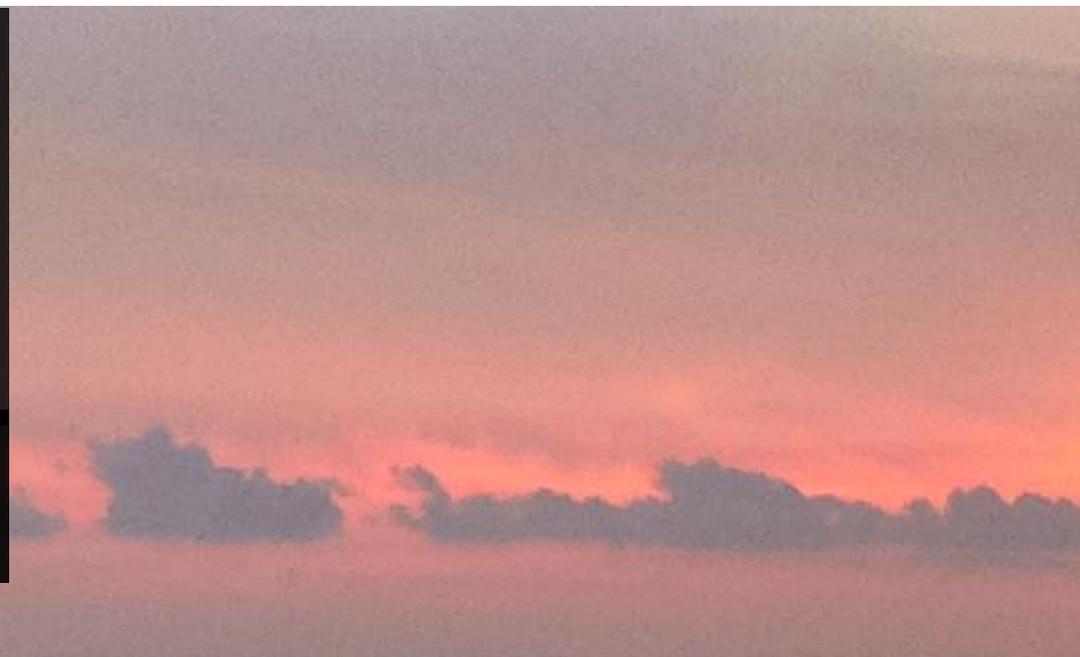


Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM)



Jeremy McBryan, PE, CFM
County Water Resources Manager

July 22, 2021



Lake Okeechobee

Background



An interim operational plan was implemented in 2008 to protect the public from the risk of catastrophic failure of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD)



HHD rehabilitation activities began in 2001 and are expected to be complete by 2022



Lake Okeechobee experienced extensive Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in 2016 and 2018



WRDA2018 requires the expedited completion of a Lake regulation schedule to coincide with completion of HHD repairs

Goal of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) Project

Incorporate flexibility in Lake Okeechobee operations while
balancing congressionally authorized purposes.



