



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON
President

November 17, 2021

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

Dear Colonel Booth,

Congratulations on your recent transition to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District. My Senate colleagues and I are incredibly grateful for your prior service to our nation in Afghanistan, during what was certainly a very challenging and dangerous time.

As you begin your work as district commander and the Corps finalizes the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual and associated environmental impact statement, I am writing to share a concern that in the final materials it should be clear the schedule being developed is not overly prescriptive in a way that infringes on Florida's ability to allocate water. Specifically, express language relying on the South Florida Water Management District's authority to allocate water as the lake approaches the Water Shortage Management Line needs to be included in the lake schedule and acknowledged in the environmental impact statement.

Lake Okeechobee is the heart of the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project and of an interconnected regional aquatic ecosystem. The lake has many purposes, including agricultural and urban water supply, flood protection, fulfilling Seminole Tribe water rights, recreation, and fish and wildlife preservation and enhancement. The 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule was a painful but necessary schedule to protect the integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike. Now, with the improvements to the dike, and the expedited storage both north and south of the lake, we look forward to a significantly improved hydrological system.

Thank you for your consideration of this concern. I look forward to working with you moving forward and to seeing you later this week as we mark the completion of the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area. Welcome home and welcome to the Sunshine State.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wilton Simpson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wilton Simpson