



**Transcript of Briefing on Lake Okeechobee Pollution  
Rep. Patrick Murphy (FL 18) and Rep. Trey Radel (FL 19)  
October 3, 2013**

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you all very much for being here this morning. This is an unbelievable turnout. A lot of you, I know, took a bus up here, a lot of you flew up here and a lot of you took a lot of money out of your own pocket to be here. That's critically important. We have a couple members of Congress with us today and hopefully there will be several more as we get into the day and I am going to make sure they understand what you all did and the time you took to come up here. That will go a long way in selling our story and making sure that this institute understands how important this issue is to all of us.

Again I just want to thank everyone for being here today, and I am thrilled to see so many active members of our community here fighting alongside me to bring this issue to Congress. It is really only because all of you that this is taking place. It is because of this activism that we have this opportunity today. I'm honored not only to represent you, but also to stand with you as our community calls national attention to this crisis in our waterways. I'm also pleased to be here with my good friend Congressman Trey Radel and my other colleague Congressman Alcee Hastings.

The effects of the polluted waters touch everyone in our communities regardless of party affiliation, and it is important to come together in a bi-partisan, bi-coastal effort to address this issue. Do not let this divide here say anything about Trey and I not working together on this issue. Throughout the day, other members of Congress will be coming into the room to learn more about this ongoing problem and to hear your concerns. Although some may only be here for a short amount of time, they will see what a presence we have here today. They will see the devastation in our waterways and these photos here and some of the PowerPoint slides and the importance of this issue will not be ignored.

I know that with the shutdown, there were concerns with this meeting being cancelled. While we are addressing the shutdown, I still remain focused on the issues of great concern to the community, especially the problems plaguing our local environment. This is simply too important not to move forward with. And although federal agency officials who were affected by furloughs are not able to join us today, we are recording this entire briefing to share with them. We will also take this transcript and enter it into the Congressional Record to be delivered to every single member of the House and the Senate to bring this matter to their attention. I do not have to explain to anyone who travelled here from Florida how serious this is for St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee and those areas and those waterways.

For those of you who do not live in our community, you will see today the dramatic pictures of clear blue water inundated with dark brown plumes, plagued with bacteria and pollutants. Our local economies depend on tourism dollars and the success or failure of small businesses is directly connected to the health of the St. Lucie.

The St. Lucie Estuary is part of the Indian River Lagoon, known as the most bio-diverse estuary system in the continental United States. Yet, we watch as these harmful waters severely damage this rare and precious habitat.

The health of the St. Lucie is not only vital to the economy and environment; it is vital to public health. The bacterial levels were so high this summer that local health officials deemed the water unsafe to contact. In fact it was deemed toxic in three different places. This led local papers to deem the summer of 2013 as "the lost summer." The situation has reached such levels that national media covered our polluted waters just this week. I want to thank the media for their understanding of the seriousness of this issue and providing great coverage, calling attention to this crisis since lox opened in May. I appreciate them coming to Washington, DC to hear this important meeting.

This issues, however, is not new. This is a problem that has been going on for decades. Our community is rightfully frustrated that year after year we watch the waters that we rely on for our livelihoods turn brown from bacteria and pollutants, and witnessing the deaths of crucial marine life. There is no denying that an environmental crisis is taking place up and down the Indian River Lagoon. Record breaking rainfall, out of date engineering, and urban and agricultural runoff are all contributing to a serious crisis in our waters.

We are here today to not only discuss the seriousness of the problem with the rest of Congress, but the solutions, both short term and long term that can only come from mutual understanding of the problem and cooperation of local, state, and federal entities. Solutions such as completing the Everglades restoration projects like the Indian River Lagoon South project and funding the completion of C-44 components of this project as soon as possible. To grant relief to the already battered St. Lucie Estuary is critical. We must also fight for quick and effective repairs to the Herbert Hoover dike that will allow for the safe retention of more water. Further, moving water south is a crucial component of the solution, and authorization of the central everglades planning project is an opportunity to lock down a working plan that the Army Corps of Engineers and Congress must not miss.

Florida also has the unique chance to act on an agreement with willing agricultural partners to purchase land south of the lake and help promote this initiative, and it is my hope they will act to do so. Prioritizing other helpful and innovative approaches are also crucial in this fight, such as establishing conservational land north of the lake to reduce run-off and promoting and funding water storage initiatives with local farmers. That is why this past spring I joined my colleague Tom Rooney in sending a letter urging the administration to support funding for the Everglades Headwater National Refuge and Conservation Area. Understanding that maintaining open land north of Lake Okeechobee is one of the most efficient and effective methods of bettering water quality and increasing water storage. That is also why I have been working with local agricultural leaders to explore innovative water storage programs. We must also act on short term solutions, such as moving as much water as possible out of the containment areas in the south to enable more water to flow from south of the lake and reassessing how much water can be held within Lake Okeechobee. Just last week I sent a bipartisan letter to the Army Corps of Engineers urging them to take these actions and help reduce these damaging discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee.

From my first days in office, this issue has been a priority. To this end, I have held numerous meetings with local, state, and federal officials, including the Army Corps of Engineers, and I have briefed the White House, House Leadership, and Senators to bring attention and advocate for real solutions to this crisis. I am dedicated to looking for and supporting real solutions to protect our precious ecosystem and the important role it plays in our economy and entire way of life. This includes continuing to press Congress to support ongoing Everglades restoration efforts like the C-44 and C-43 and ultimately moving the water in Lake Okeechobee south. With your help today, we can show other members why these projects are so vital to the region. No one person can make all these things happen. It takes advocacy and action at all levels of government. That is why I am pleased to have so many important voices in the room today who each represent a component of that solution. The presence of each and every one of you here means that you are committed to addressing this problem that has been inundating our communities for far too long.

Today we are going to have three panels that will help us inform other members of Congress about the importance of this issue, as well as discussing steps towards solutions of the problem. At the end of each panel, we will have time for community members to speak and ask questions be held to one minute each. If you have a question that are not answered during this meeting, I invite you all to fill out a comment card and we will follow up with answers to all of your questions. I am constantly talking about this issue to any colleague that is willing to listen, whether on the house floor, in meetings, or in the hallways. As many of you have seen, I have been bringing this bottle around with me. This bottle was first filled up by Senator Nelson and signed it right here. Mark Perry helped fill it up three weeks ago and I signed it here. The problem goes back of course much further than 2005. When members see this, it gives them a visual and understanding of how bad the water really is.

I hope today that the people that have been most directly impacted by this pollution year after year deliver this message loud and clear. To the people that can truly make a difference in changing this ongoing environmental crisis, and those people are you, each and every one of you in this room.

I want to move and be sure that Mr. Radel and Mr. Hastings have an opportunity here, and we want to hear from you all. So, with that, thank you again for being here, and I will pass it over to Mr. Radel.

*Rep. Trey Radel (FL-19):*

Patrick has gone over a lot of the technicalities we will talk about today. We will hear about that form our panels as well. One thing that I feel compelled to say to you is that we are in a government shutdown, and I'm sorry. I am sorry that we have a dysfunctional Washington. I am sorry we are in this position we are in. In these times of incredible pessimism, I hope that we can be a tiny ray of light and a hope of optimism. Just to share with you what has happened in Washington over the last several years, we have had wave classes of many democrats and Republicans coming in. But our freshman class is about evenly split. We meet every single day, and we have conversations every single day. We are in a bipartisan caucus called United Solutions that he helps spearhead, which is to just sit down and talk and have conversations with each other. I took my first few months here as a member of Congress to sit down with every Florida Democrat to say I am not here to yell at you or call you names, but to work with you. That is exactly what we are doing here, and that is why it is so great to see other members walking in now who will share, I hope, some of the same optimism.

I am optimistic also because you are here. You are paying out of your own pocket to be here, you are active, you are engaged, and this is how the process should work. You should be giving yourself a round of applause and be proud of yourselves.

I am a member of Transportations & Infrastructure Committee, and part of what we are going to be talking about today is WRRDA (the Water Resources Reform and Development Act). Again, we can go over all the technicalities and the panels will be laying out some of this. Also, other members of Congress can also help with the process of this. But look, there is something that I live by and I am a firm believer in. We in Florida clearly understand that a healthy environment means a healthy economy. It is something we see and live by every single day. Right now on our coast in Sanibel, Fort Meyers Beach and parts of Cape Coral are being devastated by these released.

Now, Patrick touched upon something too upon national news coverage. Again, why I am so happy to see other members of our Florida delegation is that this is an issue that effects all of our state. When people in Great Britain or Germany or Chicago or New York come and visit and see this, it is Florida. We do not want these trips to be cancelled. We want more people to come and enjoy our beautiful beaches and help our economy, and in effect help every single job we will talk about today. Form our massive ports that can be engaged in trade all over the world, to the server or busboy in one of the restaurants on one of our

beaches. Again, I hope that this draws attention to where we are at, and I hope it also gives you a little optimism that we in Congress can work together, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans and members here to serve you.

*Rep. Alcee Hastings (FL-20):*

I just want to thank you, Patrick and Trey, for organizing this meeting, and thank all of you, ladies and gentleman for being here. I am 77, and a native Floridian. I was born in Altamonte Springs. I fished the Kissimmee River before it was changed. My position is that it would have been better had we left it as it was, and I find it fascinating that the Army Corps of Engineers trying to put it back to how God put it there in the first place. All things considered, this is critical for all of us in Florida. It is a united delegation. The Florida delegations works actively together and we do not have anything more important than the WRRDA project that is coming down the pike for us and other Americans. The emphasis that we put on it today is going to be critical in us making sure that the leadership here and in the Senate. Thank you Patrick and Trey and thank you ladies and gentleman for being here.

*Rep. Ted Deutch (FL-21):*

Patrick and Trey, thank you for bringing this together. Thank you all for being here today, and know how much your presence means to us and our delegation

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you all. Our first panelist is Secretary Herschel Vinyard. He is with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and is the head of the state agency responsible for environmental management and stewardship. He has more than 20 years of experience in environmental law and business management. Before his appointment as secretary of the FL DEP, he served as Director of Business Operations for BAE Systems Southwest Shipyards. Before that, he practiced environmental law for nearly a decade at Smith, Hulsey, and Busey, where he counseled clients on state and federal environmental compliance and permitting. Thank you for being here, secretary, and the floor is here.

*Secretary Herschel Vinyard:*

Thanks you Congressmen Murphy and Radel for pulling us together. We had a similar hearing like this that Sen. Negron pulled together in Stuart, and what this gives us is an opportunity to share our passion and our sense of urgency with the folks in Washington, DC. I wish that our federal agencies were here today to hear and see first-hand how we feel about what is going on in Florida.

I wish the Army Corps of Engineers were here. I know that there are challenges in managing the system that we have on both coasts. We have lots of people and we have had lots of rain (records highs in June and July), which is typical wild Florida weather. Two years ago on the west coast, we had a drought. We were getting emails from a lot of folks that they want more water because they could not get boats out of the boathouse. So, it is a difficult system to manage when you have these wild swings in weather. It certainly impacts everyone of us in Florida. One of the things that Sen. Negron asked us to do at his hearing was focus on what we can do on the short term. I know that your constituents want answers and solutions now.

One of the things that we have come up with, is that we are directing water everywhere else we can right now and away from the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River. We own a lot of land and we are pumping lots of water in areas that do not normally receive lots of water so it does not have to go to those two critical estuaries. Since Sen. Negron's hearing, DEP Water Management District have been great partners, and have diverted 10 billion gallons of water away from those two critical estuaries. 10 billion gallons of water is a drop in the bucket, but that is what we have been able to do in a very, very short period of time.

The Governor directed DEP the ability to issue any permits that have to help solve these problems on an expedited basis. There is the Tamiami Trail, which is acting like a dam and preventing us from moving water south the way it naturally flowed. We had a permit application from the South Florida Water Management District, who wanted to knock a 200 foot gap in the Tamiami Trail to allow water to go somewhere other than St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee. I have with me Ernie Marks from DEP, and we issued that permit in 3 hours. So, there is a lot of water that would have entered Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie that is now going through the Tamiami Trail.

I do not want to get into long-term solutions, but I would rather just move to medium term solutions because we do not have the time for long term ones. You all know that the Governor announced with Congressman Radel on the west coast a commitment of \$90 million to raise the Tamiami Trail, essentially building a bridge span to permanently allow more water to move south. That will be over a three-year construction period, and we are excited about that. The Governor also announced in Martin County a commitment of \$40 million to expedite the state's portion of C-44. Congressman Murphy mentioned C-44, and for those of you all who do not know, C-44 is mammoth water storage and clean-up project and is a federal and state water district partnership. What we will be able to do with that extra \$40 million is accelerate the state's portion of that construction. We will be able to finish the state's portion 2 years early.

I am grateful to every one of you all for authorizing C-44 and I think that it will pay big, big dividends for the folks on the east coast. However, the federal government and Army Corps of Engineers do not have the funding for their remaining piece. They are working currently on a portion of that, and if you can all find the funds for the Army Corps of Engineers' remaining piece on C-44, it will pay big dividends for the people behind me. We have a similar project in Congressman Radel's district, known as C-43, which is another large storage and treatment area. Right now in the South Florida Water Management District is using the land that the state is already purchased to pump water out of the Caloosahatchee so it does not reach your estuary. One thing we would ask of you is that it needs to be authorized. It is currently in the pending WRRDA bill, and once authorized the federal government can then get involved in doing its share there. I think the Army Corps of Engineers is eager to get started on that.

