

January 8, 2014

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

**Re: Request for Governing Board Support for the U.S. Army Corps to Utilize "Make-up Releases" from Lake Okeechobee to Supplement Freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee to Maintain Salinity below the MFL "Harm" Threshold**

Dear Chairman O'Keefe:

The City of Sanibel is requesting the Governing Board's support for the U.S. Army Corps to utilize "make-up releases" from Lake Okeechobee to supplement freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee to maintain salinity below the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) "Harm" threshold.

This past rainy season, from June to October, the Caloosahatchee estuary received flows averaging 7,400 cubic feet per second (cfs). These flows resulted impacts to seagrass beds, oysters and other marine organisms in the lower estuary; nutrient loading throughout San Carlos Bay, Pine Island Sound and the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge; and a freshwater plume that extended more than 14 miles into the Gulf of Mexico. This not only impacted the ecology of the Caloosahatchee and our coastal waters, but also had a significant impact on our local economy.

Three months later we are now presented with a different problem, the Caloosahatchee is not receiving enough freshwater flow to maintain salinities below the MFL "harm" threshold, as defined in Chapter 40E-8.221(2)(a), F.A.C.<sup>1</sup>. When salinity within the upper estuary averages more than 10 psu for more than 30 days, estuarine resources such as tapegrass, oysters and nursery areas for economically important fish species are adversely impacted.

From November 18<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were using "make-up release" water from Lake Okeechobee to supplement freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee. *Make-up releases* are defined in the Lake Okeechobee Release Schedule (LORS 2008) Water Control Plan, Section 7-15, as "...releases from Lake Okeechobee to tide and/or to the WCAs (via STAs) to make up for releases that

<sup>1</sup> 40E-8.221 Minimum Flow and Levels: Surface Waters.

(2) Caloosahatchee River. A minimum mean monthly flow of 300 CFS is necessary to maintain sufficient salinities at S-79 in order to prevent a MFL exceedance. A MFL exceedance occurs during a 365 day period, when:

(a) A 30-day average salinity concentration exceeds 10 parts per thousand at the Ft. Myers salinity station (measured at 20% of the total river depth from the water surface at a location of latitude 263907.260, longitude 815209.296; or

(b) A single, daily average salinity exceeds a concentration of 20 parts per thousand at the Ft. Myers salinity station.

Exceedance of either paragraph (a) or (b), for two consecutive years is a violation of the MFL.



# City of Sanibel

800 Dunlop Road  
Sanibel, Florida 33957-4096

www.mysanibel.com

### AREA CODE - 239

CITY COUNCIL	472-4135
ADMINISTRATIVE	472-3700
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

were previously reduced or prevented.” When the lake level is below the Intermediate Sub-band, these make-up releases from Lake Okeechobee to tide (estuaries) and WCAs will occur as soon as possible and may occur when Parts C and D (Figures 7-3 and 7-4) do not allow releases or prescribe a lower volume release.<sup>2</sup> The lake make-up releases to tide (estuaries) would be limited to a pulse release from Lake Okeechobee not to exceed 2,800 cfs at S-79, and 2,000 cfs at the St. Lucie Estuary.<sup>2</sup>

*Make-up releases* supplemented flows to the Caloosahatchee by 80 cfs, increasing the pulse releases from 650 cfs to 730 cfs. This small amount of supplemental flow was critical for maintaining salinities below 10 psu. When these supplemental flows were discontinued on December 8<sup>th</sup>, salinity again began to rise in the upper estuary. Provisional data collected by the SFWMD indicates that salinity at the MFL monitoring station in Fort Myers is now exceeding the 10 psu 30-day moving average threshold. This will be our seventh consecutive year of exceedances to the MFL rule, resulting in “significant harm” to the resource.

The SFWMD’s December 2013 Position Analysis indicates that there is less than a 25% chance that the Lake level will drop below the Water Shortage Management Band of the LORS 2008 schedule, where water restrictions could be implemented. However, the Caloosahatchee estuary is already experiencing “harm” to its resources. It is critical that we reinstitute *make-up releases* now while the water is an asset; rather than holding the water in the Lake until the rainy season when it becomes a liability. If the water is held in the Lake until the rainy season, the estuaries will be further impacted during the spring/summer drawdown.

We want to thank you for your leadership and hope that you will consider supporting our request.

