



April 29, 2020

Re: Reject request to include "Savings Clause" in WRDA 2020

To the members of Florida's congressional delegation:

On behalf of Friends of the Everglades, I'm writing to voice our concerns about an effort to manipulate this year's Water Resources & Development Act (WRDA) in a manner that would be detrimental to the Everglades, the northern estuaries and Florida Bay.

In an email sent Tuesday, April 28, Rep. Alcee Hastings' staff requested other representatives sign onto a letter to the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee requesting that, as part of WRDA 2020, Congress retroactively apply the WRDA 2000 "Savings Clause" to the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual that was already authorized in WRDA 2018 without this condition. This is a terrible idea that would result in the prioritization of water supply for large industrial farms south of Lake Okeechobee over the health of residents living along toxic-algae plagued waterways. It also would jeopardize long-term Everglades restoration goals.

The result would be to impose the constraints of a 20-year-old water-supply arrangement onto the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) already being developed by the Army Corps of Engineers. That's despite the fact that the Army Corps of Engineers has repeatedly stated (most recently during its December LOSOM PDT meeting) that the Savings Clause does not apply to LOSOM because LOSOM is not a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Moreover, why would we go back to water management as it was in 2000 when we know so much more now about the health risks stemming from human exposure to cyanobacteria/blue-green algae? Retroactively applying the unrelated WRDA 2000 Savings Clause to LOSOM would require keeping Lake Okeechobee water levels too high during the dry months — which, history tells us, results in toxic discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries during the rainy months — and would deprive the Everglades and Florida Bay of much-needed water when they need it most.

In the name of the Everglades and Florida's treasured estuaries, we ask that you reject the request to sign onto Hastings' letter to the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

Sincerely,

Eve Samples
Executive Director, Friends of the Everglades