

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

March 1, 2024

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

Colonel Booth:

Thank you for coming to the River's Coalition meeting. I want to continue our conversation on the risk profile of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) now that repairs have been completed at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.5 billion.

I have the following questions:

- In short, what did we get for our \$1.5 billion?
- What has the limited risk potential been raised to that was previously stated to be 18.5'?
- What has the critical risk potential been raised to that was previously stated to be 21'?

The goal of the HHD repair project was to protect human life while reducing the risks of impact to the way of life, the economy, and the environment of our communities. One benefit from the completed HHD repair project that is especially important to my Treasure Coast constituents is that it increased the capacity of Lake Okeechobee to hold water without risk of dike failure, which in turn should reduce the need for damaging discharges. At least, that is how the project was sold to me each time the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) came to Congress to ask for federal funding.

As you are aware, the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule for 2008 (LORS08) outlines the integrity issues for the HHD indicating states limited potential for failure with lake elevations lower than 18.5', whereas analytical studies indicate that the HHD would likely fail at multiple locations if the water level reached 21'.

As a result of the completion of the HHD repairs, the USACE should have reassessed this risk threshold; however, when I asked this question at the Rivers Coalition meeting, I was told "*I can't answer your specific question if you're looking at what does the new dike assessment say, and what's the elevation that's risk of critical failure. I don't have that answer today*". As taxpayers who funded this repair project, as well as a community that is detrimentally affected by discharges, we were owed this information when the project was completed.

Please respond no later than March 8, 2024. Our Treasure Coast community is currently being decimated by discharges from Lake Okeechobee that you initiated, so time is of the essence. Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Mast', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Mast
Member of Congress