**Flood
Control**



**Water
Supply**



Navigation



Recreation



**Preservation
of Fish &
Wildlife**

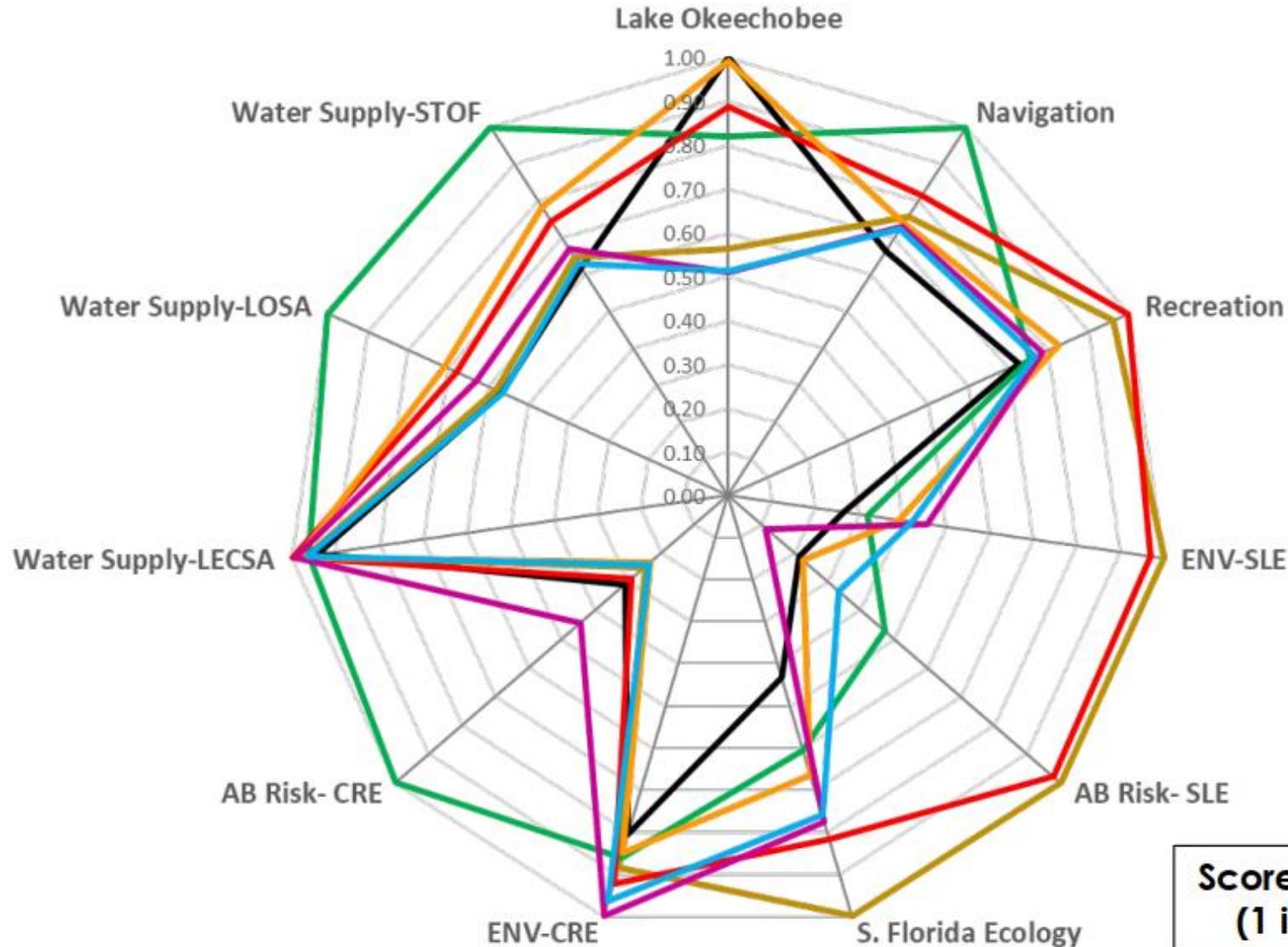
USACE Progress to Date and Next Steps

- Conducted Public Scoping (Jan. – Apr. 2019)
- Developed ~120,000 conceptual operational plans and evaluated them using a subset of performance measures (Jul. 2020 – Jan. 2021)
- Identified a suite of top-performing single-objective plans (Jan. - May 2021)
- Introduced an approach to formulate balanced plans (May 2021)
- Released six balanced plans and associated performance results (June 2021)
- Requested plan recommendations from stakeholders (July 2021)
- Selected a Preliminary Preferred Plan (July 2021)



Graphical Performance Summary of 6 Balanced Plans

— NA25 — AA — BB — CC — DD — EE1 — EE2



Compared to Projected Future Conditions (2025) with the Existing Lake Operational Plan in place

**Score Key 0-1
(1 is best)**

NA25 = Future Conditions with Existing Lake Operational Plan
 ENV = Environment
 SLE = St. Lucie Estuary
 AB = Algal Bloom
 CRE = Caloosahatchee River Estuary
 LECSA = Lower East Coast Service Area
 LOSA = Lake Okeechobee Service Area
 STOF = Seminole Tribe of Florida



Key Palm Beach County Input to Date

RESOLUTION NO. 2019- 0379

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA, ON THE RE-EVALUATION OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE OPERATIONS BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PURSUANT TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE LAKE OKEECHOBEE SYSTEM OPERATING MANUAL