Congressman Hastings mentioning the Kissimmee River. There is an ongoing project, which is the Kissimmee River Restoration Project. When God made it there was a significantly winding river. For whatever reason, we made a canal out of it and straightened it out. So, the natural function of that system where you have the plants that take up the nutrients, where you have a natural flood plain that we need as a state, was taken away from us. So, we have spent collectively a lot of money between state and federal governments to restore portions of the Kissimmee River. It is great to see that river restored. However, it is not finished. There is about a third of the river left and as you all may know there is something called a Section 902 fix, for which the Army Corps of Engineers needs additional spending authority to finish that last third of the Kissimmee River restoration. Once done, we will be able to store more water north of the lake and we will have greater nutrient uptake. Congressman, hopefully before you leave Congress you will be able to fish again on that stretch of the river in its natural state.

My recommendation to you all is to finish our projects. There has been a lot of time and money spent by everybody. A lot of very dedicated scientists and engineers have come up with these projects. Let us move forward, because we have CEPP right behind it. Those two acronyms mean an awful a lot to the environment and an awful lot to the folks behind me that we complete them. That is the end of my remarks.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

One thing too, you will hear funny words and acronyms used all day. We have been in Washington here a few months now, and we are still trying to figure out many of them. One of them you will here is WRRDA (Water Resources Reform and Development Act), which is something we have passed out of Transportation & Infrastructure, which is the committee I serve on with the gentleman I am going to introduce to you in a second. We will get into the details of that, which comes through on the promises that the federal government made a long time ago when we talk about the big umbrella of the comprehensive Everglades restoration project. C43 for our coast and us is a big part of that. I want to introduce two gentlemen who have just walked in, and we serve on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee together: Congressman Daniel Webster (FL 10) and Congressman Bill Posey (FL 8). If you could introduce yourselves and any ask questions you may have as well.

*Rep. Daniel Webster (FL-10):*

Thank you for letting me come, and it is good to see some of our friends from Florida again. I served in the legislature there for a long time and worked for a long time on the state end of the Everglades project. Many years ago, I served as the Speaker of the House during that time frame, and it has come a long way. Yes, there are promises left. Initially there was no federal money and only state money, and now maybe it is shifting a little bit. But I am very excited about the WRRDA bill and there is a lot of good things there that we were able to get forth that are going to help Florida, especially in getting ecosystems in one of the pilot project opportunities that will hopefully allow something that was brought to me by the South Florida Water Management District was being able to do the projects and contract with the Corps and let them do the oversight and that is a great opportunity. Some of the others like the 902, if the state is willing to fund all of it, and there may be other things we can do to fix some of these problems. I am excited about the opportunity of getting a bill out with broad, bipartisan support, and hopefully in conference we will make it even better. Thank you.

*Rep. Bill Posey (FL-8):*

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you to both co-chairs for their bipartisan spirit in hosting us today and bringing us together on this. You hear about a lot of acrimony in Washington and a lot of partisanship, but there are certain issues where partisanship is not involved. I'm proud to say this is one of them. I represent Florida's east coast, and Kennedy Space Center is the geographical center of my district. We have the Indian River Lagoon with severe water problems and St John's River. So everything that you are doing affects my constituents and I am grateful for the panelists being here and do not want to waste any more time talking about me. I want to hear from you. Thank you.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

I am going to let Congressman Hastings introduce our next guest because they go way back. So, I will let him have the honor.

*Rep. Hastings:*

Rep. Peter DeFazio is one of the most critical members to our efforts in reference to water resource development, and one of the most knowledgeable members in reference to those matters. But to show you sometimes how you don't know when we are working together, he is the ranking member of the significant [Transportation & Infrastructure] committee and the chairman of that committee is Bill Shuster went to Connecticut very recently. Schuster was there at a bocce tournament, and we had an opportunity in a leisurely setting to talk about many of these projects. To have the chair and ranking member there was a good visit to help us all. So, I am delighted that our colleague has joined us and ask him for his remarks.

*Rep. Peter DeFazio (OR-4):*

Thanks, Al. There aren't a lot of bipartisan things in Washington, DC these days as you have probably noticed from your chagrin and our chagrin. But this is an issue that rises above the current acrimony. The restoration of the Everglades and the benefits to provide to not only that incredible national treasure, but the problems it would solve for you on the east and west of the Everglades with the flows out of there, dealing with the nutrients issues, the exotic species, and restoring the flows. I have been here so long that I remember when we took this issue up initially in what was then called the Interior Committee and essentially made a promise that we were going to restore the flows, and I also sit on both committees of jurisdiction here that are called the Natural Resources Committee and the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee because of their jurisdiction over the Army Corps of Engineers. So, we have not delivered on the promise and it is long overdue. It is a difficult problem, obviously, and there are many interests and some conflicting interests dealing with major agricultural producers and others. But I believe we can and must get it done. I am very pleased to be here. Patrick invited me quite some time ago and invited me to come down and see the problem on the ground and we are working on that. So, I intend to push very hard from both committees to see that we finally deliver on the promise of the federal government to partner with the state of Florida and the people of Florida to restore a national treasure and give you the relief you need from the pollution and the other problems that are being caused. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Here is a very important person. This is Chairman Bill Shuster. He is the Chair of Transportation & Infrastructure, overseeing getting this WRRDA bill passed. Because of him, we were able to get bipartisan support to pass this through committee, and it will come to the floor.

*Rep. Bill Shuster (PA -8):*

It is great to be here today with you, and what a great turnout. I know that Trey and Patrick worked hard to get you folks here, and I think it is very important for people from the real world to come to Capitol Hill and visit with their members of Congress. These two young members are obviously working very hard in their first terms. Trey sits on the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and we work very closely together to develop WRRDA and is an integral part of that. Also, Daniel Webster serves on that committee and was very instrumental as we moved this bill forward. Florida was well represented on the committee on both sides of the aisle, and we heard often of the needs in Florida. That is why in this WRRDA bill there are many good things happening in FL, thanks to Trey's and Dan's work in the committee. As Peter said, transportation and infrastructure is a bipartisan issue. It is actually what I believe in the Constitution one of the few things the federal government should be doing, and that is the infrastructure starting with the founding of this country. There has been a federal role, especially when it comes to harbors, ports, and waterways. This was the good foundation for transportation in this country.

As I said, we worked very hard on the committee to produce a bipartisan product and went through a number of listening sessions from local stakeholders to industries and companies that have interests in the ports, harbors, waterways, and environmental restoration projects. We developed a bill that is very bipartisan. In fact, when it came out of the committee it came out on a voice vote, which says it was unanimous coming out of committee. We thought we were going to the floor next week, but because of what is going on it might be pushed back. I feel confident that we will have this completed and on the President's desk on a relatively short order. The bill contains a tremendous amount of reforms in it. Both Republicans and Democrats both saw the need to make sure we move these projects forward faster and I think anybody that runs any type of organization knows that time is money. So, we get this done faster and we can save money and get these projects closer to completion. The other thing in this bill that I want to make sure as we move forward in the next Congress is that we do a WRRDA bill every two years so that these things don't languish and lay on the shelves. This WRRDA bill was last done six years ago, so the pressure is going to be on us as a committee to make sure we do there every two years. That is historically what has happened and what is absolutely necessary. I appreciate the fact that you are here, and thanks to Trey and Patrick in a great effort in getting you here, and Trey and Daniel for doing a good job in making sure that Florida was heard loud and clear by the committee. Thank you.

*Rep. Ted Yoho (FL-3):*

Welcome everybody. My name is Ted Yoho, and I am from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District, which is Gainesville. I am glad that you are all here to address these issues that we can all work on together. What you will see is that we have got a strong Florida delegation and that we stick together when it comes to issues of Florida. So, welcome and I look forward to hearing from you.

*Rep. Murphy:*

Our next panelist is Mr. Ernie Barnett, who joined the South Florida Water Management District in 2005. He has more than 30 years of water resources management experience and public service, during which he contributed to several landmark environmental laws. During a 22-year tenure with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Barnett worked as a shellfish biologist, aquatic preserve manager, environmental administrator, water policy director, and ecosystem projects director. He has a broad understanding of the ecosystem issues in South Florida and I welcome him here today.

Thank you.

*Ernie Barnett:*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy. We are very much appreciative of the opportunity to be here. I think what you will here in my comments in complete agreement with what Secretary Vinyard has laid out. We have worked very closely together, as well as with our federal partners, local government agencies, and all of the stakeholders. What I will do in my comments is put a little more detail in a few of the issues to drive home the significance and magnitude of the issues we face in South Florida.

We have to start back into a little bit of history. The central and south Florida flood control project was built by the federal government and authorized in 1949 to deal with serious flooding issues that were the result of major hurricanes that hit our area. The system was built by a great federal and state partnership. We asked for the central and south Florida flood control project to be built. It did exactly what we wanted it to do, and it drained the landscape. It drained the landscape extremely efficiently to the point where it was designed to hold and accommodate the water supply and flood control for about 2.5 million people. As we move forward into 2014, we have over 7.5 million people who live within the South Florida water management district. Probably 5.5 million people directly rely on the central and south Florida flood control project for their water supply. They also rely on it for flood protection. Simple facts are that prior to the construction of the project, we had 4 million acres of wetlands, and today we only have about 2 million. We have the same amount of rainfall and run-off that hits our landscape, and the system does what it was designed to do, which is very efficiently and effectively drain the land.

Prior to the construction of the project, every drop of water that left the Kissimmee Basin flowed into Lake Okeechobee. It either evaporated or spilled over a little shallow levy in the south and flowed into the Everglades. The way this system was designed and engineered and is operated, about 85% of the water that now leaves the lake leaves through the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries. That is unacceptable. We have known as water managers that this is unacceptable, and have been given strong direction by Gov. Scott, Sen. Negron, and the state legislature to deal with. The Secretary laid out some interim actions to take off some of the pressures on the estuaries, but we do need some long term and very weighty solutions going forward.

The best thing we can do we believe is to continue the interim actions that Gov. Scott and Sen. Negron directed us to do. The Secretary is correct that since Sen. Negron directed us to find emergency actions, we have moved over 1 billion gallons of water out of the lake. Thanks to the legislature and Secretary bringing forward a legislative amendment, we amended our budget in midstream and now have enough funding to continue those emergency operations through the end of the wet season and through the end of the calendar year to continue to pull as much water as we can out of the southern end of the everglades to make room for more lake water to flow through the storm water tributaries and into the water conservation areas. We believe that is a very good interim and immediate action that we can do, but urgency is of the issue.

We could not resonate more the comments of the secretary to finish the projects that we have started. I will give you a couple of examples. The Indian River Lagoon South project was designed to handle the local basin run-off that occurs between Lake Okeechobee and the Estuary. About 50-60% of the runoff that we see in a very wet year comes from those areas. The combination of a reservoir and a storm water tributary was designed to deal with that. Our partners in Martin County put up more than \$75 million dollars they bonded themselves to help facilitate the land acquisition needed to do those projects. The Florida legislature, the Governor, and the leadership in the House and Senate, have continuously since 2000 provided significant funding for Everglades restoration to the tune of over \$1.8 billion. Of that, we have invested over \$200 million to buy the real estate we need to finish the Indian River Lagoon project. You have a local sponsor, a legislator, political leadership in Florida, and governor that really want to see these projects done. Also, Martin County, a local government with [a contribution of] \$75 million for a federal project, is remarkable. We need to finish the Indian River Lagoon South and C-44, C-23, C-24, and C-25.

The Governor came forward with a bold plan working with the Secretary's leadership to deal with water quality. The cleaner we can get the water coming out of the lake, the more water we can move south. We have already invested \$1.6 billion in water quality improvements alone since 1994. We have stepped forward in the legislature, and thank you Rep. Caldwell and Sen. Negron for your leadership. The legislature passed the Governor's water quality plan \$880 million that the state will be investing over the next 12 years to meet a very protective water quality standard for the Everglades so we can continue to send water south.

To keep projects that we have to get done, there is a dam at the end of the system. You hear about the Tamiami trail blocking the flow. The Governor stepped forward with Sen. Negron by his side and Rep. Caldwell and announced a \$90 million over the next three years to do the next additional bridging of 2.6 miles at Tamiami Trail. In order for that to work, we need to complete the modified water deliveries project to Everglades National Park. Rep. Dante Fascell and the 1989 Everglades Park Expansion Act with modified water deliveries authorized it, which would move 4000 CFS through the south end of the system.

We are one contract away for another project to allow it to go forward, which is Contract A of the C-111 project, and we are here to make sure that that gets done. That will allow us to begin to pull the plug at the bottom of the bathtub and allow more water to drain south and restore that more historic flow.

Lastly, the other project we have to finish is the Kissimmee River. The Kissimmee River project is a great partnership between the state and federal government. Since its authorization, the state of Florida has acquired 100,000 acres of flood plane lands. Now, envision this: it is 22 miles of river where we will restore the back fill of the flood plain, and it is 2 miles wide. That amount of natural storage is equivalent to probably 75,000 acres of storage, which is probably a \$500 million reservoir. So, instead of building another reservoir, let us finish this restoration and get this dynamic storage.

