

BRIAN J. MAST  
18TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0918

2182 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3026

171 SW FLAGLER AVENUE  
STUART, FLORIDA 34994  
(772) 781-3266

October 2, 2020

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

Dear Colonel Kelly:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stated in a bulletin issued on Tuesday, September 29 that the Army Corps will be directing a contractor to begin aquatic plant management treatments in the south end of Lake Okeechobee and that this contractor has been authorized to use chemicals, including diquat and glyphosate. We urge the Army Corps to restrict the contractor's use of chemicals and instead implement non-chemical, mechanical measures to control the invasive plant growth.

We would also like to remind the Corps of appropriations language included within the FY21 Energy and Water Appropriations Act which encouraged that funds be appropriated to the Aquatic Plant Control Program to promote development of mechanical harvesting technology and asked that non-chemical control methods be prioritized before chemical methods.

These chemicals pose a potential risk to human health and exacerbate environmental issues on Lake Okeechobee and in the surrounding areas. For example, a 2015 study by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) designated the herbicide glyphosate as a Group 2A Chemical, or "probably carcinogenic to humans." In addition to concern for those recreating on Lake Okeechobee, if these chemicals were to build up on the Lake and then be discharged to the St. Lucie or Caloosahatchee Rivers—as the Corps has stated is imminently possible—the potential health impacts on our communities could be severe.

As a result, we implore you to restrict the use of chemical spraying and mandate the use of non-chemical, mechanical harvesting techniques. Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



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Brian Mast  
Member of Congress



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W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress