# City of Sanibel

## City Council
## Special Meeting

August 21, 2013

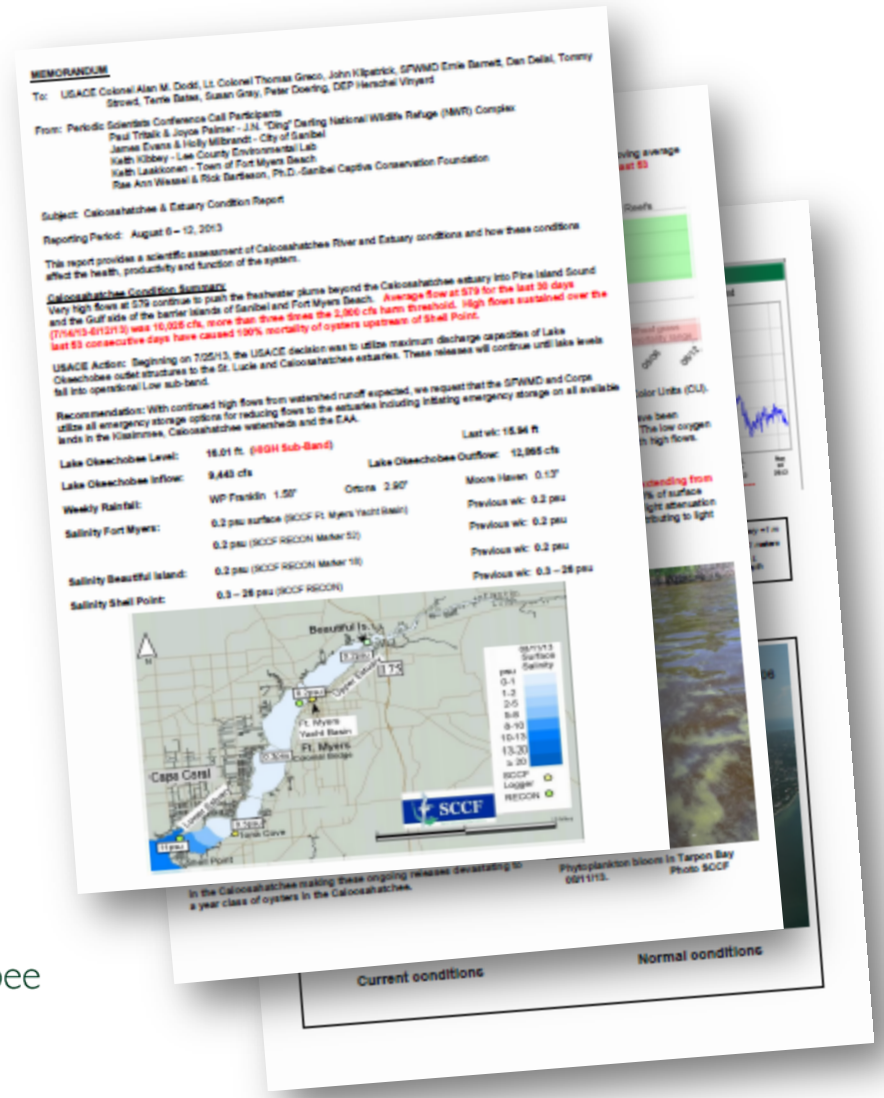
Impacts of Freshwater Releases from Lake Okeechobee on Sanibel Island and the Coastal Waters of Lee County

# Meeting Overview

- Caloosahatchee Conditions & Ecological Impacts
- Economic Impacts
- City's Approach & Partnerships
- State & Federal Legislative Priorities
- City Actions to Date

# Ecological Conditions

- Lake O at 15.70 feet (8/20)
- Flows at S-79 avg. 9,803 cfs for past 30 days; >2,800 cfs for the past 60 days
- Low salinity impacting oysters & seagrasses in lower estuary, San Carlos Bay & Pine Island Sound
- Dark water impacting light
- Anticipate nutrient impacts
- Human health concerns