The Secretary also mentioned the other benefit is the removal of tens of thousands of metric tons of phosphorus each year flowing to those flood plains. I will wrap up by saying thank you to Chairman Shuster and each and every one of you for holding this meeting and a particular thanks to Congressman Webster for being supportive in bringing some of our amendments forward. We also thank both chambers for having the four projects included in both bills so it is not a conference issue, and thank you for working that out up front. They have all been mentioned, but it is the C-43 that will provide benefits to Congressman Radel's district and the valuable relief to the Caloosahatchee, just as the C-44 is doing on the east side. The Biscayne Bay, the coastal wetlands, the Broward water preserve area, and C-111 spreader canal are four of those projects that are listed.

Now, the critical importance of that to this issue we are facing today with all of the releases out of the lake is the state of Florida has previously invested in real-estate and construction \$415 million that we would get credit for once these lands are certified as part of the project's authorization. This is important to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee because it is all part of our cost share to allow the Army Corps of Engineers' construction to go forward. So, thank you for that.

Lastly, as the Secretary has mentioned, we have had staff working very diligently to complete the Central Everglades Planning Project, and it will bring another 200,000 acre feet of water south and we are very appreciate that Congress is considering the possibility of allowing projects that have completed chief's reports within the next 6-12 months to also be considered for potential authorization because this is a key piece of the overall ability to flow more about south.

Congressman Murphy gave me that wonderful introduction, and the first thing that he said was that I started out as a shellfish biologist. I am a biologist by training and I care very passionately about the estuaries. The way this central and South Florida Flood Control Project has been designed, we know on average over 30 years we will have about ten of these events. That is a one in three period of occurrence. As a biologist, it breaks my heart to see what happens to our estuaries when this happens. What you will see is that from the agencies, local governments, and all the way up our political leadership is a strong will to reduce those amounts of frequencies and send more water south. We have the ability to capture, treat, and store water, but we just need the authorization and funding to move these projects forward. Thank you for all of your support.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you. We are lucky again to be joined by another important member of Congress and the ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Mr. Rahall is here. He has some remarks. The floor is yours, Mr. Rahall.

*Rep. Nick Rahall (WV-3):*

Thank you, Patrick. I do want to commend Rep. Patrick Murphy for the tremendous job and tremendous leadership that he has done on this issue, as well as the rest of your Florida Delegation. These gentlemen have taken this issue and approached all of us in this body in a manner that does show the importance of this project to their home state. I also commend those that have come from Florida, and the mayors, county officials, and those here presenting testimony, which is going to be very important from us. I know you have heard from our chairman, Mr. Schuster, and as the ranking member for Transportation and Infrastructure, I can only sing praise for the manner of the way he has conducted himself as chair of our committee in a bipartisan fashion. He has reached across the aisle on both the member and staff level. We have developed a WRDA bill, which I'm sure you are familiar. While there are no earmarks in that legislation, it does not renege on the congressional responsibility given to us by the Constitution to scrutinize these projects and make the ultimate decision ourselves coming up from the Army Corps of Engineers. We know this is an effort to authorize the Central Everglades Planning Project and an ongoing core study, which is very important to us on the committee as well. You are working very hard to work out all the technical issues to get this authorized, and we have set up a process in our WRDA bill to ensure that Congress does have the pressure to authorize a new bill more frequently. That is a goal in this bill that Chairman Shuster and I brought before our committee and are waiting for action by the full House. Again, I just want to commend Patrick Murphy for the tremendous job that he has done. He has visited with me personally on this project, and I thank all of you for your testimony today.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Our next panelist is Dr. Tom Van Lent. He is currently the senior scientist at the Everglades Foundation, where he works on providing scientific and technical support to non-governmental environmental organizations supported by the foundation. He has worked at the South Florida Water Management District, Everglades National Park, and as an assistant professor at South Dakota State University. Thank you for being here.

*Dr. Tom Van Lent:*

Thank you, Mr. Murphy. First, we would like to especially thank the entire Florida delegation for their bipartisan work on this. We especially like to thank Mr. Radel and Mr. Murphy for convening this hearing in Washington to give us a voice and talk to you about these very important issues to Florida and to the nation.

So, as I talk about the way forward, I think it is very important to first focus on two problems. We have two problems in the estuaries: one is a water quantity problem and the other is a water quality problem. It is kind of important to separate the two because when we come to Congress, we are going to be focusing on that water quantity problem. That is the federal jurisdiction, and the water quality problem is on that we will be talking to with Secretary Vinyard and the many members of the Florida legislature, as it is primarily a state issue.

On the water quantity issue, I think Ernie basically laid out the problem. The Everglades used to work by water coming into the lake and spilling out and going south. When they built the central and south Florida project, they reengineered the whole system so now the water primarily goes out to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuary. It was designed to work this way. That is the sad fact and why we get these events about once every four years since this project was built beginning about 1960. But that is a joint federal and state partnership that we are committed to work out, and that is why we are here talking to you about fixing the Central and South Florida Project so it is no longer designed to dump water into the estuaries, but designed to put water back where it should go.

So, in terms of short terms solutions, I am just going to tell you that I appreciate all the efforts that the district and state is doing, but you are just trying to squeeze a few extra drops out of this lemon. It is difficult to fundamentally change how it operates and we are at the mercy of the rain. I appreciate the effort, but the real solutions are going to be these long-term solutions that redirect the flow.

The long-term solutions are these projects that work in the local basin that Ernie has talked about, which are the C43 are the Caloosahatchee and Indian River Lagoon project, and the St. Lucie Basin, but also the Central Everglades Project which moves that water south. That helps us recreate how the Everglades used to work. That benefits not only the estuaries, but also Everglades National Park. It is in the federal interest of why we should do this, and it is a very important new outlet to the south.

The Everglades restoration was a project undertaken by Congress in 2000. In 2007, Congress authorized three projects, and all of those are under construction right now. There are four projects being considered in the water resources act, being considered in front of Mr. Rahall and his committee. But there is one more, which we think is important, which is the Central Everglades Project (CEP).

It is very important to talk about what the benefits are. If you have to think about one thing when you look at an estuary, you would focus on the salinity. That is sort of the one thing you look at to say if the Estuary is better or worse off. This (on the screen) is a metric that looks at how many times I have too much fresh water or too little fresh water in the Caloosahatchee. We would like these occurrences to go down to zero. The C-43 project's primary benefit is to reduce the number of times when there is not enough fresh water. It does a tremendous job at that, and that is why it is a very important project. We appreciate the Committee's efforts, Mr. Radel especially, to get that project authorized. However, it does not help as much as we would like in solving the problem of too much water. It reduces the number of times we have too much water by about 14%. With the Central Everglades Project we have another 14% reduction, which is still not enough. To eliminate these large discharges of too much fresh water, we need to send the water south.

In the St. Lucie, you have a similar situation. Today we have these events of way too much fresh water. Some of it comes from local basins, and some of it comes from the lake. If we complete the Indian River Lagoon project it is a major help and is especially important in that it reduces by about 15% these discharges, but if we had the Central Everglades Project, we can reduce that by another 41%. The reason is that we are not storing our way out of trouble, but opening an outlet and letting water flow south. That is where the real benefits come.

The reason that this is in the public and national interest is that these projects benefit Everglades National Park, all of the Everglades, a number of federal lands and waters. This is something that benefits everyone in south Florida. The C-43 in front of the committee for authorization and the Indian River Lagoon (C-44) is getting appropriations. The state has committed to even expedite that. All of these are major steps towards helping with the solutions, and we appreciate the state stepping up and moving that forward.

But, to fix these problems long term, we are going to need more land for storage and treatment, and we need to move more water south. I would summarize by saying Mr. Murphy did a wonderful job in laying out the steps forward both the interim term and long term. You really have an excellent agenda and road map for how to solve this problem. We sincerely appreciate your efforts and whole-heartedly endorse what you have laid out. Thank you so much for your time.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy :*

Thank you. I want to thank all the panelists for their time, and I want to defer to my colleagues if they have any questions for the panelists, and then I want to open it up to the floor.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

I have a quick question for you, Ernie. We see the leadership you have given at the state level. How can the Army Corps of Engineers get out of the way? We are not here to take shots at the Army Corps of Engineers and quite frankly, sometimes they are relegated to the responsibilities Congress has given them over the years. That being said, how can we facilitate to get the Corps out of the way?

*Ernie Barnett:*

Well, I think one of the things that has actually been discussed and included as a potential amendment is to allow the local sponsor to do the contraction of projects. We have a long-standing track record of being able to build a lot of infrastructure. We have built 57,000 acres of storm water treatment areas and all on time and under budget. We have been able to demonstrate that. Also, the concept of a block grant has been discussed and that language would also be very helpful. I believe the stat has proven that we are capable, responsible, and fiscally responsible. If the project is authorized and the money moves like a traditional block grant to the state to allow us to build it, we are very confident we can get the job done and eliminate a considerable amount of potential overhead. Those are some of the few ideas. Secretary, is there anything you would like to add?

*Secretary Vinyard:*

Congressman, I support Mr. Barnett. In fact, I think when we first met we spoke with you about this block grant concept. Fortunately, water management does not have 200 years of regulation piled on top of one another. So, they are able to move a little faster. The goal of everyone in this room is to get these projects built so that we can give the environment some relief. So, I am spending the rest of my day talking to members of Congress supporting this block grant concept so we can get the money into projects.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

On that same note, there has been a lot of talk in local press in my area about switching the management of the Herbert Hoover Dike from the Army Corps of Engineers to the South Florida Water Management District. Can you all talk about that and give us your thoughts?

*Secretary Vinyard:*

I think it is great out of the box thinking. My caution is that I would not buy that as is. There is a significant amount of repairs that are needed, and perhaps it would be a better discussion once some additional work has been done on the dike. Floridians are at risk right now because of the condition of that dike.

*Ernie Barnett:*

I agree. The magnitude of the problem is that it is a 140-mile levee and Congress has been funding a significant amount of work and I believe there was \$130 million in last year's budget. This is just an old earthen dike of lake bottom piled up 30 feet high and 250-foot wide mound of dirt to hold back 730 square mile lake. There is a lot of pressure on that old earthen structure and the cost to repair that is in excess of \$1 billion. So, it is an offer like taking a broken car that does not drive. I think to repair that broken levee should be Congress's highest priority. One last piece of information is that you hear a lot about storage. It is even better to send water south than have it flow, but storage is very important to these issues. One foot of water on top of Lake Okeechobee is 500,000 acres of storage.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

What is the plan for C-44? How much would that hold?

*Ernie Barnett:*

It is around 80,000 acres. C-43 is a little larger.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

We have two more members who just joined us. Two folks that understand these issues, but are also here to hear from you all.

*Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-17):*

I want to thank Patrick and Trey for hosting this meeting today. My district used to include the Indian River Lagoon and now I am more in the middle of the state and what many of you would probably consider the source of the problems that we are having. So, I think it is important that I try to be part of the solution. Obviously we have a lot of work to do, and I know that you all are working very hard to help us figure out what the solutions would be. But as I said before, nothing would give me more pleasure than would someday look back and say that we actually solved this problem. With Trey and Patrick taking the lead on this, I think our chances are better than ever.

*Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-25)*

Thank you. Let me also just echo what my colleague, Mr. Rooney, just said. First, I want to thank both of you for your leadership. This is an important meeting, and this is not the extent of your leadership, so thank you for your involvement. This is an issue I have been involved with for a long time and many of us have been working on it for a long time. On the Appropriations Committee, we have \$96 bottled away. We just have to get back to the appropriations process for the dike. I will tell you that unites the Florida delegation, but it is important to hear from those of you who are there to make sure that we are on the right track. We can always do more, and we can continue to do more. The good news is that we are united on that. Thank you all very much, and thank you both in particular for your leadership.

*Rep. Bill Posey (FL-8)*

Other than the overhead that we saw solutions, are there any other legitimate out there that are not on the list?

*Dr. Tom Van Lent:*

This is not the first time that we have been we have been in this situation, and we have experience in just trying to find as many possible things we can do. I think we are further along than ever at doing what we can in the short term, and also identifying those long-term things so we are not coming back here every four years. People feel like we are on a track to an end goal.

*Ernie Barnett:*

When we formulated the original comprehensive Everglades restoration plan, the one single element that provided most relief to the estuaries was the implementation of aquifer storage and recovery wells. That is something we are still evaluating. It is very complicated, but basically capturing lake water and pumping it down into a series of wells around the lake, and into a deep aquifer, and then bringing it back up at a later date. We are not quite ready to launch a full implementation of that kind of technology, and additional testing is required. In all the modeling that has been done, that is probably the one that would provide the most benefit. I think we are on the right track and we have a couple of billion dollars for projects to move forward. We have 43,000 acres of real estate between C-43 and C-44 and other project footprints that we need to build the infrastructure and reservoirs. My plead would be to concentrate on completing the authorized projects that we have, the additional projects we have asked to be authorized, which all provide significant benefits to the ecosystem. This is a 30-year implementation schedule and this will take time. Some of these other technologies will vet themselves and either become viable or we need to find alternatives.

*Rep. Bill Posey:*

To your point, I think whatever is done needs to be done on a priority basis with whatever is most important first. What else is there that we are going to hear about, and maybe jockeying for a priority that is not on that list just to be prepared. The other thing I wondered about is what solutions are we going to hear about that you do not think are appropriate?

