

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES, INC.  
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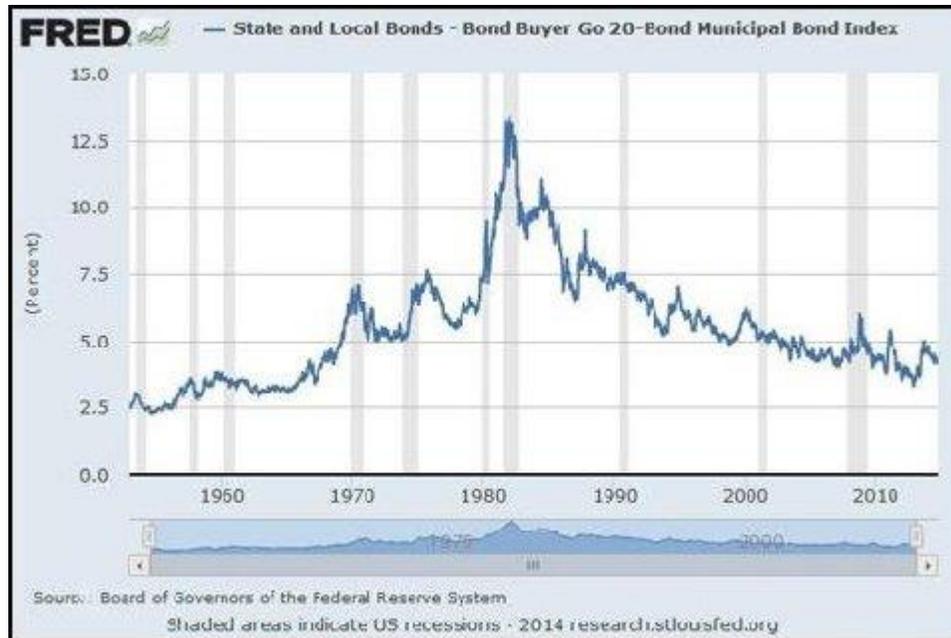
The Audubon Society of the Everglades joins with our colleagues in the conservation community to oppose the plan by U.S. Sugar to create a sprawling 67 square mile company town called Sugar Hill in the heart of land critically needed for Everglades restoration. With plans to build an estimated 18,000 homes and 25 million square feet of commercial space, the Palm Beach Post editorial board has correctly characterized this as “the equivalent of 25 Gardens Malls.”

Clearly, the fast-tracking of such an ambitious and unprecedented development plan needs to slow down. We call on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District to strongly oppose this short-sighted and inadequately researched plan when they make their comments this week to the Department of Economic Opportunity.

While the environmental community has raised well-reasoned scientific objections that such a bloated building project would adversely impact the Florida Everglades and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries in their critical flood control and water supply functions for millions of Floridians, the same cannot be said of the developers, who have failed to explain why such an environmentally threatening plan must be rushed through regulatory approvals without allowing time for deliberate, independent studies of the environmental and economic impact. public ownership of essential lands necessary to completing the restoration of the Everglades is clearly the only permanent solution to these constant development bombs being dropped on South Florida, forcing the public to battle special interests on multiple fronts simultaneously. And there is no time like the present. Interest

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rates on general obligation municipal bonds to finance such land purchases are at their lowest level in half a century, as evidenced by the chart below from the economic research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.



Today, we have the opportunity to do something that generations to come will look back on and praise -- to preserve a critical and cherished part of Florida's heritage that is also essential to its flood protection and clean water needs. And we have the opportunity to do it at the lowest interest rates in 50 years.

This is the vision we need to be talking about – not a throwback to the company towns of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Paton White, President, Audubon Society of the Everglades**