky, a Wynwood developer. “We think this would be a wonderful thing.”

Gimenez said he was ready to negotiate a deal with Brightline, but that the company’s proposed starting terms were far too costly.

The proposal has Miami-Dade paying \$29 million a year just to use the tracks, plus between \$30 million and \$50 million for Brightline to run the privatized commuter line. Miami-Dade would keep the fare revenue, and also contribute about \$350 million toward station construction if no other funding sources are secured. The county already has a deal [to spend about \\$75 million building Brightline](#) a station in Aventura as part of an express service running from Miami to Orlando.

Gimenez championed the Aventura plan, which the commission approved in October. On Tuesday, he was much cooler to the company’s offer for a multi-station commuter service and gave a grim outlook for a company that was hitting [just a fraction of its ridership and revenue forecasts](#) before the coronavirus crisis.

“Virgin is in trouble. Miami-Dade is not going to be bailing out a private company because they’re in trouble,” he said. Referring to the company’s overall strategy to make a for-profit rail line work, he added: “I wish them luck. I thought it was a very risky venture to begin with, the whole thing.”

Gonzalez said the company is optimistic about the future once the planned express line to Orlando opens, a project under construction for a planned 2022 opening. “I was surprised by the mayor’s comments,” he said. “I don’t know where the mayor is getting his information from. ... We have no financial issues.”



A Brightline train — running along a rail line that’s being rebranded under the name Virgin Trains USA — arrives at the MiamiCentral station in downtown Miami. Brightline proposed a \$350 million deal with Miami-Dade to build five commuter stations between Miami and Aventura. *MIAMI HERALD FILE*

## [DOUGLAS HANKS](#)

[305-376-3605](tel:305-376-3605)

Doug Hanks covers Miami-Dade government for the Herald. He’s worked at the paper for nearly 20 years, covering real estate, tourism and the economy before joining the Metro desk in 2014.



## **Turkey Point Is About to Get a New Pollution Permit. Critics say Not So Fast.**

*By Jenny Staletovich, WLRN Media*

Opposition is mounting to a **proposed pollution permit** that would, for the first time, allow water seeping from a 5,900-acre network of cooling canals at Florida Power & Light's Turkey Point nuclear plant to move beyond plant boundaries in southern Miami-Dade County.

The proposed permit, a revision to a February 2019 draft, was quietly published last month, opening up two weeks of public comment that ended last week.

The Everglades Coalition, which represents 60 environmental groups, and Miami Waterkeeper, along with the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority and Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association are considering a legal challenge.

"There are violations out there right now. There are water quality concerns all around the plant," said Laura Reynolds, a member of the coalition and environmental consultant representing the guides association. "But this permit moves forward as if there are not water quality problems."

The revised draft, Reynolds said, still does too little to improve monitoring for the canals that have been in the midst of a \$200 million cleanup plan. The notice alerting the public also landed the same day the U.S. Supreme Court decided a decades-long battle over whether the Clean Water Act can regulate pollution from groundwater, like the kind spreading from the canals.

"It changes how the permit may be applied to the pollution coming from the plant," said Waterkeeper executive director Rachel Silverstein. "It's setting a new standard. A lot of very smart attorneys are looking at the implications of this, not just for Turkey Point, but a lot of other places where there's water contamination."

This is the first new pollution permit in more than a decade and comes after state environmental regulators and Miami-Dade County began wrestling with how to stop polluted canal water from seeping into groundwater. The heavier, saltier water has helped propel a saltwater plume westward, threatening drinking water supplies for the Florida Keys.

The canals were dug in the 1970s as an alternative to dumping canal water directly into Biscayne Bay after the Environmental Protection Agency sued, fearful that canal water would damage seagrass beds and the bay's health. The plant also drains other industrial waste water into the canals.

To keep the water from moving through Florida's porous limestone, a deeper canal, called an interceptor ditch, was dug along the western border but ultimately failed.

