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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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

December 15, 2021

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon
55th Chief of Engineers and Commanding General
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Spellmon:

I request that as the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) begins to finalize the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) and associated environmental impact statement, that you require the final schedule to adhere to Florida's water rights and laws.

While the work to date on LOSOM has set the stage for reduced discharges to our coasts and a modest recovery of water supply compared to the interim LORS08 schedule, clarity about the State's role in managing its water is still needed. Every prior lake schedule since 1948 has protected the state of Florida's right to make water delivery decisions when the lake is not at a level that poses a threat to the stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike, except LOSOM. State control at levels above the water shortage band is critical to ensure that Florida retains the flexibility to meet its goals, such as reducing discharges, protecting the environment, and growing the economy. These goals support the efforts of the Corps and ensures that the State maintains its sovereign powers over its water resources.

As currently drafted, the Corps only recognizes Florida's authority to make water delivery decisions when the Lake has reached the low levels of a water shortage. My request is simple – LOSOM should clearly state that Florida has control over its water management decisions, well before a water shortage level is reached. State control is needed to ensure that there is water available for existing legal users and the environment, under normal conditions, not just in times of shortages. I believe with this clarification you are well on your way to fulfilling the lake's project purposes by protecting Floridians and their environment.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Corps. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Gregory Steube".

W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

CC:

Assistant Secretary Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary for the Army for Civil Works
Brigadier General Jason E. Kelly, Commander of the South Atlantic Division
Colonel James L. Booth, District Commander - Jacksonville District
Drew Bartlett, Executive Director - South Florida Water Management District.

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