



Protecting Southwest Florida's unique natural environment and quality of life ... now and forever.

November 16, 2022

Colonel James Booth
District Commander U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Jacksonville District Jacksonville, FL 32207

Dear Colonel Booth,

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, on behalf of our over 6,400 supporting families, appreciates the opportunity to share our concerns regarding releases of Lake Okeechobee waters into the Caloosahatchee system. We understand that you and your staff have a challenging task at hand and that you must consider many different aspects and interests when managing Lake Okeechobee.

Southwest Florida as you know has experienced economic and environmental devastation due to Hurricane Ian. The impacts continue as red tide concentrates along the coast. Reports of fish kills and respiratory issues are further delaying recovery and threatening the livelihood of those who rely on clean and healthy water.

The data shows us that Lake Okeechobee nutrient levels have doubled and even tripled in parts of the lake since Ian. We are concerned that nutrient rich releases will intensify the red tide, thus delaying hurricane recovery and furthering the damage to our communities. Therefore, we urge you to maintain flows at the lower end of the optimal flow range of 750 cubic feet per second while the red tide bloom is present in Southwest Florida coastal waters.

Again, we recognize the complexity in operating the Lake Okeechobee system. We are confident that you and your team will make an equitable decision that serves all stakeholders and the coastal waters of Southwest Florida.

Sincerely,
Michele Arquette-Palermo
Water Policy Manager
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
michelea@conservancy.org

(239) 302-7839

Cc: Drew Bartlett, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District
Shawn Hamilton, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Eric Sutton, Executive Director, Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission



Conservancy of Southwest Florida has been awarded Charity Navigator's prestigious 4-Star top rating for good governance, sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. Charity Navigator is America's largest and most respected independent evaluator of charities.