



Charlotte County Government

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March 15, 2019

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

Dear Dr. Hodgson,

Thank you for beginning to reevaluate the Lake Okeechobee operations schedule to create the new Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). We appreciate the opportunity to partner with you on this effort and look forward to working together to create a new operations schedule for Lake Okeechobee that more broadly recognizes the impacts of the releases on all of Florida's residents. As you know, our community is negatively impacted by Lake Okeechobee high flow releases to the west coast. This is one of the most critical issues facing our region and our future.

The public health and economic impacts of Lake Okeechobee releases are routinely catastrophic, negatively impacting our residents and their public safety. While we respect the function of the Herbert Hoover Dike as a flood control structure and appreciate that thousands live near its shores, to not also recognize the public health and safety impacts of releases via the new LOSOM cannot be overlooked and subordinated.

During the development of the new LOSOM, we implore you to not only consider the impacts of those CERP infrastructure projects that are scheduled to be completed by 2022, like the Herbert Hoover Dike rehabilitation, but also other projects that may come online over the next five-plus years that would offer additional flexibility with Lake Okeechobee operations. LOSOM must be flexible enough to respond to a changing environment, whether that may be unexpected weather patterns, new storage capabilities developed by federal, state, or local governments, or critical health and economic impacts of Lake releases.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

18500 Murdock Circle, Suite 536 | Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1068
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We also request that the Corps to host public meetings in Punta Gorda or another Charlotte County location during your many rounds of upcoming public engagement. It is critical for our constituents to have opportunities to engage without having to travel far. This issue is too important to host public meetings throughout the state, including in some areas that have less direct impact from Lake Okeechobee releases, and not in our community too. We are happy to work with you to identify appropriate space for such public meetings.

Thank you again for your work on this critically important issue. We appreciate your focus on improving the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule and look forward to our partnership on this moving forward.

Sincerely,

Kenneth W. Doherty, Chairman
Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

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