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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

JUDICIARY SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE
ON WEAPONIZATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0917

October 22, 2024

Lieutenant General William H. Graham, Jr.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear General Graham,

Although Hurricanes Helene and Milton caused tremendous damage in my district and across the state of Florida, the storms naturally reopened Midnight Pass between Little Sarasota Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, which provided an opportunity for my constituents to experience some of the benefits of a reopened pass. Given these developments, I am hopeful that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will complete a permanent restoration of Midnight Pass.

Unfortunately, Midnight Pass was closed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1984. Over the past 40 years, the ecosystem in Little Sarasota Bay has suffered because of this action. The water quality has deteriorated, and marine life has dwindled. It is estimated that nearly 70% of the sea grass beds in Little Sarasota Bay have disappeared. Further, cutting off access to the Gulf decimated the local fishing industry and resulted in less recreational and commercial boating activities.

By reopening Midnight Pass, the water quality in Little Sarasota Bay would improve since cleaner water would be able to flow into the Bay. This would improve water circulation, reduce pollution, and foster the development of marine life like oysters and shrimp, which have disappeared since the Pass was closed.

Although we are still assessing the damage from Hurricane Milton that made landfall near Midnight Pass, it is very possible that the damage was mitigated due to the Pass being naturally reopened by Hurricane Helene. It is possible that the Pass provided an outlet for waters to escape from Little Sarasota Bay. Due to the environmental and recreational benefits of opening the Pass permanently, the Army Corps of Engineers should work to restore Midnight Pass expeditiously.

In addition to Midnight Pass, I am also hopeful that the Corps will open Little Gaspirilla Pass and Stump Pass in Charlotte County since both have closed. Like Midnight Pass, reopening these areas will help the natural ecosystem and improve the enjoyment of the areas for my constituents.

Sincerely,

W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

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