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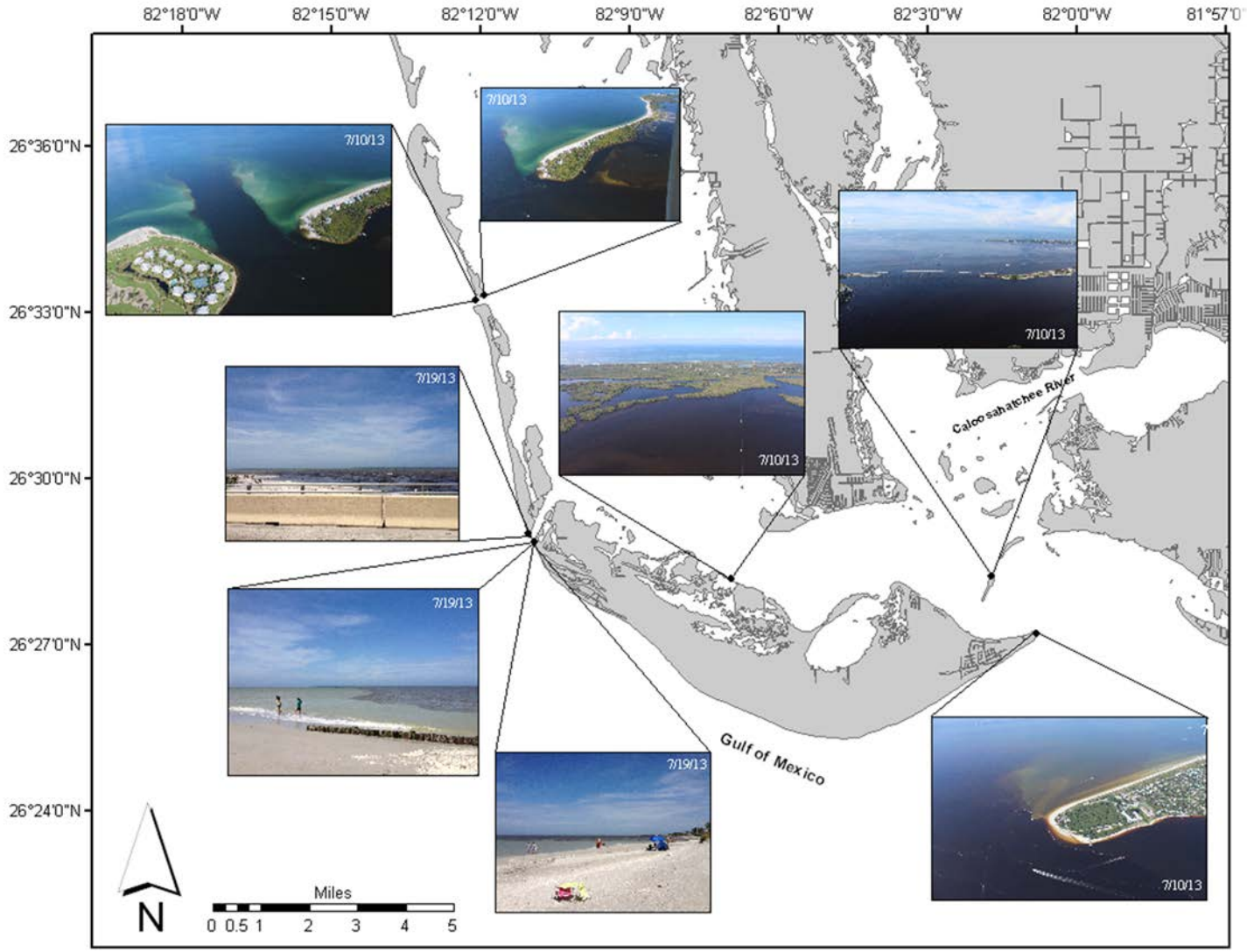


Impacts of Freshwater Releases from Lake Okeechobee on Sanibel Island and the Coastal Waters of Lee County

July 10, 2013
Photo by Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation

Photo by Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation

July 19, 2013
Photo by City of Sanibel

July 19, 2013
Photo by City of Sanibel

July 10, 2013
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# Economic Impacts

- "Trickle down economics"
- $4.3 billion in tourism; 85,000 jobs
- $400 million contributed from Lee/Collier from bed tax, sales tax, gas tax, and local tax
- Lee/Collier $147 billion real estate assessed values
- Lee/Collier $1.9 billion property taxes paid
- Water quality issues can impact consumer confidence

# City's Approach and Partnerships

- Building on past efforts and accumulated science
- Focusing on economic impacts
- Partnering with Lee County, local municipalities, Island Partners and east coast stakeholders
- Communicating with House of Representatives, Congressmen, State Senators, and Governor's Office

# Lake Okeechobee Water Releases
# SANIBEL LEGISLATIVE AND FUNDING PRIORITIES

## FEDERAL PRIORITIES

1. Fully support the 2013 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill, which includes authorization for the Caloosahatchee C-43 West Basin Reservoir Project; and appropriate the necessary funds to implement the C-43 Reservoir Project. (Reservoir will provide 170,000 acre-feet of storage within the Caloosahatchee basin and help address high and low flow issues.)

