



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Gayle Harrell

District 83

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Governor Rick Scott
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Fl. 32399

Dear Governor Scott,

As you know, the Treasure Coast has experienced incredible devastation as a result of the recent toxic blue-green algae invasion on the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon. The releases from Lake Okeechobee are a direct contributory factor in the development of these toxic algae blooms. There are mats of toxic algae clogging our marinas, canals and even our beaches. Our environment, economy and the health of our citizens are being threatened.

The State of Florida has taken significant steps to address the releases from Lake Okeechobee within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan expending over \$2 billion since its inception and this past year passing the Legacy Florida Act. It requires that 25% of Amendment 1 money or at least \$200,000,000 per year and over \$4 billion over 19 years be allocated to restoring the Everglades. Most importantly under Legacy Florida, priority must be given to those projects which will stop the releases from Lake Okeechobee. As a result of the passage of Legacy Florida, South Florida Water Management District will now have the resources to address this critical problem.

Given the level of crisis our estuaries are facing, I urge your immediate action in addressing this situation. Currently, the 20-Year Plan Integrated Delivery Schedule does not call for identifying water storage south of Lake Okeechobee. I believe that we need to identify **all** areas that can hold water to reduce the harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee and strongly encourage you to use available resources provided by Legacy Florida to purchase the appropriate land for increased conveyance, storage and cleaning of water **both south and north** of the Lake as well as using lands already in state or water district ownership (e.g., Holey Land and Rotenberger Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). The independent technical study done by the University of Florida Water Institute supports this approach and identified the need to purchase between 11,000 and 129,000 acres of additional land between the Lake and the EAA, depending on the mix of storage and treatment options.

I would also ask that you direct the SFWMD to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to expedite the planning process and act concurrently in identifying storage opportunities to the south as well as to the north of Lake Okeechobee. We need to work concurrently with both regions to find additional storage. We are in a state of crisis and cannot delay the planning process.

In addition, please direct SFWMD to further research and evaluate new technologies that may be available to address this crisis including technologies to reduce the nutrient load of phosphorus and nitrogen in Lake Okeechobee and the water that is released into our estuaries as well as new methodologies available for water storage, deep well disposal, Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) and dispersed water management (DWM).

Sen. Negron has made the reduction and ultimate elimination of harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee a priority of his Presidency of the Florida Senate. He is initiating a discussion with leading experts on the best ways to accomplish this goal. I share his goal and look forward to working with you and Sen. Joe Negron to address this critical problem.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Gayle B. Harrell, District 83
Florida House of Representatives

CC: South Florida Water Management District
Army Corps of Engineers