

July 30, 2013

Daniel O'Keefe, Chairman
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

Subject: Caloosahatchee High Flow Discharges and Need for Additional Water Storage

Dear Chairman O'Keefe:

The City of Sanibel is very concerned about the impact of the current high flow regulatory discharges from Lake Okeechobee and runoff from the Caloosahatchee watershed. Sanibel Island is a world renowned tourism destination and is consistently ranked among the top beaches in the world (e.g., U.S. News Travel). People from all around the world come to Sanibel to enjoy our pristine beaches, observe wildlife, and fish our world class waters. As a result, many Lee County residents have built their businesses in tandem with this natural setting. The recent high flow discharges from the Caloosahatchee watershed and Lake Okeechobee threaten the livelihood of hundreds of Sanibel residents and businesses including, fisherman, tour operators, hoteliers, restaurateurs, and realtors to name a few. The Sanibel community vividly remembers the impacts of the high flow discharges following the hurricanes of 2004 through 2006 and the unprecedented impact the piles of rotting drift algae blanketing area beaches had on our resident's quality of life and our local economy. Research conducted by a consortium of scientists from 2008 to 2010 contracted by the City of Sanibel and Lee County determined that the algae blooms that plagued area beaches were directly related to nutrient runoff. The primary sources of the nutrients were attributed to regulatory discharges from Lake Okeechobee and runoff from the Caloosahatchee watershed (Loh et al. 2011). We are very concerned that we will see a similar situation result from the high flows that we are currently receiving.

While we understand the need to protect the communities around Lake Okeechobee from flooding and the current condition of the Herbert Hoover Dike; we are very concerned that very little progress has been made to increase water storage in the Caloosahatchee and Lake Okeechobee watersheds. Increasing water storage and having the ability to move water south into the Everglades during times of emergency is critical to solving the estuary's high flow problems. It is imperative that the state and federal agencies responsible for managing our area's water move quickly to increase water storage in the Lake Okeechobee and Caloosahatchee watersheds and eliminate the impediments to moving water south into the Everglades.

We request that all short and long-term storage options be evaluated and considered, including temporarily holding the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes at or above schedule; increase disbursed water storage throughout the system and maximize all storage opportunities on publicly owned lands; reduce or eliminate flood control backpumping into Lake Okeechobee; and partner with farmers within the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and provide incentives to hold more water within the EAA during times of



City of Sanibel

800 Dunlop Road
Sanibel, Florida 33957-4096

www.mysanibel.com

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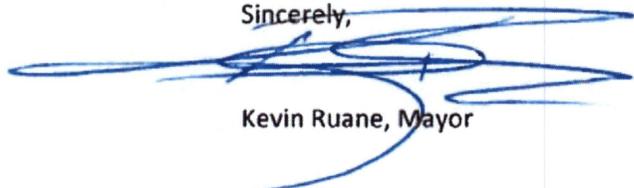
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BUILDING	472-4555
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	472-3111
FINANCE	472-9615
LEGAL	472-4359
NATURAL RESOURCES	472-3700
RECREATION	472-0345
PLANNING	472-4136
POLICE	472-3111
PUBLIC WORKS	472-6397

emergency (e.g., Recyclable Water Containment Areas). It is also critical that the District continue to work with the US Army Corps to fast track the Central Everglades Planning Process (CEPP) to facilitate moving more water south into the Everglades to prevent further damage to the estuaries.

In addition to increasing short and long-term storage within the system, we also have an immediate need for the District to assess the ecological impacts of the high flow discharges on the Caloosahatchee estuary. We request that the District immediately implement additional ecological monitoring on seagrasses, oysters, and marine organisms in San Carlos Bay, Pine Island Sound, and the coastal waters of Lee County. Monitoring should also include efforts to quantify the areal extent of the river plume, sedimentation impacts on oysters and seagrasses, and nutrient impacts associated with increased loading.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

