



April 30, 2020

To All Members of Florida's Congressional Delegation:

In the 30 years of the Everglades Trust's battle to help save America's Everglades, restoration has always been about reconnecting Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades and removing man-made barriers so that clean freshwater could once again flow south, down to Florida Bay, the headwaters of the Florida Keys.

The plan agreed to in 2000 also included projects east and west of Lake O that, when combined with southern flow capabilities, would work to halt the unnatural and unacceptable releases of polluted freshwater to the estuaries on both coasts of Florida.

We have just learned of a new effort underway to add language into WRDA 2020 that would seriously jeopardize continued progress toward managing toxic discharges from Lake Okeechobee and greater ecosystem restoration, and undermine the significant taxpayer investment in Everglades restoration over the last two decades.

To be clear, this is an attempt to guarantee the sugar industry a level of service that no other water user in the country is given – to the detriment of everyone and everything else.

The Army Corps is currently having to deal with toxic blue-green algae in Lake Okeechobee, which has damaging environmental, economic, and health effects when it is discharged. This language would hamstring the Corps in exercising its duty to protect human health, safety, and the environment and all but make moot the public process for a new lake regulation schedule – LOSOM.

The southern end of the Everglades system is collapsing from a severe lack of clean freshwater already. Locking in a regulation schedule from the 20th century is not only misguided for a 21st century economy, but it ignores the fact our climate has changed and will continue to change. As things become hotter, water is going to become more and more scarce and, where polluted, more and more toxic.

All of these things are working against the best interests of the Everglades ecosystem and the state of Florida as a whole.

Agreeing to this new language would all but guarantee a certain death to the Everglades and three nationally-important coastal estuaries, taking Florida's economy and future with them.

On behalf of the Board of the Everglades Trust, nine million Floridians who rely on the Everglades for their drinking water supply and all the critters who call the Everglades home, I ask you to reject any attempt to insert the "savings clause" language into WRDA 2020.

Respectfully,

Kimberly Mitchell
Executive Director, Everglades Trust