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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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July 9, 2018

The Honorable R.D. James
Assistant Secretary of the Army—Civil Works
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington DC, 20310

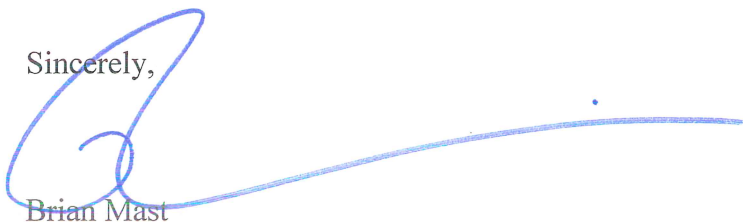
Dear Assistant Secretary James:

As you know, the Department of Defense is currently conducting a “full assessment of system conditions” regarding water discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries. I first want to thank you for the decision to suspend discharges effective today while this review is conducted.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is charged with protecting human safety, yet the safety of my constituents has been systemically ignored and deprioritized. The toxic pollution stemming from algal blooms covering more than 90 percent of Lake Okeechobee presents an imminent and dangerous threat to public health and safety. As a result, Governor Rick Scott declared a State of Emergency for Martin and Lee Counties today. Section 7-13 of the Water Control Plan For Water Conservation Areas, Everglades National Park, and ENP-South Dade Conveyance System states that, under emergency conditions when there are “pollution problems,” water control actions “necessary to abate the problem are taken immediately.” Our toxic algae crisis undoubtedly qualifies as an emergency “pollution problem.”

Therefore, while you are conducting your assessment, I urge you to formulate a solution that ceases discharges until you can prove definitively that the toxic algae pollution problem no longer exist or a greater imminent threat emerges. Because this is a life or death situation for our community with serious ramifications on human health, your immediate attention to this issue is needed and appreciated.

Sincerely,



Brian Mast
Member of Congress