*Secretary Vinyard:*

I do not know what other comments you may hear after you leave this room. I am relatively new to this process, but one benefit is that I have a fresh set of eyes. I think we have gotten ourselves in a bind in that we lurch at the solution of the day and flavor of the month. As Mr. Barnett and Dr. Van Lent said, we need to finish these projects. We know that they will give us benefit if we finish them. My caution to you as we maybe hear of new magic bullet solutions is that a lot of them have been vetted. Let us finish what we have on our plate today.

*Rep. Bill Posey:*

Well that is why I asked the question to see what else we will hear about, and what is really not a new idea and if it was vetted and why it was not a good idea. We would like to hear about those too. We have another issue that involves many of us and everybody in the United States is our space program. In the last two decades, we had over 24 missions to nowhere that were started where a lot of money was thrown in and abandoned. We do not want to do that with the restoration. We would like to see that everything is being considered and on track. As you said it is to a 30-year approach, we want to stay on the track. That is why I asked what else we are going to hear, and I appreciate the underground storage being mentioned as a potential.

*Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart:*

As I mentioned, we all recognize that the two of you have been great leaders in all of those. Frankly, it would be a disservice if I did not mention my partner in crime Alcee Hastings is here. In our delegation, when you think about the Everglades restoration, we started the Everglades Caucus. It would be a grave disservice if I did not recognize one of the true champions of this issues for longer than any of us would really like to talk about.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Maybe we can get a couple quick questions from anyone either for the panel or members.

*Community Question:*

What are we doing to reach out to the whole nation to help us agriculturally address these issues? We have agricultural schools across the nation, and what could do to reach out to everyone and get their input, not just out of Florida.

*Rep. Bill Posey:*

I think we are doing this now. Part of why we are all here today is to bring to focus the attention of the nation onto what we are doing and why it is important. The Everglades are a national treasure. Our beaches also, which goes back to the economy.

*Ernie Barnett:*

One thing that we are fortunate for in Florida is that we have the University of Florida, which has an incredible agricultural school. Through IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences – University of Florida) there has been extensive research in the Everglades agricultural area. For example, they have investigated different types of cultivars of sugar cane that can grow in wetter conditions. A lot of work has been done on crop rotations and those types of things. I know there is a network of researches that extends beyond the borders of the state of Florida. On the other side of the coin, I think that people might be very surprised by the technologies that have been implemented to reduce phosphorous and clean up water. There is a network at from Duke University to Oregon State, all the way back across the nation. We have had tens of millions of dollars invested in research to academia and others to push forward ideas to use natural based systems to cleanse the water. We have proven that to be very successful. So, there is a strong base. I would be happy to talk independently about other ideas, and we are certainly open to bring other viewpoints into our interactions with the agricultural community, but a lot of that work does go on daily.

*Community Question - St. Lucie Commissioner Chris Dzodovsky*

What we have not heard yet is nutrient reduction and reverse pumping of water from the agricultural sugar land into Lake Okeechobee. We have heard largely about water quantity, but quality is equally if not more important. So, removing fertilizers and pesticides from the water is largely what needs to occur. I hope we here that this from the next panel, but I would like to hear from the current panel as to how nutrient reductions would occur, especially with the reverse pumping form sugar lands into Lake Okeechobee.

*Secretary Vinyard:*

The nutrient issue is really plaguing our country. One of the things when I started at DEP I asked our water quality guys, "what is the number one issue our state faces?" They said, "nutrients." One of the things we did, with the help of the Florida legislature, was approve the most comprehensive nutrient reduction program in the country that now has to go through a process in which EPA approves that. Just last Friday, EPA approved another segment of those water quality rules impacting our estuaries. So, we are working very well with EPA in that they approved Florida's rules. As you might know, everything has to go through EPA as part of the Clean Water Act. One thing that we talked about at Sen. Negron's hearing and that we need to be mindful of is that in my short time being at DEP, one thing that causes progress to stop is if we try to attack the other person. Maybe that is what is happening in Washington right now. Nutrients are from all of us; it is from our waste water treatment plants, our septic plants, our pet waste that we do not pick up, from over fertilization of our lawn and improper techniques, and agricultural. We are all in this together. I would encourage folks to work together to find those solutions.

*Ernie Barnett:*

Specifically on the Lake Okeechobee water coming from the Everglades agriculturally, that rarely happens. 30 years ago it was standard practice when we thought farm fields would flood, we would pump water off of the fields into Lake Okeechobee. Lake Okeechobee collapsed and too many nutrients began to die. We re-plumbed the system and built the storm water treatment areas and now less than 1% of the water that went into Lake Okeechobee came from farm fields. That is why we have made massive investments to clean up the water going south. Most of the loading that goes into Lake Okeechobee comes from the basins to the north and the Kissimmee River, probably 97-99% on average. So, it is good to operate from a base of information. The farmers in the Everglades Agricultural Area have implemented best manager practices and have had great reductions. The last point I want to make is that we only operate the pumps in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers to back pump. Congressman Hastings has been a great champion of environmental justice. What we do not realize is that when the farmlands are flooding, so are our communities. Most of the canal stages south of the lake are higher than the farm fields, and we have very little margin of area for flood protection. We only do it when the canals are at 12 ½ feet and when we pump the water back in the lake, we are protecting schools, roads, families, and that is the way the system is designed to operate. It happens very rarely, and in this past event it only happened for a few days. I just want to make sure that is clear, and as the Secretary said, we need to focus our energy on the problems that exist out there and not pointing any fingers.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

One thing I would like to add that if we can put pressure on the EPA or of the other agencies up here, please let us know. Number one, we do not fight with each other about this issue and we would like to see the different agencies work together, whether it is local, state, or federal. Anything we can do to try to help them get and clear up some of that red tape and bureaucracy is something we would like to do. Again, that is a big part of today's panel. The more we can get members of Congress from all over the country to be able to send a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, USDA or White House, the stronger that letter will be. So, if you want to briefly comment on that or send us some recommendations.

*Secretary Vinyard:*

I will tell you that my relationship with this EPA has really been very, very productive. They have been supportive of Florida's efforts to reduce nutrients in our waterways. The scientists in Washington who work for EPA and the ones that reside in Atlanta, which is their regional office, have been very, very supportive because we have been taking a science based approach to resolving our nutrients.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you. I would like to recognize Congressman Tim Bishop (NY -1). He is also on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the ranking member of the Water Resources Sub Committee, so that will directly affect everything we are talking about today. He represents the eastern most part of Long Island. Thank you for joining us.

*Rep. Tim Bishop (NY -1):*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy. Let me thank you and Congressman Radel for bringing us all together this morning. Let me apologize for arriving late, and further apologize for leaving shortly. I have to get to a speech off Capitol Hill. I also want to thank my colleagues from Florida who are here and have been working on a number of issues associated with this problem for a while now. I do not know if Congressman Rahall made this comment when he was here, but we just passed out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on a bipartisan basis unanimously, a WRRDA. It is one of the most important pieces of legislation we can pass relative to the Army Corps of Engineers and the work they do. It will be the first one we pass as a Congress, we hope, since 2007. We hope to bring that legislation to the floor within the next two to three weeks, and we hope we will encounter the same kind of bipartisan support from the full Congress that we met in the Committee. That legislation authorizes four chief's reports for this Everglades project. That is a good thing, but now let me suggest to you what will be a challenge. That is, those four projects have a total federal cost of \$1.2 billion, total. The total construction budget for the Army Corps of Engineers for FY2014 for the entire country is \$1 billion. We are authorizing in the WRRDA 23 chief's projects that have a total cost of \$6 billion. So, that is set against a construction budget of approximately \$1 billion.

I think what is important for all of us to recognize is that we have water resources environmental restoration, waste water infrastructure, drinking water infrastructure needs all over this country that greatly and dramatically outstrip what the federal government is currently providing. So, one of the things I hope we can all do on a bipartisan basis, and there are lots of things on which the federal government expends money that reasonable people get disagree on, I hope that collectively we can come together and say that we have some really pressing and fundamental water needs that we must address if we are going to serve two priorities: economic development and environmental protection. I think this kind of gathering is enormously helpful and I commend you for bringing us all together. I am hopeful that collectively all of us here can recognize that one of the solutions is that the federal government has to step up to the plate greater than we currently do. If we can lock arms and go to battle with the appropriators so we can get that funding we need, I think we can advance ourselves.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Congressman John Mica is here. This is a pretty important man, and former Chair of Transportation and Infrastructure. Thank you so much for being here.

*Rep. John Mica (FL-7):*

Thank you. First, I have to thank Mr. Radel and also Mr. Murphy for assembling you all together and focusing on a very important issue. The Florida Everglades and water resources of Florida are a national treasure and protecting and preserving them, and making certain that water quality is attending to and being going stewards of our state and resources is very important. You have assembled some folks from Florida and members from other states. What you are doing that is critical to the process is educating members. I know we do not have the core representatives and we have the minor interruption of federal services, but we will get beyond that. It is actually sometimes good to have time like this because you probably would not have gotten as much time and focus to stop and think for a few minutes about where we are. This is a huge committee as you can see. They are not all here, but you have to make those folks aware of our needs and our issues. The other thing, to be frank, is that you are competing against a number of other districts. You are looking at a big dollar ticket too. This is half a billion dollars that you are seeking on one project, which the mayor of Sanibel and some others briefed me on. You have some great state leaders that Florida is awesomely blessed to have who are fiscally responsible that balance their budget and pay as you go. Here, we are charging everything and pay \$0.43 on every dollar we spend will be money on the lam. In two weeks they are going to ask for another \$1 trillion, and we are \$17 trillion in hock. At some point, that becomes unsustainable.

So one, we have to make our case, and two, we are competing against all these other districts. Having sat as Chair, I have been across the country in the last two years. In the Dakotas, where you have communities flooded with too much water, and some with not enough water. I have been down in New Orleans and the various ports that you can shut down commerce if you cannot dredge. So, there are lots of demands that you are competing against.

Let me also tell you something I never gave much thought to. We were at a meeting and trying to talk about improving the amount of money particularly for dredging our ports. That money all comes out of the Army Corps of Engineers budget. Somebody said that Florida is in a unique position in that we have many ports. We have Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Canaveral, and Jacksonville, Tampa, and you can keep going around. We are competing against states like Georgia with Savannah, Virginia with Norfolk, and South Carolina with Charleston. They have one major focus, which is where a lot of our money goes. So, we have a unique need and need lots of money. We need to be looking at mega porting on the west coast and other ports as we open the wider canal.

Finally, what is the plan? I think this is an expensive project and it will require long term funding. My suggestion was first do a delegation letter to get to the top of the priority list. Secondly, I would recommend that you look at longer term funding. You are never going to get \$250 million in one chunk. When you get a commitment, you already have your foot in the door to a degree. Again, meeting on a bipartisan basis to secure support and going to the leaders on the committee. Authorization does not mean anything unless you have the appropriations ask in this situation.

With those quick suggestions, I am happy to yield to the floor. We have one of our leaders of the House here and want to make certain he has an opportunity to participate. Thank you.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you. We have Lois Frankel who we will get to in a moment, but I want to yield the floor to Congressman Steny Hoyer. We have had a number of opportunities to discuss this issue. Steny, just so you know, many of these people have been on a bus for 15 or 16 hours that they chartered. They raised about \$8,000 in various forms such as carwashes to get up here. That to me means a lot that they are that committed to this.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Just a quick note, Patrick and I put this together, and it is so good to see the bipartisanship that we have. You know especially under Transportation and Infrastructure we have been able to do this. Just a quick thank you, you have always been very kind to me with time with you history here in this great institution. Thank you for your service and for always having an open door for me as well.

*Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (MD-5):*

Thank you very much. I went to Coconut Grover Elementary School and Coral Gables High School. I was supposed to be with Patrick a few days ago to see first-hand the damage that is being caused not only the man-made problems, but also by nature in the extraordinary rainfall. I want you to know the Leader is on her way over here. We just left a meeting, and Leader Pelosi will be here. This is a crucially important issue, not just for Florida, but also for our nation. This is an extraordinary resource, and Florida is a resource. I want to thank you for doing those carwashes to come up here. Saying democracy works is a little tough today, but I have been in office for 45 years. Democracy works. Democracy works because conscientious people take their time and effort to communicate their concerns. The Constitution calls it redress of grievances. You have a constitutional right to do that and a responsibility to your children, family, community and your environment, which is so critically important, and also, perhaps to the porpoise and others and to your lagoon, as the sign says. So, thank you all very much for being here. I will tell you, Patrick and Trey have us all focused like a laser on addressing this problem. I was elected to the Maryland State Senate in 1966, five months out of Georgetown Law School. I was elected in the State Senate in the state of Maryland. At the same time, Spiro T. Agnew was elected governor of our state. In his state of the union he said this: "the cost of failure far exceeds the price of progress." We need to invest in making this problem go away. You keep on, and we will keep on. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Lois is on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. She also is aware of this issue, but also wants to hear from all of you.

