

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2021

Colonel Andrew Kelly
Commander and District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Dear Colonel Kelly,

In response to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' request for input into Preliminary Preferred Plan CC as part of the Lake Okeechobee Systems Operation Manual (LOSOM) development, we would like to express our concerns related to the plan's ability to meet the Congressionally-authorized Lake Okeechobee project purposes for water supply and the Lake's ecology. These project purposes were mandated by Congress to ensure an availability of water for all of the necessary uses for water from Lake Okeechobee. While Plan CC appears to meet certain project purposes including flood control, navigation and recreation, it falls short on other purposes. In the case of water supply, more than 7 million Floridians and thousands of businesses tied to tourism, agriculture, healthcare and construction depend on water supply from Lake Okeechobee, and expected that LOSOM would result in a plan that meets the water supply purpose by restoring the water supply performance that existed prior to the current schedule. As such, prior to the final selection of a LOSOM plan, we are requesting that the Corps explain how Preliminary Preferred Plan CC will be adjusted to restore the water supply function on which we depend, and how optimization will be performed to meet this serious deficit.

In addition to seeking assurances from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that the Preliminary Preferred Plan CC can be optimized to meet the lake's project purposes, we are also concerned that without such changes, Plan CC will result in significantly higher volumes of harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges to the Caloosahatchee River. Throughout the LOSOM process, we have heard the need for "shared adversity." However, as mentioned during public briefings, Plan CC results in more frequent damaging discharges to the Caloosahatchee River in favor of fewer discharges to the St. Lucie River Basin. Lake Okeechobee's ecology itself also seems to fare less than our constituents expected under Plan CC. We strongly urge you to correct these disparities as the plan is optimized.

Finally, any final LOSOM plan developed and adopted by the Corps should take advantage of the additional capacity provided by the \$2 billion worth of repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike, which is expected to be completed in late 2022. As mentioned in the [2015 University of Florida Water](#)

[Institute Report](#) into options to reduce Lake Okeechobee discharges, adjustments in the operating schedule to allow storing additional water in the lake would help reduce damaging Lake Okeechobee discharges during the wet season.

Please know we appreciate your commitment to seeking public input throughout the LOSOM process. The Lake Okeechobee watershed impacts millions of residents in 16 Florida counties and as such, we hope the final optimized plan selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will provide the greatest benefit to the most water users throughout the entire ecosystem, and adhere to the mandates from Congress.

Sincerely,



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Mario Díaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress