

# Okeechobee County, Florida

## Office of the County Administrator

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November 2, 2021

Congressman Greg Steube  
Katherine Marks, Field Representative  
1069 US 27 North, Suite 116  
Lake Placid, FL 33852

**RE: Protecting the State of Florida's Water Rights from the Federal Government's  
Usurpation in Lake Okeechobee**

Dear Congressman Steube:

We represent a broad cross section of business, landowners, and citizens who look on Lake Okeechobee as the center of our history, present day economy and the very identity of our communities. The Lake supports recreation, tourism and supplies the water we need to grow food, irrigate our lands, and for our drinking water. We have been engaged in the management of Lake Okeechobee for decades, including the ongoing LOSOM Process.

The Corps of Engineers has just released a group of what they call optimized plans. The problem is they based the optimization process on their preliminary Plan CC, which is a very flawed plan designed to satisfy only the desires of the advocates for the St Lucie estuary. Starting with that plan, it is not possible to reach a broad consensus on a new schedule.

The plans hold the lake stage higher for longer, which hurts the lake ecology and angers the fishing communities around the lake. This is a critical issue for Okeechobee County residents. The plans also include environmental releases when the lake is low, which compete with existing uses that have been in place for decades.

The Comprehensive Everglades Plan, CERP, was approved as the mechanism for eliminating this competition for water between people and the environment. CERP projects to do this are still ten or more years away so the Corps is trying to achieve CERP objectives through Lake management. This is not possible, and their attempts to do so are causing conflict in the process.

The big policy issue stems from the fact Congress made it clear when the C&SF Project was authorized that the authority to allocate water from the project (i.e. Lake Okeechobee) was vested in the state, not the federal government, and this worked well as Florida grew from 1950

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David E. Hazellief  
District 1

Vacant  
District 2

Bradley G. Goodbread  
District 3

Terry W. Burroughs  
District 4

Kelly Owens  
District 5

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to 2010. For the Corps to come in now and say they have the authority to decide where the water goes threatens the allocations under state law that have been made over the last 50 years.

Please do what you can to convince the Corps and the South Florida Water Management District that protecting Florida's water supply is an essential State function, and it must be acknowledged in LOSOM. We look forward to your assistance in this critical matter and your continued support and protection of Florida's water supply and our Lake for Florida's future.

Sincerely,



Terry W. Burroughs, Chairman  
Okeechobee County

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