In 2014, the canals came under scrutiny after they began running hot and salinity in the canals spiked. That drew attention to the spreading plume. Despite denials from FPL, regulators confirmed canals water was driving the plume and seeping into the bay. That launched the cleanup effort, which is supposed to retract the plume within 10 years and stop its forward progress by May 2021.

Miami-Dade County environmental regulators complained in February that the first version of the permit failed to adequately monitor the water, relying on an existing network rather than creating one with wells better located to track pollution.

This month the county's chief environmental regulator, Lee Hefty, said the new permit addresses concerns.

"It's not perfect, but it certainly holds them accountable now to the water quality standards," Hefty said. "What this permit does is, it incorporates a significant number of stations that have been developed over the last 10 or 12 years or so, because if you recall, when this facility was developed decades ago, there was monitoring and then the monitoring sort of diminished considerably over time."

A report issued by FPL in November said cleanup efforts, which involve pumping out saltwater, flushing it underground and pumping in millions of gallons of freshwater from a nearby canal, are on track. In an email, FDEP said FPL had met all its deadlines so far. But in six months it will meet a critical deadline: lowering salinity to match nearby bay water, a key fix to stop the canals from fueling the plume. Records show the salinity is still above bay waters, hovering about 20 units higher.

There is also growing debate over freshwater supplies, needed to revive the canals at the bottom of the state where Everglades marshes also need water. In January, **Miami-Dade complained** that FPL was using too much for a mitigation bank, endangering restoration work and cleanup efforts.

"How can you issue a new permit when these issues haven't been resolved," Reynolds said. "There's a timeline on correcting them and once they're corrected, great. Issue a new permit."

FDEP did not respond to questions about the timing of the permit or the length of the comment period.

*"The Invading Sea" is the opinion arm of the Florida Climate Reporting Network, a collaborative of news organizations across the state focusing on the threats posed by the warming climate.*

---

<https://www.newsbreak.com/news/OPHyoakn/county-aqueduct-fishing-guides-challenge-pollution-permit-at-turkey-point>

# KEYS WEEKLY



## COUNTY, AQUEDUCT, FISHING GUIDES CHALLENGE POLLUTION

### PERMIT AT TURKEY POINT

By [Jim McCarthy](#)

June 9, 2020

Add Monroe County to the growing number of challengers to a proposed pollution permit renewal for Florida Power and Light's generating units at Turkey Point Nuclear Plant on Biscayne Bay in Miami-Dade County.

Approval of operating licenses could further jeopardize the Florida Keys drinking water even more, local officials say.

Monroe County commissioners were unanimous in the decision during a June 4 special meeting to join the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority's petition for an administrative hearing, which challenges Florida Department of Environmental Protection's notice of intent to issue a new pollution permit for the continued operation of two units. Renewal of operating licenses for units three and four at the plant, which are the nuclear pressurized water reactors, would allow an additional 20 years of operation beyond the current licensed operation periods.

If renewed, unit three's operating license would expire at midnight on July 19, 2052, while unit four would expire at midnight on April 10, 2053. The nuclear power units have operated since 1972.

Last December, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission approved FPL's application for an additional 20 years of operation. It's the first time NRC has issued renewed licenses authorizing reactor operation from 60 to 80 years. Last month, DEP issued a notice of intent to issue the permit unless a petition for an administrative hearing is filed.

In recent talks with FCAA, County Attorney Bob Shillinger said the county was asked to intervene in the authority's challenge to the permit FPL must obtain from DEP. Several discussions were had in years past regarding concerns over the cooling canal system and continued westward movement of hypersaline water toward wells that supply drinking water to the Keys.

Failure to halt the movement westward could lead to contamination of the water supply, while eastern movement will affect natural resources, officials say.

"The environmental concerns are broader than just the well fields; it involves Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay," Shillinger said. "It would be a more comprehensive approach to challenging the permit if the county were involved."