*Rep. Lois Frankel (FL-22):*

Thank you. First of all, thank you all for being here. Your being here for a very important health and economic issue is a reminder why we need to get this government back to work. Not to be political and I will speak for myself, but this shutdown is absolutely wrong. I am so sorry that you have to witness this. With that said, Trey Radel and Patrick Murphy are examples of what is right in this process to work in a bipartisan manner as we deal with a very important health and economic issue for our state and country. I also see Sen. Joyner and Sen. Negron who have joined hands also be here, and that is an example of bipartisanship. The governor's office is here and I thank them too. I just want to say as I look up and down this panel which is both Republican and Democrat, each one of us has worked, especially in the infrastructure area, have worked together. I see my colleagues Rep. Diaz-Balart, Rep. Posey, Rep. Rooney, and of course Rep. Hastings. I thank all of them. I am on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee with Rep. Radel, Rep. Posey, and Rep. Webster who is not here but has been an incredible partner to work with. I also want to say a special kudos to Patrick Murphy. He is using his youth to his advantage, because this guy works very hard. I just want to give my commitment to all of you to make sure we get it right and get this water cleaned up, and make sure that our most beautiful Everglades gets repaired as it should be. Thank you all for being here.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Leader Pelosi has just walked in. Thank you, Madam Leader, for being here today. The Leader is very familiar with this issue. I have had the chance to talk to her about it, as a lot of us have. Leader, just so you know a lot of these people got on a bus yesterday for about 15-16 hours and they raised money at a car wash, I think that was about \$8,000, to come up here. That means a lot to me, and I think to you and anybody in this institution. Just so you all know, I had a chance to bring this sample to the Leader's office a couple weeks ago. I put it on the desk and did not say anything. Half way through, she said, "Patrick, are you juicing? What is that?" I had a chance to tell her about this bottle and the history of this bottle. So, she certainly knows about it. Thank you for coming in and sharing with us. The floor is yours. Thank you.

*Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi:*

Thank you very much, Congressman Murphy, for the invitation to be here. Thank you, Congressman Radel, for hosting this important meeting. It is really a beautiful site. We have a bipartisan coming together of an issue – it is not an issue really, it's about our planet – and the participation from the community that is so affected by it. When Patrick Murphy came in with that bottle I was not sure what was going on. When he told me what that water was, it was really shocking. A picture is worth a thousand words, and that was a pretty scary picture. The fact that all of you are here is a tribute to how important the issue is. I am here to say, after hearing from Patrick and knowing something about the issue in advance, and Trey, thank you as well to be here in a bipartisan way with our colleagues, I think your being here and their support for this elevates this to an issue of national significance. There are some challenges we all have in our districts and we come together in a bipartisan way to protect our region and bring people from all sides, and that is good for our districts. That is a discrete, wonderful success. There are some that are about the integrity of the environment of our country and of our planet, and this is one of them. I am sorry we have the government shutdown for many reasons. Perhaps you can bring the officials who were supposed to be here down to Florida. When he first showed me that bottle of water from St. Lucie River I was shocked, but I want you to know that these advocates here have been very articulate on your behalf and Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie River is not a partisan issue. It is an environmental crisis that requires our immediate attention. So, I want you to thank Patrick Murphy. He is a brand new member of Congress and has been effective from the start. He comes with his youth and knowledge of the environment, and with his bipartisan spirit as a representative. That is his title, and his job description. He is a representative of the people of his district, and part of that is to work in a bipartisan way. Thank you, Trey, for your leadership and I look forward to working with you, Congressman Rooney, and others on this subject.

The Senator has arrived and I know we have an important panel, so I will submit the rest of my statement for the record. I just want to pay my respects, offer my support, and endorse what is happening here today. Thank you all.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

We are lucky to have Senator Bill Nelson (FL) here with us, who obviously knows this issue as good as, if not better than, anybody. Sen. Nelson, we have the bottle here today. You signed this in 2005. I signed it this year. Leaders Pelosi and many other members of Congress have seen it. I will say this just one more time that a lot of these folks chartered a bus, raised money at a car washes (about \$8,000) to come up here, and took the time and money out of their own pockets to get up here. That is we are here, and that is what we are here to do, which is to hear their voices and let them know we are working hard at the national level and trying to work with our state and local counterparts to get this solved. So, thank you for being here and the floor is yours.

*Sen. Bill Nelson:*

Many of you I have talked to at length about this issue over the course of years. The question of water quality in Florida, particularly in south Florida, was actually starting to be addressed about 25 years ago when Bob Graham was governor. You remember that over the years after we had lost over 2,000 people in that hurricane in the late 1920's. The idea was to get the water off the land: flood control. Of course, all the diking and draining that occurred for the next half-century was exactly that. Even so much so that the meandering stream called the Kissimmee River was cut into a straight ditch. Well, what happened over the course of that half century was that Mother Nature was not able to work to cleanse that water. So, now we are in this 40-year process called the Everglades restoration, which starts well north of Lake Okeechobee and proceeds south. We are now getting some of the evidence, and we see what is happening in the east in the St. Lucie, west in the Caloosahatchee, and further south, and what we see up the Indian River Lagoon, and what we see over in the area of Charlotte Harbor and places south including the Ten Thousand Islands, into Florida Bay, the Keys et cetera. So, we have talked about this for some period of time. We have got to continue the appropriations for the Everglades restoration. We have to keep the fire under the Army Corps of Engineers because we have to keep them caulked and primed in order to get their chief's report out in time so that it will not miss this next water bill, but we need pass a water bill called WRDA. We passed it in the Senate. We have the Everglades restoration in the Senate bill. We have got to get the House and the Senate to come together. Take for example east of the lake, where the water is coming out and ultimately gets into the St. Lucie. Well, it is not just the lake water that is causing all the damage. There is a lot of run-off that comes from around there. So, you need to clean it up. Well, there is a \$30 million canal being built off the north side of the canal, which flows into the St. Lucie. It is going to have a 9,000-acre cleansing area, but that is going to cost \$270 million. We need to get the money. So now, we are talking about appropriations and keeping the government open. We are talking about letting the process work. Go to the west, dumping out into the Caloosahatchee. There are way too many nutrients in there, and I am sure you have already had the testimony of what happens when there is too many nutrients. It is not only that bottle, but that has been going on for years. I grew up on the Indian River. When I was a kid that water was clear, but it is not now.

Go to the west of the lake and go to the Caloosahatchee. There is a project that is scheduled for a big holding area south of LaBelle. That whole project is going to cost close to \$500 million. We have got to have appropriations, but we need to have a water bill first that authorizes it. We have to get the Army Corps of Engineers chief's report in time before the water bill is signed into law in order that it can be a part of it.

So, here is what my ask of you all would be: keep up the pressure. Thank you.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you, Senator, for your time and knowledge on this issue and for sharing your thoughts. Thank you for passing that WRDA bill in the Senate, and we hope to pass it on our side as well.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

The good news too is that the Senator is a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. We have passed it by a voice vote with total support on both sides of the isle. With that being said, we will get this marching.

*Sen. Bill Nelson:*

Get it up in front of the full House, pass it, and agree to go to a conference committee so we can get a final product.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Let us hope we get to regular order and let us hope, as a not jaded, young, eternal optimist freshman, we get this government open too.

*Rep. Alcee Hastings:*

I wanted to make another observation. Another important member the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has just come in: my dear colleague and classmate, Corrine Brown (FL-5). But before I leave, I wanted to say three things and I will do so very briefly. I hope at some point, wisdom prevails and we have a person that comes as the Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers and stay there until the dam project is concluded. Every time we get one of them that finally understand, that person gets sent somewhere else. The previous one is in Afghanistan, would you believe, building projects there. It is kind of strange to me that that is the case. The other thing is we have incredible partners that we need to be mindful of in the Everglades and they are the Miccosukees and the Seminoles. Those issues need to be addressed and in every meeting we are in, we need to have their interests heard as well.

The other observation that I want to make is a little more controversial. That is, when we point those fingers, and a previous panel said we would be better served and I agreed to not do that, we need to understand, and let me give you 21 years of wisdom of working with farm interests, ranchers, the sugar interests, and the responsibility that they have shown. The very first time that I went into the Everglades to see some of their projects, we talked about the academic undertaking that are going on at the University of Florida and elsewhere. The fact is, the farm, rancher, and sugar people have been doing things on their own to reduce the nutrients. A lot of times they are made the villain without a clear understanding of what they are doing. So, I wanted to point that out to you. A final word is that there is going to be a future. Some of us will not be at that future. I recall coming to south Florida 50 years ago after having been born and raised in Altima Springs, near Sanlando Springs, near the City of Lakes and Orlando. I did say about fishing in the Kissimmee River, but I did not tell the story of where I almost drowned when my cousin and I were fishing. Our anchor broke, and he told me to jump off the boat and get the anchor. I thought the river was shallow, and I went down real quickly and have not forgiven him since. But one thing I hope we do, and what I did when I ran for the legislature 48 years ago, we should attend desalination in the state of Florida. We need public and private and intensive efforts in reference of portable freshwater. I thank you all for being here. Patrick and Trey, thank you for the opportunity to be with you. I also want to point out my good friends Sen. Joyner and Sen. Negron and other state legislators that I really think have done responsible work for all of us, and I am deeply appreciative for them.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Before we get to the panel, Ms. Corrine Brown. We work on Transportation and Infrastructure. She has been an integral part in getting this WRRDA bill out of committee with unanimous consent, doing this in a bipartisan way. If you would like to introduce yourself, the floor is yours.

*Rep. Corrine Brown (FL-5):*

Well, I really want to hear the panel. I am Congresswoman Corrine Brown, and welcome to your capital. This is where we work, and this is my committee room, and have been in here for 21 years. Alcee is in my class. I am very interested in hearing from the panel, and very pleased we are going to get a WRRDA bill which is very important to Florida, but also I am told we are going to get a coast guard bill, so I am very interested in what you have to day about the Army Corps of Engineers and what we need to improve that. I am really just here to listen. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Sen. Negron, you have been a key component in making sure that both of our coasts come together to address this issue at the state level, which is where we are. Sen. Negron is a native Floridian and currently a Stuart resident. He represents District 28. The floor is yours.

*FL State Sen. Joe Negron:*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Congressman Murphy and Congressman Radel for putting this together.

The first thing you should do when you are confronted with a problem is find out who the decision maker is. In life when someone tells you that a problem is so complicated that they cannot explain it to you, that is generally a reflection of their inability to communicate rather than your inability to understand, and it has probably been told to you either by a lawyer or theologian.

So, let us start from where we are. There is no dispute that the flood control acts passed by Congress from 1930 to 1962 provide the Army Corps of Engineers with the exclusive jurisdiction over Lake Okeechobee and the water control structures. They are in charge. They are the judge, jury, and executioner. Now, look at the body of water that they are in charge of. Lake Okeechobee is 662 square miles, and the fourth largest lake that is wholly contained within the United States. It is the liquid heart of Florida. I believe that the Army Corps stewardship over Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie estuary, and Caloosahatchee estuary has been and continues to be a complete, dismal, abject failure. In my view, the Corps has a long history of supporting environmentally damaging projects. Due to the time, I will mention two, but I could mention a dozen. One, the National Academy of Sciences reviewed the upper Mississippi project and reported that the Corps was not properly accounting for the environmental consequences of the project. The General Accounting Office, which as you know as members of Congress is our investigating arm, in 2006 found that the Corps' analysis are, "fraught with errors, mistakes, and miscalculations, and they have used invalid assumptions and outmoded data."

The good news is that we are at the right place. Only Congress can solve this problem. Only Congress can take away the authority of the Army Corps of Engineers to make all the decisions about these releases. They are the ones in control of the locks. So, I would ask that Congress consider doing three things. Number one, remove the jurisdiction of the Army Corps over Lake Okeechobee and turn those operations to the state of Florida. There is a precedent for this and they have done this in many other states. In fact, even on some projects in Florida. Secondly, they still need to complete the fortification of the Lake Okeechobee levee. They built it, they are responsible for it, and they need to complete that project on an expedited basis. In the interim while this action is considered, the 2008 schedule needs to account for the increased fortification. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to make these culverts better and to improve the quality of the levee, but they are not taken into account. We have a 1% chance of a breach. We have a 100% certainty that where I live on the Treasure Coast that our estuary and our water bodies will be destroyed, and on the west coast this will also happen by out the Caloosahatchee. I would also ask you to work with President Obama to direct the EPA to rescind the water transfers rule which creates an exemption to the Clean Water Act and allows the Army Corps to transfer polluted water from one body to another. Why should the Army Corps be allowed to do something that if you or I did it we would be arrested and prosecuted for environmental crimes?

If I can just talk briefly about what the state is doing, Gov. Scott has proposed \$40 million for the C-44. We have already cut the Tamiami Trail and have \$90 million to elevate 2.5 miles. Sen. Joyner is here, who serves on the select committee, and with me Sen. Benacquisto who represents southwest Florida has also worked closely with me. We are going to ask for \$100 million in this legislative session for the Everglades restoration. We also want to work on the C43, which effects southwest Florida.

As I was coming in today, a nice young girl approached me. Her name is Cecilia Taylor, and I think she is actually here in the audience today. She lives in Palm City, FL and came here with her parents. She is four years old. She gave me this oyster shell as a reminder of what this debate is really about. We have destroyed millions of dollars worth of oyster beds that Sen. Nelson, Congressman Rooney, and others worked hard to get into the St. Lucie River. They have been destroyed. The good news is that I am optimistic about the long-term future, but let us be clear who is responsible. The Army Corps of Engineers has been running this project for decades. They have failed, and they need to be replaced with those of us in Florida that we can vote for or against and people who have our best interest at heart. Thank you.