2. Fast track the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and get congressional support and funding for the project. (The project will move approximately 250,000 acre-feet of water south of Lake Okeechobee and will reduce some of the damaging flows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.)

3. The Federal Government needs to fund their share of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and implement the projects agreed to in the plan. (A majority of the lands needed for the projects have been purchased by the State and need Federal funding to move forward with the projects.)

4. Continue to keep pressure on the Army Corps to move as quickly as possible to rehabilitate the Herbert Hoover Dike. (The project will protect the communities around Lake Okeechobee and provide more freeboard and temporary storage in the lake to reduce peak flows to the estuaries.)

## STATE PRIORITIES

1. **Purchase the additional 153,209 acres of US Sugar lands south of Lake Okeechobee within the Everglades Agricultural Area at fair market value**. The State currently owns 26,790 acres of land that was purchased for $197,396,088 ($7,400/acre) from U.S. Sugar Corp. as part of the *Reviving the River of Grass Project*, with an option to purchase an additional 153,209 acres. Initial purchase of the land would have short- and long-term benefits to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries by reducing the need for flood control on those lands (at a minimum, it could temporarily store 200,000 acre-feet of water). The purchase would also increase capacity in the stormwater treatment areas (STAs) south of the Lake, allowing more water within Lake Okeechobee to be moved into the Water Conservation Areas. When completed, this project could store or convey approximately 500k acre-feet of water south of Lake Okeechobee.

2. **Interim storage on C-43 West Reservoir site** – Project would significantly increase the amount of water that can be stored on the C-43 West Reservoir (Barry Groves) property. It would require additional infrastructure including building berms and installing larger pumps to put more water on the site. It could be considered phase I of the larger C-43 West Reservoir CERP federal project and could be included in the state cost share for the federal project. Estimated cost is $655,000 to increase total amount of storage on the site to 15,000 acre-feet.

3. **Lake Hicpochee Restoration Project** – Additional funds needed to complete planning and construction on south side to increase storage and treatment. Estimated cost is $4.5 million for construction of Lake Hicpochee South. Project benefits come from creation of a spreader canal that slows the rate water gets to the Caloosahatchee and improves water quality.

4. **Increase distributed storage in Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee, and Caloosahatchee basins.** Additional funds are needed for the state to partner with large land owners in the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee and Caloosahatchee basins to store more water on the land so that it is not discharged to Lake Okeechobee or to the Caloosahatchee River. No cost estimate available, but new partners could be brought on as funds become available.

5. **West coast site visit by Governor Scott with Mayor Ruane** by air to see the impact the freshwater releases are having on the coastal communities.

*Note: *The state needs to continue to fully support the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) projects. Our biggest relief from the freshwater releases in the Caloosahatchee are going to come from the larger federal projects, which have much larger water storage benefits and can move water south into the Everglades. The state needs to continue to work with our federal partners to come up with strategies to move more water south of Lake Okeechobee.*

# City Actions to Date

- **August 2nd** – Meeting with Lee County, Corps & SFWMD
- **August 6th** – City Council meeting; pivot on message
- **August 7th** – Mayor met with Congressman Radel
- **August 8th** – Senator Benacquisto adds Mayor to Senate Select Committee agenda
- **August 9th** – Senate Select Committee agenda amended
- **August 14th** – Various meetings at FLC to communicate WQ message
- **August 15th** – Mayor talked with Governor's Chief of Staff

# City Actions to Date (Con't.)

- **August 16th** – Mayor met with Governor Scott; Martin and Palm Beach County officials; Senator Nelson's staff; and FLC President's Nominating Committee
- **August 17th** – Mayor was Master of Ceremonies at past President's Luncheon and carried WQ message
- **August 18th–20th** – Mayor and Director Evans went to Tallahassee & met with Senate Select Committee staff and the Governor's Office
- **August 22nd** – Senate Select Committee Hearing, Stuart, FL
- **September 5th** – Lee County and City of Sanibel Town Hall Meeting, Lee County EOC

# Questions

- Council Comments
- Public Comments