WHEREAS, Lake Okeechobee is the liquid heart of an integrated regional water management system and is essential and interconnected to communities, businesses, public water supply utilities and ecosystems throughout Palm Beach County; and

WHEREAS, Lake Okeechobee is an integral component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and is critical to meeting the environmental restoration and water supply needs of South Florida; and

WHEREAS, Lake Okeechobee is essential to protecting the region's water supply infrastructure from saltwater intrusion by providing a source of freshwater to prevent the migration of saltwater into coastal wellfields; and

MACK BERNARD, Mayor	-	Aye
DAVID KERNER, Vice Mayor	-	Aye
COMMISSIONER HAL R. VALECHE	-	Aye
COMMISSIONER GREGG K. WEISS	-	Aye
COMMISSIONER ROBERT S. WEINROTH	-	Aye
COMMISSIONER MARY LOU BERGER	-	Aye
COMMISSIONER MELISSA MCKINLAY	-	Aye

The Mayor thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted on this 12th day of March, 2019.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY ITS BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

SHARON R. BOCK, CLERK

BY: 
Michael W. Jones
Senior Assistant County Attorney

BY: 
Sharon R. Bock
Deputy Clerk



Public Scoping Comments on the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM)

Submitted to:
Dr. Ann Hodgson
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District
P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019
LakeOComments@usace.army.mil

Submitted by:
Palm Beach County



Prepared by:
Jeremy McBryan, PE, CFM
County Water Resources Manager
Palm Beach County
301 North Olive Avenue, 11th Floor
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401
jmc Bryan@pbcgov.org
561-355-4600

April 22, 2019



County Administration
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West Palm Beach, FL 33402-1989
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Palm Beach County
Board of County
Commissioners

Dave Kerner, Mayor
Robert S. Weinroth, Vice Mayor
Maria G. Marino
Gregg K. Weiss
Maria Sachs
Melissa McKinlay
Mack Bernard

County Administrator
Verdenia C. Baker

April 30, 2021

Via Email: LakeOComments@usace.army.mil

E. Timothy Gysan, PE, PMP
Senior Project Manager, Programs and Project Management Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, Florida 32207

Dear Mr. Gysan,

Subject: Palm Beach County Comments on Balanced Plans for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual

As a part of its Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) Project Delivery Team (PDT) process, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has requested input on the desired characteristics of a balanced plan and the performance to be carried forward as part of a balanced concept. The below comments are being provided on behalf of Palm Beach County (County). Please carefully consider the comments below and include this comment letter in the LOSOM administrative record. Much of the input below was previously provided to the USACE in April 2019 during the LOSOM public scoping period and during the April 12, 2021 PDT Workshop.

Desired Characteristics of a Balanced Plan

- A balanced plan must be consistent with federal and state law.
- A balanced plan must recognize all of Lake Okeechobee's Congressionally authorized purposes including flood control, water supply, recreation, navigation, and preservation of fish and wildlife.



DAVE KERNER
County Mayor
County Commissioner, District 3

Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners
Governmental Center
301 North Olive Avenue, 12th Floor
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
Telephone: (561) 355-2203
Facsimile: (561) 355-6344

dkerner@pbcgov.org
www.pbcgov.com

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Jaime A. Pinkham
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G. Street NW
Washington, DC 20314-000

Dear Mr. Pinkham,

Subject: Palm Beach County Request for Additional Time to Review and Comment on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual Alternatives

Lake Okeechobee is an integral component of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Flood Control Project and is critical to meeting the environmental restoration and water supply needs of South Florida. Lake Okeechobee is the liquid heart of an integrated regional water management system and is essential and interconnected to communities, businesses, public water utilities, and ecosystems throughout Palm Beach County.

