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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

November 10, 2022

Colonel James Booth
Jacksonville District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Dear Colonel Booth:

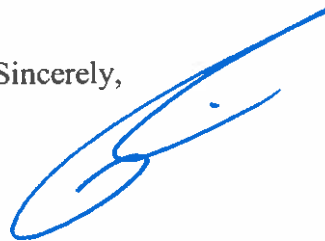
As you and the Jacksonville District team work to manage the impacts of Hurricane Nicole, I urge you to use the maximum capacity on Lake Okeechobee and throughout the rest of the system to avoid discharges to the St. Lucie. The structural improvements to the Hebert Hoover Dike, coupled with the fact that we are at the end of the wet season, have made discharges to St. Lucie unnecessary at this point. Moreover, significant flooding is already harming our community and additional water from Lake Okeechobee threatens to substantially exacerbate this damage.

In addition to flooding concerns, the Corps has made it clear that the potential for severe algal blooms on Lake Okeechobee is notably higher after Hurricane Ian, with the lake receiving millions of gallons of runoff filled with nutrients. That, combined with the severe wind and rain stirring up the nutrients already filling the Lake, makes now a horrible time for Lake Okeechobee water to be sent to the St. Lucie River estuary.

Finally, the estuary is no doubt already measuring much fresher than is healthy from direct rainfall alone. Adding water from Lake Okeechobee threatens severe, long-lasting damage to our estuary. With dry season coming, now is not the time to inundate our already-drenched coast with unnecessary discharges.

Thank you for all you do to protect Floridians from the devastating impacts of hurricanes. I ask that you continue that protection for the Treasure Coast by taking all steps possible to avert an ecological disaster.

Sincerely,



Brian Mast
Member of Congress