*Rep. Corrine Brown:*

Let me point out that this is an educational process, and we are not here to beat up on the Army Corps because it is a lot of blame. It is not just the Army Corps. So, party of what we need to do is educate members so that we can understand what other problems and what other solutions and what we need to do together because the state of Florida is not completely innocent. It is a lot of blame to go around, so let us just keep that in mind. If we want solutions, we need to try to understand and work together.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

I completely agree, and I pointed that our earlier that we are not here to villianize anyone at all, or any industry, any individuals, any people, and not the Army Corps. As I explained earlier, quite honestly the Corps was a direction from Congress in the past at the federal level for years before. Again, you are exactly right. Today is about focusing on the future and what we can do to improve.

*Rep. Corrine Brown:*

We are going to have an Army Corps bill in the next couple of weeks and one of the points that Congressman pointed out that once we get someone by law, they can only spend three years in an area. Maybe that is a change. So, we are here to work together.

*Rep. Tom Rooney:*

Joe, you talked about the jurisdiction of the Army Corps and how some other states have gotten waivers in allowing south Florida water management or whatever to take the lead on some of those projects. What about the funding for those states that did no longer give the Army Corps jurisdiction. Did they still get that funding, or did they block them out all together?

*FL State Sen. Negron:*

Thank you, Congressman Rooney. There have been different ways in which it has been done, and some the actual operation control of the structure has been turned over to a state or to a local government, but the Army Corps continues maintenance. In other cases they actually titled over projects to a particular state. This is what I would recommend. First of all, I do not want to work with people that are punching me in the face. First, stop punching me in the face, and then I will work with you. So, part of the solution is to say that the Army Corps is part of the problem. That is constructive. Secondly, what I would suggest in this issue is that the Army Corps finish the job. They built this dike and it is their job to complete it. The operations, the decisions about these releases and these complex water decisions, need to be made by the best and brightest scientists in Florida. Not by a federal bureaucracy of people who live in Jacksonville, Savannah, and Washington.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Congresswoman Sherri Bustos has joined us from Illinois. Congresswoman Bustos is also on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, so she has had a chance to vote on the WRDA bill and understands a lot of what is going on there. It is great to have you here. You are going to get tired of me saying it, but I cannot stress it enough to my colleagues. A lot of these people have been on a bus for 15 hours, they raised money to be here on their own, and this is a critical issue to all of south Florida and my Florida colleagues. But this is an issue, as Leader Pelosi mentioned, on the national spotlight. This is something that has been brought to the United States Congress, and hopefully we are all singing from the same hymnbook about how important this is. So, thank you for being here.

*Rep. Sherri Bustos (IL-17):*

And that is how government should work, right? Citizens getting involved in issues that are important to your own areas. I am here more than anything to say that I am a colleague of Congressman Murphy's, and we are both in the freshman class and we are very close. He has made me well aware of the issue that is important to you. Why that might be relevant to you is that I am on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and I have a very good relationship with our ranking member on that committee. I just want to give you a little bit of background on the committee about the chairman, Chairman Shuster, and the ranking member, Mr. Rahall.

The very first time I ever sat down with Mr. Rahall, he talked about the good relationship they have. So, you can see and feel the dysfunction out in this area because it is palpable. We work in a committee where the Democrats and Republicans work together. Patrick has made me well aware of your issue, and I am happy to sit down along with Patrick or anybody else, and have a conversation about this issue that is important to you. So, you here in this audience have a pipeline to the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and that is through Patrick Murphy and then through me. We will sit down together and make sure they are well aware of this issue. More than anything, I wanted to let you know that. We just did a pretty good job getting WRRDA through. It received bipartisan support. It was a voice vote, but it did have bipartisan support. We will work on getting that through and hopefully that can be brought to a vote once we get past this dysfunction here. We will work for you. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Two state representatives and good friends, Matt Caldwell and Heather Fitzenhagen. We are going to go ahead and start with Matt.

*FL State Rep. Matt Caldwell (HD 79):*

Thank you, Congressman. Thank you all for the opportunity to be here today. I believe as I think about the reason why I am here starts in three ways. One is that my role as Chairman of the Agricultural and Natural Resources Subcommittee in the Florida House. Every single one of these issues when you get to the structural accomplishments, they are going to come through my subcommittee. Also, I was proud to demonstrate what we have talked about today: the bipartisan nature of this issue. Last year as the House sponsor of the renewal of the Everglades Forever Act, it passed unanimously out of the House and Senate, renewing Florida's commitment to finish those projects. In a great irony, those projects were designed to address drought circumstances. Literally, from May 1 when we came home from the legislature passing unanimously a bill to address drought circumstances, we have now seen historic flood levels change the nature of the conversation. What I want to talk about with you today is built upon a lot of the comments you have heard today, is that this is a partnership. But in fact, it is not a partnership that began 30 years ago or 60 years ago, it started the very first year Florida became a state. We became a state and joined the Union in the spring of 1845 and in November of that year, the Florida Legislature asked this Congress for the ability to drain these swamps and overflowed lands for development. So, if my message was summed up in any one sentence, it is that this is not any one industry's problem, not any one person's problems, but it is all of ours as Floridians, and we own it. As a native son of that state, I feel an ownership of it perhaps ever more than many others might.

There are some facts that we just cannot change. That state that joined this Union had 100,000 people in the entirety of that geography. We have now put 18 million people on that geography. To expect it to look like it did when it joined the Union is an unrealistic expectation, and I do think it is worthwhile to point that out. So, if we agree that that is unrealistic, then we have to work together cooperatively on what we want to see accomplished. What is the end that we are beginning to implement here?

We fundamentally changed the system. This year's floods ostensibly look identical to the 1947 floods that brought the central and southern flood control project to bear. Mr. Barnett mentioned that we have a regular occurrence of issues with the estuaries, but holistically across the state and across the entire district, the rainfall we have had this year is an identical pattern to 1947. This project works. The project that we as Floridians asked you to build to protect us from devastating floods that destroyed farms, homes, cattle, and crops, works. Nobody has lost a home this year, nobody has died, and no one I know of has submitted a claim for agricultural loss.

However, we did not design a single facet of that project to address environmental concerns. Frankly, nobody lived in Sanibel in 1947, and same with the beaches at the end of the St. Lucie. So we have got to reverse engineer this system.

This is not new, and not something we all figured out when we showed up here today. The Corps was tasked with a restudy in 1989. The ultimate result was the SERP (Statewide Emergency Response Plan) authorization in 2000. We recognize the reverse engineering that has to be accomplished, and there is nothing really new under the sun here. We just have to finish the projects that we put onto the books. Frankly, if you remember, Congressman Radel, you asked me if I could really just wave a magic wand and what I would do. I would say just give us all the projects back because ultimately, despite what I believe are deeply committed intentions of our Florida delegation, I have lost most faith in the federal government in being an effective 50/50 partner in this process. As representative of the state, I am looking for the federal government to demonstrate that they can return to that real commitment of 50/50 partner to finish the dike and finish the projects that we laid out. I do want to highlight a couple of those real quickly of the big top line projects.

The Herbert Hoover Dike is the key to this. You heard Ernie talk earlier about 500,000 acre-feet in one foot of storage. We used to store water in the lake up to 15 feet. We only store it up to 12 feet. That is 3 feet, which is 1.5 million acres of water. By the way, in the rainy season, all the water in our estuary, the Caloosahatchee River, received from the lake was about 560,000 acre-feet. So, one foot of storage on the dike would have negated all of the flow we got from the lake during the rainy season. All of these other projects would not of had been as critical as getting the dike finished and fixed.

The C-111 was identified in 1989. The state and district have offered multiple times to build that project for the Corps and we have been unable to. I think it is a huge accomplishment that the WRDA bill will authorize outside parties' funding in completing these projects on a faster timetable.

Finally, the C-43 and C-44 are critical to the end basin problems that we deal with. I will just wrap up with a quote I will steal from one of the former congressman here, and now our Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, that ultimately we need more ribbon cuttings, and more ground breakings. We need to finish projects rather than just starting projects and never getting to the completion. With that, I will end my comments. Thank you.

*FL State Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen (HD 78):*

What I would like to do is just underscore a few things that I think are very important while you are doing this critical analysis and trying to pass the water bill. The first thing is I noticed there were a number of young people and kids that came to this meeting. I am so excited to see that, because what we are doing right now is we are making decisions that are going to impact our kids' futures. I took my children this past weekend to walk up on the Herbert Hoover Dike to show them what is going on and to try to make them understand. We have to work towards long-term solutions because these young people that are here today are relying upon us. The second thing that I would say to keep in your consciousness is that we need to plan ahead and we need to think prospectively and not reactively to this problem. We are very, very fortunate to be sitting here today in a hurricane season that has been non-existent. If we were sitting here under circumstances with the kind of water that we have had hit the state of Florida and a hurricane to come, we would be talking about FEMA aid and another Katrina in Florida. So, let us work very, very hard to make sure that we address the problems so that we do not have that kind of catastrophe to deal with in the future. I would also add that it is very important to consider in the state of Florida that we are soon going to be the third most populous state in the country we have a thousand people moving into Florida every day and we have nearly 90,000 tourists coming in. Those people are going to be looking to us. The businesses are going to be looking at us to make sure we have clean and clear water and everyone in their communities are going to be looking at us to make sure that we are taking care of these problems. So, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Thank you. Next up is Thomas MacVicar. He is a registered professional engineer specializing in water resource issues of south Florida.

*Thomas MacVicar:*

Thank you very much, Congressman Radel and Congressman Murphy. I represent the people in agriculture south of Lake Okeechobee. We have something to offer to this, and if nothing else then to talk about how we have gotten through the last 25 years of the environmental challenges that we face. 20 years ago this month, there was a team from the state of Florida Department of Justice and Department of Interior held up at a hotel in Crystal City. We spent six months there negotiating what became the Everglades Forever Act. That followed a couple years of, 'this isn't my fault, I didn't do this, what do you mean I have to do that,' and we decided on this as the model for moving forward 20 years ago. A combination of action by the landowners in the local land area, government assistance in the big projects that only government can do with our eyes on the Everglades, we have the privilege of farming between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. Every bit of our run-off water has to go to the Everglades. We are where the Corps put us, and the Everglades is where God put it, and we are right in between.

This is our area since 1996 when the act passed. There are now over 100,000 acres in public ownership, the most of that was farmland, has been given up. We have gone from seven sugar mills to four sugar mills. However, we have stayed active in the community. This was the real challenge for us. The top of that bar shows you the phosphorous concentration of our runoff going into the Everglades in 1996: 170 parts per billion. The blue line at the bottom is the number that EPA and Secretary Vinyard talked about this morning that we had to get to. There was no blue print for getting there, it had never been attempted before, there was no technology you could apply, but we all committed, farmers and government, to lock arms and do each other's piece. Somehow, we got a way to get there. That green bar is what we have done to date. We are now down in the red area. That red piece is going to be removed by the program that Secretary Vinyard mentioned that was passed this summer. We are within 5% of getting to a goal that we thought was impossible 20 years ago.

How did we get there? This is how much phosphorous has been removed by the water, documented by the Water Management District. 2,565 tons of phosphorous have been prevented from going into the Everglades by what the farmers have done on their own prosperity. You talk about what to do quickly for the estuary, and this is what we did quickly for the Everglades. We implemented the BMPs first, and they have done the most. This thousand tons at the bottom has been removed by the storm water treatment areas. This is a mammoth success story that we did not think was possible. Some of us got dragged into it kicking and screaming, but if you stay together and recognize that you have a long-term approach, you can get there. You may not know how and you may not recognize the path you are on at this stage, you will find a path. I think that the estuaries are at that position right now.

This is the watershed map of the St. Lucie Estuary. There are three big contributors. There is Lake Okeechobee to the south and the rural inflows, which is mostly agricultural property and 2/3 of the county. All of that land drains into four big canals directly into the estuary. We know exactly how much water goes into the canals and how much phosphorous and other constituents are in the water. The red area is the urban area that surrounds the estuary itself. We have almost no handle on how much water goes from the red area to the estuary and much less of a handle of what the water quality issues are. In the rural area, which you can still see surrounded by black, there are four CERP projects that have been authorized and you have heard a lot about them today. There are a number of projects that deal with and address the Lake Okeechobee issues. We do not really have a project yet for the area in red. The yellow dots are just the location of septic tanks that may or may not be one of the biggest issues there. I view this area as being where we were 25 years ago. Farmers had to implement a program where we monitor, measure, and report every gallon of water that leaves our property and what is in it. We have to do the water quality analysis, collect the data, and report it ourselves. We are at a point where we need that kind of information here so we can figure out what kind of design we need to get us to the end of the path.

I have read the House version of the WRRDA bill and very much support it. I am encouraged by you adopting the Corps' 333 program and I think Assistant Secretary Darcy deserves a lot of credit for her team coming up with that approach. I think it will move the Corps process along substantially if they stay in Florida. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Next up is Mark Perry, the Executive Director of the Florida Oceanographic Society known as FOS for 35 years. Thank you for being here.

*Mark Perry:*

We have decades to go to get this water right. It took decades to get there to mess it up, and we got decades to go.

