



HENDRY COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 2340
LaBelle, Florida 33975-2340
863-675-5220

Jennifer Davis
County Administrator

Mark F. Lapp
County Attorney

Kimberley Barrineau
Clerk of the Courts

May 25, 2021

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

Re: Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual

Dear Colonel Kelly:

We are writing to emphasize how important the management of Lake Okeechobee is to our rural communities located around the shores of Lake Okeechobee. The people and businesses we represent are directly affected by the decisions of the Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District in how the level of the lake will be managed. Water supply for agriculture, flood protection, and recreational access to the lake are important objectives we hope to see protected in the new Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM).

Most of us have attended the public meetings you have hosted in or near our communities since the LOSOM process began. Some of us even participate personally in the Delivery Team meetings conducted by your staff. We cannot pretend to understand all the science, or even the acronyms that dominate these sessions, but we hope our presence communicates to you how important the lake is to our communities, and how much we care about the outcome.

We have directed our representatives in this process to support balanced plans that make things better for all the many interests affected by the lake, not just what is most important to our community.

Tom MacVicar and Bill Baker represent Hendry County and many of the local governments in the Lake Communities on the Project Delivery Team (PDT) and have been a valuable asset in helping us understand much of the technical matters associated with the project. Hendry County feels that their experience and expertise lends to a more robust discussion with your staff when considering balanced alternatives.

Emma Byrd
District I

Darrell Harris
District 2

Mitchell Wills
District 3

Ramon Iglesias
District 4

Karson Turner
District 5



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The present schedule, adopted in 2008, reduces the water supply capability of the lake and results in lower levels in the dry season which have, at times, prevented recreational boating access. We look forward to working with you to correct these problems with this next operating plan. Thankfully, the model results shared by your staff have shown that this is possible and that improvements for both estuaries and the Everglades can be gained at the same time.

Colonel Kelly, please convey our sincere thanks to your team for the dedication and professionalism they have shown in this effort. We will be watching closely and participating with the goal of achieving a balanced, predictable Lake Okeechobee Operating Manual that can serve all of us for many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. WILLS".

Mitchell Wills, Chair
Hendry County Board of County Commissioners

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