The cooling canals are about 2 miles wide by 5 miles long, or roughly 5,900 acres. Turkey Point nuclear units use this system like a radiator, discharging heated condenser water at one end and withdrawing cooled water at the other end for reuse. The discharge canal receives heated water from the plant and distributes flow into 32 feed canals.

Water in the feeder canals flows south into a single collector canal that distributes water to seven return canals. Water in the return canals flows north to the intakes. Flows attributable to nuclear units three and four amount to around 1.3 million gallons per minute, according to the applicant's environmental report to NRC.

Cooling canals receive inflow and outflow from the Biscayne Aquifer because of the exceptional porosity of the underlying rock, according to the environmental report. Turkey Point does not directly discharge to fresh or marine surface waters; however, because the canals are not lined, groundwater does interact with water in the canals.

FPL is currently under an enforcement action via DEP consent order and Miami-Dade County consent agreement to retract the hypersaline plume and prevent continued pollution. However, there is no evidence that the efforts have been or will be successful under that consent order, FCAA officials said.

"The existing consent order requires FPL to clean up pollution it has caused to water quality in the Biscayne Aquifer and in Biscayne Bay," said Tom Walker, FCAA executive director. "There is no reason to issue a permit to discharge industrial wastewater into the system until FPL has complied with the order."

Monroe County and FCAA are retaining the firm of Lewis, Longman & Walker in the matter. Combined, legal costs to the county and the authority could be from \$100,000 to \$500,000.

Seepage from the cooling canals also jeopardizes clean water and the 100-plus fishing guides in the Upper Keys area who depend on a healthy ecosystem for their livelihood. Laura Reynolds, representative for the Florida Keys Fishing Association, said the permit as written does not provide reasonable assurances that the beneficial uses of the bay, Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary and other places affected by the seepage from the cooling canals are protected.

"The fishing guides have decided to join the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority in also filing a petition so that we can make sure that the beneficial use of the bayside equation is there," she said.

A South Florida nonprofit, Miami Waterkeeper, is also involved in a challenge to the operating license extension. With a focus on clean water, habitat protection and sea level rise resiliency, Executive Director Rachel Silverstein said the proposed license extension envisions continued operation of the cooling canals despite obvious issues of contamination of the surrounding environment and groundwater. It also ignores flood projections from sea level rise that predict the area of the cooling canal to be underwater by 2040.

"It's extremely appropriate and necessary for Monroe County to step in at this point and to protect their drinking water supply. This is the utmost importance to the community," she said. "This permit, one of the major issues we have with it is that it seems too far from stopping the movement of the plume. It actually allows seepage from the cooling canal system, particularly into the surface waters. It was our hope that a permit would seek to stop that."

Commissioners were in consensus with the speakers.

"They're going to push, push, and I know it's expensive to push back, but we may end up with no drinking water and that is going to be one hell of a mess because we have nowhere else to go," said commissioner Sylvia Murphy.

Mayor Heather Carruthers said FPL is aware of salt water intrusion issues like the saltwater plume that has leaked from the plant into the Biscayne Aquifer. As for a remediation plan, she said it hasn't been effective so far.

"We need assurance that the saltwater plume will not compromise our drinking water and wells," Carruthers said. "This will be a great impact on our residents and our community is highly supportive of making sure we continue to have clean drinking water."

Commissioner Craig Cates said he supports challenging the permit.

"I want to stand side-by-side with the aqueduct authority to make sure this doesn't happen," he said.

More than 60 organizations making up the Everglades Coalition say the excess salt concentrated in the plume and the excessive water use nuclear power generation requires are in conflict with Everglades restoration efforts underway in adjacent wetlands called the "model lands basin." The addition of excess nutrients into Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park could kill seagrass and allow it to be displaced by fast-growing noxious seaweed, as well as stimulate algal growth, which could lead to persistent algal blooms and could affect wildlife.