The historical flows used to take 6 to 8 months to get to the lake from the Kissimmee River and another 16 months down to the bottom of Florida. That is one mile every four days. This is what it might have been what it looked like back then with saw grass plains south of the lake.

We drained the swamp. We paid people to come down to Florida, build canals, and drain it back at the turn of the century. The Herbert Hoover Dike was constructed after the two hurricane events in 1926 and 1928. 1930 to 1937 it was completed and was 143 miles around the perimeter. We channelized the Kissimmee River and cut a canal right up the middle of that Oxbow River in 1962 to 1970. Now, this is what we have: about 1.7 billion gallons a day of that fresh water goes now to the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. That is about \$5.9 million in cost. This is how it impacts these estuaries. I am going to focus on the St. Lucie next, but the Caloosahatchee also gets toxic algae blooms coming down, and this is not from septic tank run off. This is when we get fresh water run-off directly from Lake Okeechobee.

This is the St. Lucie Estuary. You can see the canal, built from 1916 to 1926 and improved after 1937, and the other two canals. This is the discharge point called the S-80 Structure created by the Corps of Engineers when the lake gets too high going to the estuary. This is the loss of our fisheries, oyster reefs, sea grass beds, and near shore reef environments.

This what it looks like there. Again, this discharge event covers over those sea grass beds, about 700 acres of prime habitat for nursery habitat. Plumes out over the reefs near the shore that are designated as national marine sanctuaries. On the site list, this is muck you pull up out of the bottom of the river. About 8 million cubic yards of that is in there that we need to get out. We have noticed fish with abnormalities and lesions: about 33 species and in 6% of the population.

Our oyster reefs are in jeopardy. There used to be 470 acres and it diminished down to 116 acres in 2003. We just had 99% mortality, and this is why. The left of the graph is the normal salinity range at 25 to 20 at Roosevelt Bridge. It dropped below that five parts per thousand and we had mortality for over 113 days.

It also covers over state aquatic preserves. These are state aquatic preserve plants we have implemented and we do not see those protections in place. The state aquatic preserves we fought for years to get into place. Also, south of the reef the hopes of national wildlife refuge in the state park reef.

Next it the sea grass beds, which are 700 acres south of there. This is their critical line: 9 parts to 5 parts for thousand. It has been there for 88 days.

You can see that red line, which is a threatened species called Johnson's Seagrass. That continuation of that graph drops down to zero. We are from 80% recovery last year down to zero.

This is what we get. Congressman, thank you for bringing that bottle and I have a new sample for you. This is a fresh sample just out of the river in August, so we will get that to you. This is what it looks like along our waterway. It is pretty nasty and disastrous. Again, coming from Lake Okeechobee, this is what it looks like. We get these high bacterial counts and advisories also from natural run-off that occurs in freshwater flows.

So, what is at stake: about 143 different species plants and animals, because we are right in that diverse area of a mixture of temperate and tropical climates. What is it worth: about \$3.7 billion a year in the Indian River Lagoon values, and even in Martin and St. Lucie Counties it is about \$840 million and 27,000 jobs locally, not including waterfront property at \$588 million.

Now, what do we do? We have done some restoration. We have started to fill in the channelized Kissimmee, and you can see how that channelize is filled in. It was reported before that we can see a nice comeback in that particular area, but we need to do more. We have done some restoration due to the Everglades Forever Act. We put in the storm water treatment areas and spent about \$1.7 billion as the state reported. Just recently, they committed to cleaning up that water again under Corps mandate. Known as the restoration strategies in the eastern, central, and western flow pass, we are going to spend \$880 million in the next ten years. We also started the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. With 68 components, some of them are in these projects. The accelerate project started before the federal involvement back in 2000-2008. The Indian River Lagoon plan has 2 of those 68 components: the C44 and C24, C23, and C25. We also have a BMAP process in place, and these are TMDLs that will be met of the next 15 years. We actually exceed that in this particular event with over 330,000 pounds of phosphorous, 2.2 million pounds of nitrogen, which is ten times that TMDL process. 14 million pounds of total suspended solids have come out.

As you know, the Central Everglades Planning Project is important, as it has gone through a vetted process and was 18 months fast tracked. You can see the components of that, and it will fill in the Miami Canal, lift Tamiami Trail, degrade L67, and provide full equalization basins in the EAA.

These are the projects that are before you. The first set of projects is non-SERP projects. Those are foundational projects for the Corps: the Kissimmee River, modified waters, the Herbert Hoover Dike, and a state project, which is the restoration of the Tamiami Trail. The second three are what you have already authorized and are appropriating for, which need continuing funding. The second general, those four projects that you have heard about, are in the current WRDA bill. We need to get those done. The last six projects are what is in the CEPP (Central Everglades Planning Project) plan. Those are the total projects that are on the board. What was brought up before is that we need to complete these and continue to either appropriate for them or get them into a WRDA bill or start to get that lined up.

This produces dollars. There are actual dollars and jobs that are produced by these restorations. The Everglades Foundation did a study where \$5 billion invested, and \$46 billion in returns.

What is the next project after CEPP? What are we going to focus on next? It was brought up by the Congressman here. What has historically been happening is we do not have that connection South. There has been a project plan that was considered in 1994 and 1996 and put aside, but we think we need to revise it and bring it up again.

We are talking about that missing connection between Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. We do not that capacity right now. It is still going to be east and west, no matter how many of these projects we put in place currently on the board. We do not have that capacity. So, we need some connection. We already own the south 76,000 acres. We just need about 50,000 of the 480,000 acres of sugar farmland.

This is going to replace the Lake Okeechobee ASR project. Those red dots, the 200 aquifer storage and recovery wells was designed as the project, one of the 68 components, to take care of the excess water in Lake Okeechobee to go to the estuaries, and it will not have the capacity to do it.

So, we think this was brought up by the Department of Interior back in 2011 also reviving the river of grass in 2008 and 2010. All of us put a lot of work in the potential.

This is the last thing we have to do. Here are four things: stop the destructive discharge to the northern estuaries, restore the river of grass and restore the Kissimmee Valley, manage Lake Okeechobee like a lake, not an reservoir, and enforce the treating of pollution at the source of the problem, not downstream.

This is why we do it. It is about our future. You have that power right now to make those decisions as the leadership in this Congress. I hope that you do. I am hearing that you can demand. We do not have the agency here today, but we need the Corps, we need a Assistant Secretary Darcy meeting, we need an agency meeting with DOI, NOAA, US Fish and Wildlife, and EPA. They all have special protected areas, which are really critical, and I do not see them at our state meetings. We need them here to help us protect those areas. They are federal agencies that you can help us engage more. Thank you.

*Rep. Corrine Brown:*

First of all, thank you very much. This has been very educational. I think Sen. Joyner is getting ready to leave and I wanted to thank you for joining us.

*FL State Sen. Arthenia Joyner (SD 19):*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy and Congressman Radel, for the invitation to come and for what you all are doing. This is a very important issue to the citizens of the state of Florida because it dramatically effects the environment and the economy because Florida is a premier tourist destination in the world. People who come to Florida want to know they can enjoy our beaches. Businesses are suffering and we need to remedy this problem. It is so good to see that the partnership works and bipartisanship is alive and well not withstanding where we are right now with the shutdown. So, maybe we can open it up and solve this problem and get Florida to be the best that it should be.

*Rep. Corrine Brown:*

Thank you. First of all, I just want to thank you for inviting me. Transportation is the most bipartisan, I think, committee in the House of Representatives. I have been on this committee for the entire 21 years I have been in Congress. Because we know for every \$1 billion we spend, it generates 44,000 permanent jobs, it is the engine that puts people to work. This will be the second WRDA bill we have had in 14 years, so it is unacceptable that we do not get everything we need in this bill. I voted to get the bill out of committee and onto the floor. But there is one issue I am going to take to the Rules Committee and I hope I have the support of everybody. That is, regarding if you do not have a chief report. We have a couple of projects in Florida that will not be ready and should have been in four months, but it is going to be longer because of the shutdown. With the shutdown, that means that they are not essential employees, so all of the projects that would have been ready will be delayed, and that is hurting all of us. People do not understand that it is not just what you see. We have one project in West Palm Beach that they have been working on for 17 years. The point of the matter is, when the chief report is ready we want that project to roll out. We have another in Jacksonville. There are about 10 projects around the country that fit this issue. In the past, anytime we have passed a WRDA bill, you have two years after the President signs it, if your issue comes up it actually goes to be funded. There is a feeling that we want to do a WRDA bill every two years. Based on the Congress I am working with, that is not going to happen. So, we need to make sure we get everything we need in this WRDA bill. So, I am asking you to educate your member about the importance of passing this WRDA bill and making sure Florida gets everything they need. I can tell you that we are not going to have another bill in two years. If we have a bill, we need to make sure Florida gets everything it needs in that bill. I am working with that and we have 27 members from Florida. We need all 27 of them working their members and making sure they understand that Florida is number three (in population) and we have a lot on our table. I wanted to just share that with you. I am excited about the WRDA bill but I have no intentions of failing when it comes to making sure we include these things in that bill.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Just to add on to that, Mr. Mark Bossen brought up a great point yesterday, and you can put this in the column of action items for all of you. Most of you I think I know where you live and who your members of Congress are, either Trey or I, but you might have family members, children, friends, that live in other districts across the country. Get your family members to write a letter, maybe help draft that letter, to those other members of Congress. Believe it or not, we get between 1,200 and 1,400 emails, letters, and phone calls a week in my office. Every single member of Congress that I know goes through those, and that means a lot on where you get those letters from and what your priorities should be. So, part of today is getting members from Florida, but really all over the country, that can therefore go to the EPA, NOAA, USDA, and the Army Corps of Engineers, and help us prioritize the projects, and maybe in the case of the EPA, help streamline some of these regulations to work better with the state. So, reach out to your family members and friends across the country and have them put pressure on their members of Congress.

We have a couple of new members that joined us who certainly know about the issue, but are here to listen and to hear from you. I will defer to the Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Our districts do not quite touch. Her district is just south of mine. Chairwoman, most of these people took money out of their pockets and flew up yesterday or spent some money to charter a bus and raised about \$8,000 at car washes and other various avenues to get up here. You see the turnout and there is an overflow room upstairs where there is more people watching. The press has taken their time to cover this issue and have really led to this room filling up because they helped us get the word out. This is obviously a critical issue. Leader Pelosi was here and several other members from both sides of the isle talking about how now this issue is at the national level. We have had almost 20 members of Congress show up already, and they all know about it.

*Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL 13):*

Welcome, and good to see you to my former colleague Joe Negron and my other colleagues from Florida. Welcome to all of you to Washington, DC. I have seen a number of you in the halls and on the plaza last night. This is really a credit to Congressman Murphy and Congressman Radel who has become a good friend, and both of these guys right from the beginning, the first minute they got here, reached across the isle and made sure we could set an example as Floridians like we have always in our delegation, particularly on issues surrounding the environment and the Everglades. We have exemplified what leadership and bipartisanship can do. Now, we have to do that around the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee waterways. Pollution, and its continuation, is absolutely unacceptable. No family should be expected to tolerate ongoing pollution. To me, it is one of the essential functions and responsibilities of government to make sure people have clean water. That is a given, and should be a basic expected item that crosses party lines. That is why you are all here. What we need to do is continue that cooperation that our delegation has always been able to come together on. Tom Rooney and I have both done this, sitting on the Appropriations Committee together literally back to back, which makes it convenient to lean over and whisper when things important to Florida come up. But you can count on our delegation to put, in spite of a miserable situation that we are encountering now that I think all of us would like to see us move past, when it comes to making sure we stand up for Florida, I think we are all united. So, thank you both for your leadership. You are new members who have injected new vitality into our delegation and into this fight, and we are going to be with you every step of the way.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you. We also have Congressman Joe Garcia here. He represents Miami and the Florida Keys area. One thing that I just want to note, this effects all of Florida. All of these projects we are fighting for are all connected. Of course, I am fighting a little extra harder for projects in my district, but if the Tamiami Trail gets extra funding south of us or C43 gets extra funding, that helps all of us. Joe Garcia has the Florida Keys. All of this ends up down there. So, all of these projects are connected and they all help each other out. Thank you for being here.

*Rep. Joe Garcia (FL 26):*

First off, thank you and Trey for putting this together. Obviously when it comes to the environment, we are all Floridians first. Politicians can do a lot of things, but they cannot make water flow up hill, and I am down hill from all of you. We need you all to get it right, because when you do, we all win. The Florida Keys and the Everglades are the biggest attractions in our state after the Orlando area amusement parks, so we got to get it right, because when you get it right we get it right. We have seen this year we are having the best red fishing in the history of Florida. Yet we lost our bonefish this year. We once calculated what each bonefish produces. It is \$47,000 per bonefish. As my grandfather would say, you cannot even eat the thing. The reality is we want you to be successful. Patrick and Trey has made this of concern as it always has been for the Florida delegation and the people who serve us, so we take our marching orders from people in the districts. They are in the districts. I represent also the Miccosukee, who are experiencing a lot of this. Somehow when Mr. Negron drew the lines, he left the casino right outside the district, but I got them. So I got the votes, but not the money. But we want to work with you, we are here to work with you, and hopefully as this becomes a national issue and as you speak to other people around the country, we can focus in on it and start solving it. What has been done in Florida is already one of the largest restoration projects in the history of the world. Now, we have to finish it. We cannot stop half way, because we know there is more to do. So, thank you, Patrick.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you, Joe. Let us turn to the floor. We are here to hear from you, so let us try to open it up.

