

County of Monroe
The Florida Keys



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mayor Michelle Coldiron, District 2
Mayor Pro Tem David Rice, District 4
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Mike Forster, District 5

Monroe County Board of County Commissioners
The Historic Gato Cigar Factory
1100 Simonton Street, Suite 205
Key West, FL 33040
(305) 292-4441 – Phone
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Colonel Andrew D. Kelly
Commander, Jacksonville District, USACE
701 San Marco Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Drew Bartlett
Executive Director
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

May 19, 2021

Dear Colonel Kelly and Executive Director Bartlett:

On behalf of the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners, I wish to express our thanks for ensuring broad stakeholder engagement during the process to update the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). The new operations schedule, which will take into account the completion and operation of new infrastructure including: the Herbert Hoover Dike, CERP's C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir, C-44 Reservoir and Storm Treatment Areas will need to provide balance between the needs of the environment and our growing communities.

The County has a vested stake in the ultimate management of Lake Okeechobee because the southern end of the Everglades ecosystem, including Florida Bay, is highly dependent on upstream conditions and flows. Fundamentally, a healthier Lake Okeechobee and Everglades ecosystem translates into a healthier Bay.

Understanding that maximizing ecological conditions may be limited by other authorized project purposes like flood control and water supply, improving system-wide ecological conditions should still be maximized to the extent practicable in the new LOSOM.

As the South Florida Water Management District and the US Army Corp of Engineers finalize the tentatively selected plan for LOSOM, Monroe County endorses an operational schedule that ensures protection of the ecological health of the Lake and increased dry season water flows to the southern end of the system and Florida Bay.

Respectfully,

Michelle Coldiron, Mayor

Cc: Monroe County Commissioners