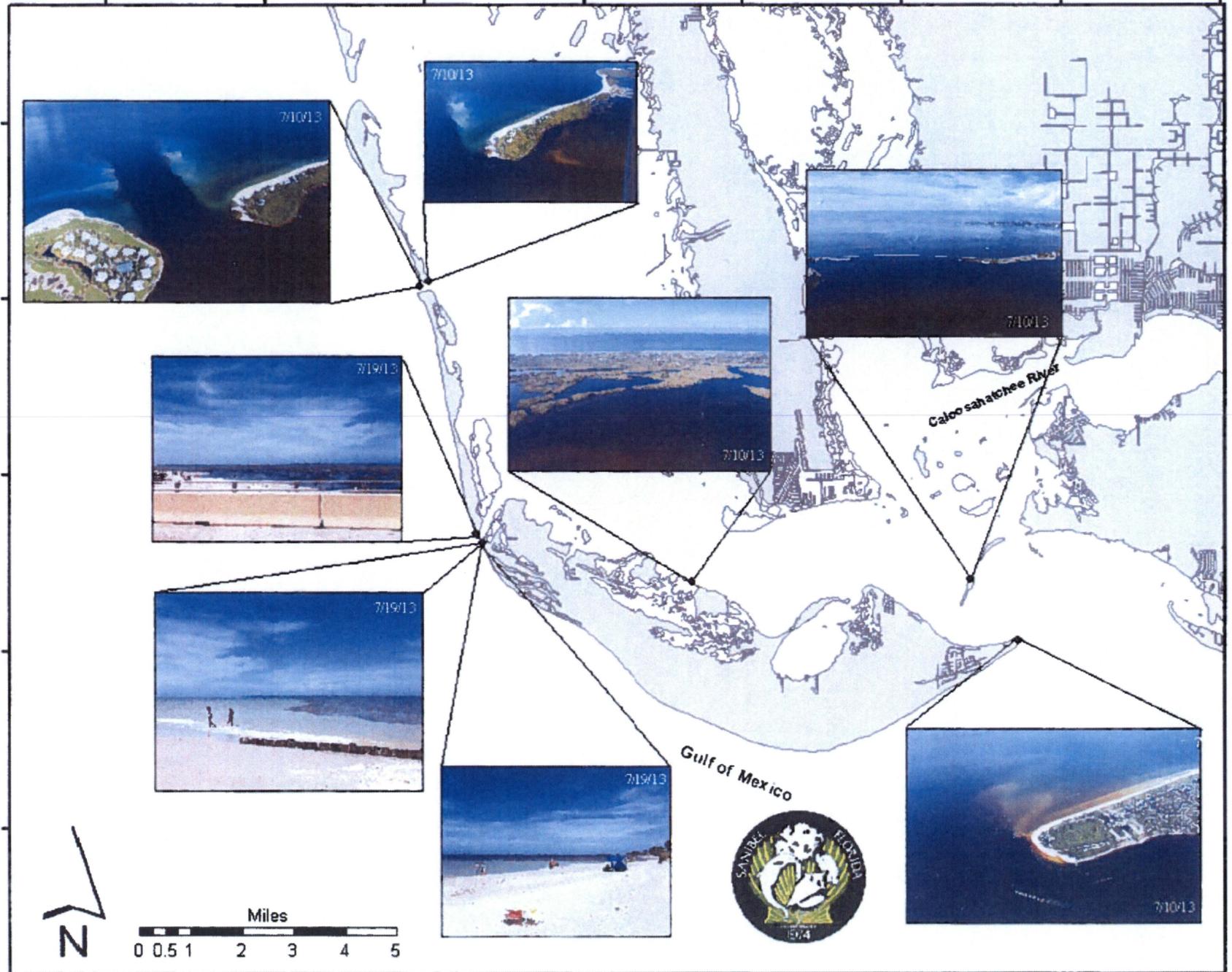


Kevin Ruane, Mayor

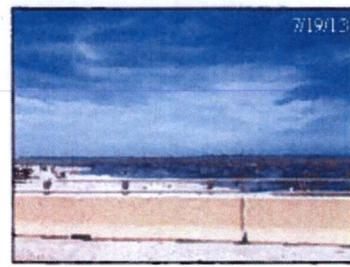
Cc: Kevin Powers, Vice Chairman
Rick Barber
Sandy Bachelor
Mitch Hutchcraft
James Moran
Juan Portuondo
Timothy Sargent
Glenn Waldman
Sanibel City Council
Judith A. Zimomra, City Manager
Kenneth B. Cuyler, City Attorney

