

BRIAN J. MAST
21ST DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

2182 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3026

171 SW FLAGLER AVENUE
STUART, FLORIDA 34994
(772) 403-0900

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

December 5, 2024

Colonel Brandon Bowman
Jacksonville District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

Colonel Bowman:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's decision to discharge water from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie Estuary must be reversed. While the Army Corps attempts to play God, picking winners and losers in Florida, those of us repeatedly on the receiving end of the abuse have had enough.

The Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) offers great promise to reduce harmful discharges to the estuaries, but the immediate enactment of recovery operations threatens that promise. LOSOM was officially adopted on August 12, 2024 and not even four months later you are already deviating from the recovery plan rather than letting LOSOM work.

During our most recent conversation, you said the Army Corps is not just starting releases this week from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie but is considering their continuation through July at a rate between 300 and 500 cubic feet per second (cfs). Over the course of months of destruction of our estuary, this level of releases will result in a decrease in the lake level of only about 3 inches. This is like slowly emptying a septic tank into our house, just enough to make it unlivable but not enough to actually drain the tank.

You are trying to give the illusion of helping the Lake recover by hurting other communities while at the same time significant nutrients flow into the Lake. I appreciate that you have many competing priorities in managing Florida's waterways, but respectfully, you have gotten this one wrong. I urge you to reverse course immediately.

Sincerely,



Brian Mast
Member of Congress