Key Palm Beach County Input to Date (cont'd)

BCC Resolution 2019-0379 (March 12, 2019)

- Implement a transparent science-based evaluation of operational plans that balances all Congressionally-authorized purposes of Lake Okeechobee
- Improve Lake ecology and protect water supplies
- Accurately characterize impacts to the environment and the economy
- Avoid or minimize of Lake discharges to the Lake Worth Lagoon and the Loxahatchee River
- Reduce water use restrictions and cutbacks on public water utilities and existing permitted users
- Supportive of Lake operations that achieve Everglades and other regional ecosystem restoration goals
- Not supportive of drastically lowering the Lake to levels not supported by sound science
- Not supportive of Lake operations that would increase the risk of saltwater intrusion into coastal wellfields and cause irreversible damage to freshwater supplies
- Not supportive of Lake operations that would negatively impact recreational and commercial fishing, and small businesses such as marinas, fishing guide services and the hospitality industry

Key Palm Beach County Input to Date (cont'd)

Public Scoping Comments

- Lake Okeechobee operations cannot resolve the region's water resources challenges by itself
- Water supply performance under LOSOM should be consistent with state and federal law
- The concept of “shared adversity” needs to be reconsidered as undesirable Lake discharges to the Lake Worth Lagoon provides no discernable reduction in impacts to the St. Lucie or Caloosahatchee estuaries

Desired Characteristics of a Balanced Plan

- Must be predictable; any operational flexibility must not override the plan
- Should not exacerbate the impacts that result from perturbations expected to occur as a result of natural and climatic processes
- Must NOT deviate from the USEPA- and FDEP-approved Everglades Water Quality Restoration Strategies Plan
- Should maximize the protection of water supplies to ensure permitted water allocations are available and minimize the potential for water use restrictions
- Should comply with environmental justice (and all other relevant) components of President Biden's Executive Order 14008

Key Palm Beach County Input to Date (cont'd)

Letters Regarding Balanced Plans

- Additional time is needed to ensure stakeholders have adequate time to review, understand and evaluate the proposed large-scale changes to Lake Okeechobee and the regional water management system and to provide meaningful input on the Lake O operational alternatives
- There appear to be deficiencies in each of the 6 Balanced Plans as they:
 - Are Not Well-Balanced
 - May not comply with state law or Congressionally-authorized purposes of Lake Okeechobee
- County is NOT able to recommend any of the 6 Balanced Plans
- Suggest taking additional time to develop better balanced plans



What USACE's Preliminary Preferred Plan means for Palm Beach County



Lake Worth Lagoon

- 94% reduction in mean annual Lake O flood control releases to Lake Worth Lagoon
- Best performing of all 6 Balanced Plans

Note: additional storage is needed to reduce undesirable excess stormwater runoff flows to the Lagoon from the watershed



Water Supply

- Slight improvement in meeting water demands *
- Slight reduction in drought duration, frequency, and severity *
- 3rd best performing of all 6 Balanced Plans *
- Does NOT return water supply performance to conditions that existed prior to the existing Lake operational plan (LORS2008)

Note: As compared to existing Lake operational plan

What USACE's Preliminary Preferred Plan means for Palm Beach County (cont'd)



Lake Okeechobee Ecology

- 20% reduction in Lake Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) exceedances
- Time that Lake O is below 10 feet reduced from 6% to 4%
- Time Lake O within ecologically-desirable stage envelope reduced from 26% to 23%
- 2nd best performing out of all 6 Balanced Plans



Recreation

- Time that Lake O is below 11 feet reduced from 12% to 10%
- 2nd best performing out of all 6 Balanced Plans

Lake Okeechobee Documents

Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual

- [Audubon Florida Scoping Comments](#)
- [Broward County Scoping Comments](#)
- [Gary Goforth Scoping Comments](#)
- [Gregg Weiss Scoping Comments](#)
- [Lake Worth Drainage District Scoping Comments](#)
- [Lee County Scoping Comments](#)
- [Martin County Scoping Comments](#)
- [Palm Beach County Scoping Comments](#)
- [Rep. Brian Mast Scoping Comments](#)
- [Southeast Florida Utility Council Scoping Comments](#)
- [Stuart Scoping Comments](#)
- [U.S. Sugar Scoping Comments](#)
- [West Palm Beach Scoping Comments](#)
- [Economic Valuation of Lake Worth Lagoon \(Jun. 2020\)](#)

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 - [Presentations](#)
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 - [Task Force Members](#)
 - [Working Group Members](#)
 - [Priorities](#)

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Click Priorities



Then click Lake Okeechobee Operations

Discussion



Jeremy McBryan 🧑

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