Sincerely,



Kevin Ruane, Mayor

C.c.: Kevin Powers, Vice Chairman  
Rick Barber  
Sandy Bachelor  
Mitch Hutchcraft  
James Moran  
Juan Portuondo  
Timothy Sargent  
Glenn Waldman  
Blake Guillory, Executive Director

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<sup>2</sup> Central and Southern Florida Project, Water Control Plan for Lake Okeechobee and Everglades Agricultural Area, March 2008.

January 23, 2014

Colonel Alan M. Dodd, District Commander  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District  
4070 Boulevard Center, Suite 201  
Jacksonville, FL 32207

**Re: Request for "Make-up Releases" from Lake Okeechobee to Supplement  
Freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee to Maintain Salinity below the MFL "Harm"  
Threshold**

Dear Colonel Dodd:

The City of Sanibel is requesting the U.S. Army Corps to utilize "make-up releases" from Lake Okeechobee to supplement freshwater flows to the Caloosahatchee to maintain salinity below the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) "Harm" threshold.

This past rainy season, from June to October, the Caloosahatchee estuary received flows averaging 7,400 cubic feet per second (cfs). These flows resulted in impacts to seagrass beds, oysters and other marine organisms in the lower estuary; nutrient loading throughout San Carlos Bay, Pine Island Sound and the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge; and a freshwater plume that extended more than 14 miles into the Gulf of Mexico. This event not only impacted the ecology of the Caloosahatchee and our coastal waters, but also had a significant impact on our local economy.

Three months later we are now presented with a different problem, the Caloosahatchee is not receiving enough freshwater flow to maintain salinities below the MFL "harm" threshold, as defined in Chapter 40E-8.221(2)(a), F.A.C.<sup>1</sup>. When salinity within the upper estuary averages more than 10 psu for more than 30 days, estuarine resources such as tapegrass, oysters, and nursery areas for economically important fish species are adversely impacted.

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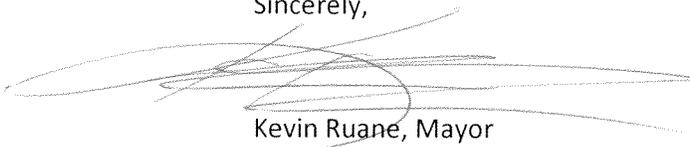
band, these make-up releases from Lake Okeechobee to tide (estuaries) and WCAs will occur as soon as possible and may occur when Parts C and D (Figures 7-3 and 7-4) do not allow releases or prescribe a lower volume release.<sup>2</sup> The lake make-up releases to tide (estuaries) would be limited to a pulse release from Lake Okeechobee not to exceed 2,800 cfs at S-79, and 2,000 cfs at the St. Lucie Estuary.<sup>2</sup>

These *make-up releases* supplemented flows to the Caloosahatchee by 80 cfs, increasing the pulse releases from 650 cfs to 730 cfs. This small amount of supplemental flow was critical for maintaining salinities below 10 psu at the MFL monitoring station. When these supplemental flows were discontinued on December 8<sup>th</sup>, salinity again began to rise in the upper estuary. Provisional data collected by the SFWMD indicates that salinity at the MFL monitoring station in Fort Myers is now exceeding the 10 psu 30-day moving average threshold. This will be our seventh consecutive year of exceedances to the MFL rule, resulting in “significant harm” to the resource.

The SFWMD’s January 2014 Position Analysis indicates that there is less than a 10% chance that the Lake level will drop below the Water Shortage Management Band of the LORS 2008 schedule before June, where water restrictions could be implemented. However, the Caloosahatchee estuary is already experiencing “harm” to its resources. It is critical that we reinstitute *make-up releases* now while the water is an asset; rather than holding the water in the Lake until the rainy season when it becomes a liability. If the water is held in the Lake until the rainy season, the estuaries will be further impacted during the spring/summer drawdown. We strongly feel that it is within the discretion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide these make-up releases to the Caloosahatchee.

We want to thank you for your leadership and hope that you will consider our request.

Sincerely,



Kevin Ruane, Mayor

C.c.: Lt. Colonel Thomas M. Greco, Deputy District Commander U.S. Army Corps  
John Kilpatrick, Chief-Multi-projects Branch U.S. Army Corps  
Zafar Hyder, Water Management Section U.S. Army Corps  
Daniel O’Keefe, Chairman SFWMD Governing Board  
Blake Guillory, Executive Director SFWMD

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<sup>2</sup> Central and Southern Florida Project, Water Control Plan for Lake Okeechobee and Everglades Agricultural Area, March 2008.