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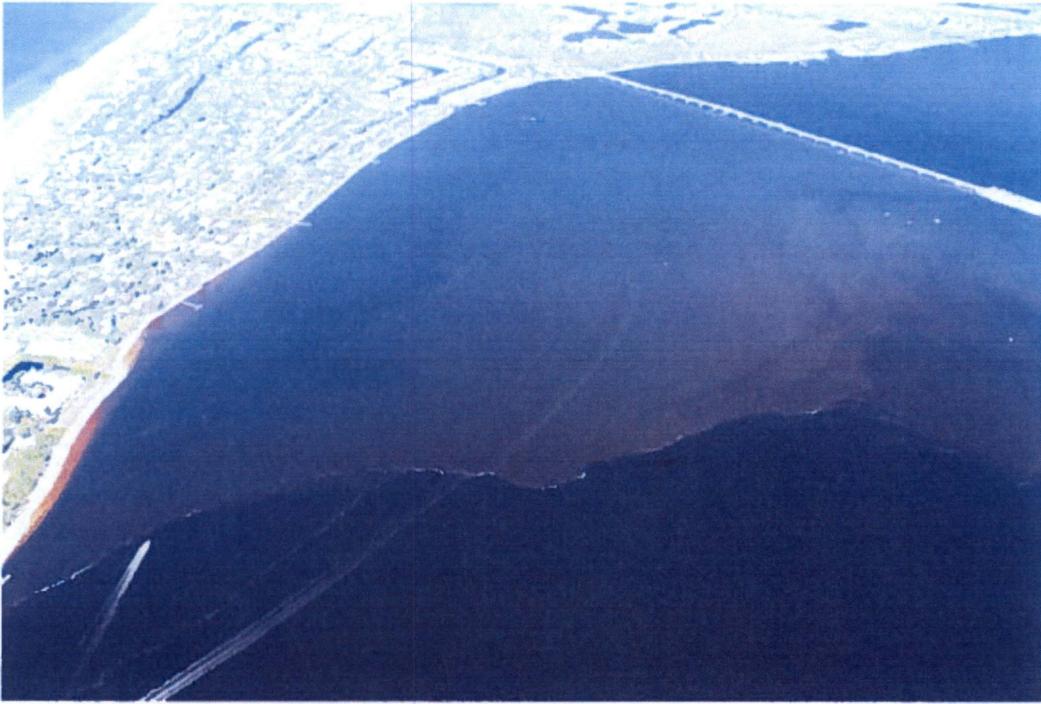


Photo 1: Sanibel Causeway 7-10-13, photo taken by SCCF



Photo 2: Sanibel Causeway 7-10-13, photo taken by SCCF



Photo 3: Sanibel Lighthouse 7-10-13, photo taken by SCCF



Photo 4: Mouth of the Caloosahatchee 7-10-13, photo taken by SCCF



Photo 5: Redfish Pass 7-10-13, Photo taken by SCCF



Photo 6: Redfish Pass 7-10-13, Photo taken by SCCF



Photo 7: Redfish Pass 7-10-13, Photo taken by SCCF



Photo 8: Redfish Pass 7-10-13, Photo taken by SCCF



Photo 9: Blind Pass 7-19-13, Photo taken by City of Sanibel



Photo 10: Blind Pass 7-19-13, Photo taken by City of Sanibel



Photo 11: Blind Pass 7-19-13, Photo taken by City of Sanibel



Photo 12: Blind Pass 7-19-13, Photo taken by City of Sanibel



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR DON GAETZ
President

July 10, 2013

Debbie Brown
Secretary of the Senate
Suite 405 Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Secretary Brown:

Pursuant to Senate Rule 1.5, today I am creating the Senate Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin (IRLLOB). This committee will serve as a stand-alone select committee. The full membership is as follows:

Joe Negron, Chair
Charles Dean, Vice Chair
Joseph Abruzzo
Denise Grimsley
Arthenia Joyner

Bill Montford, Vice Chair
Lizbeth Benacquisto
Alan Hays
Maria Lorts Sachs

This committee will be staffed by the following:

Staff Directors
Pepper Uchino
Jamie DeLoach

Committee Administrative Assistant
Kim Bonn

The select committee will investigate policies, spending, and any other governmental activities affecting water management in the Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin. The committee will conduct hearings and direct such work as necessary to complete specified tasks and prepare a report to be submitted by November 4, 2013, to the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Environmental Preservation, and Agriculture. Specific tasks include:

1. Review historic and current state and federal basin wide water management policies and activities, including discharges from Lake Okeechobee into the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon;

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2. Assess the impact of current water release activities and evaluate the results of environmental priorities in the basin;
3. Identify options for state and federal action to improve basin wide water management, including alternatives for discharges from Lake Okeechobee; and,
4. Develop recommendations for improved water management.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Gaetz", written in a cursive style.

Don Gaetz
President

Cc: Senators
Pepper Uchino, Staff Director, Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Jamie DeLoach, Staff Director, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government
Katherine Halley, Staff Director, Senate Committee on Agriculture