*Community Question – KC Traylor:*

Hi, I am KC Traylor. I am with the Guardians of Martin County and we brought up one of our smallest guardians. This is four-year-old Celia, my daughter. She has a present for all of you today that we hope you take and put it on your desk. They really mean a lot to her, and come right from her heart. Unfortunately this summer, she watched her oysters die right off of our dock, and she did not understand why. She is bring these oysters up, and she hopes you can put them on your desk and you can remember all the kids that had their lost summer and had to miss out on swimming and all of that fun stuff. So, thank you for your help.

*Community Question:*

The question was asked earlier about other projects. There are five projects that to my understanding the state already own the land for. First is the Lake Hicpochee north and south, the north six-mile Cyprus preserve, the C43 interim and emergency storage, and the Spanish Creek project. Could you please address where those are? It is my understanding that they could even be implemented by the next rainy season?

*FL State Sen. Negron:*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy, and thank you, sir, for the question. Sen. Benacquisto represents that area of the state in the Florida Senate. I have the honor of chairing the Appropriations Committee in the Senate, and we are committed to in this session working to fund as many projects as we can within our living means both on the east coast and the west coast. One of the things that I think has been tremendously rewarding about this process is how both coasts have worked together. Just as we are going to fund C44, we are going to do our best to fund C43. So, the short answer to this is we are going to through our committee process with policy and appropriations do our best to fund as many projects as we can east and west to make this problem much better.

*State Rep. Matt Caldwell:*

As Sen. Negron speaks from the appropriations side, on the policy side I think two of those projects have great potential for us. We are worried not just about the water coming into the lake, but in basin issues. So, the four corners project has been something frankly talked about for 30 years nearly. That is more of a local and a district project, but my commitment is to actually implement a policy on that and get us moving down the road so it can go to Joe and to our companions on appropriations in the house. Same with the Six Mile Slough. That is a connection with Lee County and in basin issues. So, it more than what we are just talking about here and the program the Corps is in charge of. It will take a little bit of everyone to work together, but I think those are all worthwhile projects for our in basin issues.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

I will just add that you have heard from some of the members from the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that were here earlier talk about some of the big picture items that Mark laid out very well in his presentation. C43 is now in the current WRDA bill, which hopefully will be passed on the floor. A key element, which has been mentioned, is the chief support, which has not been completed yet. Either that gets completed, which we are doing everything in our power to do and we have been in touch with the White House at least once a week and leadership on both sides of the isle to get that done so it is included. If it is not, there is an amendment on the floor where that comes up for a vote to insure that any project and chief's report done in the next six months or a year be included retroactively in that WRDA bill, so that is what we are trying to do. Also going forward, we are looking at a lot of these projects like C44, phase 2 and 3, to get those included and at least be acknowledged by the Army Corps of Engineers and be included. If nothing else, be included in the President's budget for FY2015 and beyond so they can at least reserve some funding for that.

*Community Question – Lilly Tougas:*

I am Lilly, and I am 12. I am from St. Lucie and I came up on the bus. I had questions but they already been answered, so I just wanted to say thank you for meeting with us, even during a government shutdown. I have more faith about our lagoon being fixed, so thank you.

*Community Question – Julie Hills-Gabriel:*

Hi. I am Julie from Florida. Thank you so much for being here. I have to say this is one of the most encouraging days that I have had in a long time and speaking about the Everglades restoration. We all know that the issues on coast coastal estuaries are critically important, but also intimately intertwined with the issues of Lake Okeechobee. I was just wondering if folks could speak to how the plans and solutions that have been proposed to day also consider the natural resources and fishery resources of Lake Okeechobee itself as well.

*FL State Rep. Matt Caldwell:*

Well, I will start with the fact that we have really asked two incompatible things out of the lake. The lake is not a lake in the drainage system. As the Corps designed the system, the lake is really a reservoir, both for drainage and water supply. That ultimately is not necessarily a goal compatible with using it as a recreational fishery. So, as we look to reverse engineer this system, that is a big part of the discussions of building these other reservoirs, whether it C43 and C44, but also retaining more water north of the lake, and ultimately the projects we approved in 2013 on the state level for more water retention south of the lake as they feed the STAs. Ultimately, to make the lake a healthy recreational opportunity, we are going to have to remove the pressure for it to serve as a flood control option for more of the year than not.

*Mark Perry:*

To follow up, with Sen. Negron's leadership in the legislature, this year we can push forward the Lake Okeechobee water protection plans, the TMDL set up, BMAP for Lake Okeechobee, and the Everglades protection plans. They have been put into place, but implementation is dragging very slowly, but I think with the impetus of the leadership in the state legislature they can hopefully move forward.

*Community Question – Darrell Brand:*

My name is Darrell Brand. I live in Martin County. I live in the epicenter of the C23, C24, and C44 canals. I just wanted to know, how are government agencies allowed to discharge polluted waters into our estuaries? Why are they exempt from the same regulations that I must abide by. If I were to dump those toxins into those bodies of water, I would be fined and possibly arrested by numerous officials. Before I moved to Martin County, I lived in the Florida Keys. Those waters in the Florida Keys are a natural marine sanctuary, are governed by extensive no discharge zones, and I believe the St. Lucie Estuary deserves the same status.

*FL State Sen. Negron:*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy. Before I answer that question, there is one thing we have not talk about. I know Congresswoman Debbie Wassermann-Schultz, and I served in the legislature with her, has the ear of the President of the United States, as I know all of you do. I really think it would be critical for our community that President Obama was our guest playing golf at the Floridian. Nine holes of that golf course is right along the St. Lucie River, so I know he knows our community well. I really think we need to set a goal as a community to have President Obama come to the Treasure Coast or southwest Florida to see this problem up close and personal, and I am not giving up on that. I worked with Congresswoman Debbie Wassermann-Schultz, and when she puts her mind to something, do not get in her way. She is very, very effective.

To answer your question, it is very simple. There is a rule by the EPA called the water transfer rule, which creates an exemption to the Clean Water Act that you and I have to abide by, and everyone else, and allows them to dump this polluted water from Lake Okeechobee into our communities. It is an exception that the government makes. They have one set of rules for us, and one set of rules for the Army Corps of Engineers. So, what I would ask all of us to do is to ask President Obama and his administration to direct Congress to direct the Army Corps that they no longer have this exemption and they have to follow the same clean water rules that everyone else has to follow. They have carved themselves out an exemption, and until the Congress changes it or the President directs a change in the rule, they are going to continue exactly what they are doing.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

I look forward to working with Secretary Vinyard and connecting those dots: the Florida DEP and EPA. It sounds like according to the Secretary they are working well together. I want to keep that relationship going. I want to thank you all very much for being here, especially State Sen. Negron for his leadership back home. He had a panel with eight other state senators, so we have been working well together and talk quite a bit. There is no partisanship between us.

The next panel is the local piece and that is the key to get the local, state, and federal governments all working together and to prioritize the same projects. So, thank you all for being here.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Again, Sen. Negron, I would also thank you and our state senator from our coast Lizbeth Benacquisto. For the record, we just thank you all so much at the state level for your input today. It is so great to see all of us working together coast to coast in our delegations.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Commissioner Frannie Hutchinson has a flight to catch, and I want to hear from her and I think we all do. Commissioner Hutchinson is a St. Lucie County native and began serving as a St. Lucie County Commissioner beginning in 1998. She has served as the governor's appointee to the St. Lucie County Fire District Board of Commissioners as well, and has been active with numerous volunteer and civic organizations in St. Lucie and on the Treasure Coast.

*St. Lucie County Commissioner Frannie Hutchinson:*

Thank you, Congressman, and thank you for allowing me be here. Thank you both, and thank you to all of your members of your community to be here today and listen to us. I represent not only St. Lucie County but also sat on the Board of the County Coalition, which was actively working here yesterday. I sat between many of us that have met in the meetings with the Army Corps in south Florida and met and walked across the halls. I have worked with the Army Corps. I have worked with south Florida management on a number of issues, whether it is the beach re-nourishment programs all the way to different stages of the Everglades restoration. But I want you to look about us today. I was always told that to fix a problem, you have to put a face to it. You need to make it personal. Before you sit today the faces of our small business groups, our future with the young children that are here today. Today also sits among you the concern for our environment and the concern for every single thing that happens, whether it is across the state in Lee County, or all the way over in St. Lucie and Martin County. We are here together, united. Just as I hope you all will continue to be.

While the St. Lucie Canal, also known, as C44, and the St. Lucie Inlet are both in Martin County, my neighbor to the south at home, they are directly impacted by Lake Okeechobee water releases. I am standing here telling you that we support all the efforts that are being made in the C44, along with the Kissimmee River restoration, and the C43 projects. But I need to take you back in the bigger picture of the issue. We understand that our solutions to our water problems are long-term. But, we must all do what we can to change the status quo and fight for any and all improvements to the system that can be made in the short-term. Whether we construct the projects to move more water south, store more water on fallow, otherwise underutilized land or wherever it is available to improve our water quality and increase storage in Lake Okeechobee via an amended regulation schedule. The issue is we must act now. The health of our coastal estuaries and the future of the Everglades restoration are at stake.

With regard to long-term projects, there are two that are still partially if not all in St. Lucie County that I need to bring up. The first is the Ten Mile Creek Reservoir, our water preserve area that was meant to be a reservoir and storm water treatment area. This is a project that few want to remember. Why is that? It is a failed, \$50 million project. It was one of the very first SERP projects that was to be completed and has sat in my backyard idle for all these years. It also holds little hope that it will ever be fully functional as it was originally envisioned. Why is that important: because the Ten Mile Creek could be helping to improve the health of the St. Lucie River and Estuary. The federal government and water management district must fix this project now in some shape or fashion, and there are no more excuses.

Another thing that people seem to forget and need to be reminded of is that the Indian River Lagoon South SERP Project is not simply the C44 or the storm water treatment area. In fact, the Indian River Lagoon South is an entire suite of projects meant to improve the health of the lagoon and ecosystem, all of which were authorized in WRDA in 2007. Yet, there are truly no plans to construct the remaining portions of the Indian Lagoon South, including the C23, C24, and the C25 reservoirs and STAs in St. Lucie County. I am asking you to help change that.

We have the answers in this room to help the estuary, and you have the support of the people in this room and the ones that you represent to fix this estuary. We have to quit delaying and we need to move forward with our construction projects. It is critical and I thank you both for your efforts and work on getting the WRDA bill to this point, but the push is yet to come. We need it on both. So, that is what I see as a critical issue right now, and that is where we start working. That is where the projects become alive. I thank you both for your time today and, considering the views of just St. Lucie County, I am supportive even though I may not be here physically. For my fellow commissioners in counties across the state that are asking for your help and counting on you to be our voice, we cannot keep coming up here like this all the time. So, before you walk out again today, I just ask one more time: look at the faces in front of you, let them help you, and you help us. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

A great point that you make on the end of that is that you get sick and tired as local leaders coming to Washington to beg for money, and that is how the old process used to work, and then you would introduce the things like earmarks, which became a dirty, corrupt process. We hope to do in the reform of this is that you will not have to do that and beg, and that we can create a streamline and a crystal clear process to be able to do what is right for our state. So, thank you again for being here.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you, Commissioner. Next up is Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard and Chair of that Commission. Commissioner Heard currently serves on the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council, the County Coalition of for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and the Marine Resources Council. She was also just featured in that NBC nightly news piece that ran last week. Thank you for being here.

*Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard:*

Thank you very much, and thank you for convening this critical hearing today. This is a marvelous job and we are very appreciative. We just celebrated National Estuaries Day, and our estuaries' health has slowly declined to a state of emergency. Our estuaries, the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie River, were artificially connected by the federal government to Lake Okeechobee via the C44 canal, beginning in the late teens of the last century around 1916 or 1917. In 1930, our Martin County Board of County Commissioners issued its first resolution to the then water managers to stop the damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee. In 1930, the discharges were killing our fish, shrimp, and natural resources. Over the past century, humans have become breathtakingly adept at harming and destroying ecosystems.

In the next century, if human kind is to survive, we must become experts at saving and restoring ecosystems. We can start right in Martin County. We have already begun and we have nearly acquired all the land. Martin County residents are extraordinary advocates for ecosystem restoration. They have already taxed themselves \$75 million to buy land necessary to implement our portion of the Everglades restoration: the Indian River Lagoon plan. We are not looking for repayment or credit for that \$75 million. It is a donation, and a generous one from our residents. We have already exhaustively vetted the science for the IRL plan. Not surprisingly, given our residents' key interest in restoration, we worked tirelessly to get our portion of SERP, the Indian River Lagoon plan, authorized into federal legislation (WRDA). We received our chief's report and project implementation report in 2004. We succeeded in 2007.

We recognize the laws advancing SERP rely on a 50/50 state and federal partnership. I am grateful for this partnership. I think we should embrace it and use it as a model for all the world to show what ecosystem restoration looks like, and how help partnerships can advance phenomenal environmental restoration.

The Indian River Lagoon is considered the most bio-diverse estuary in North America, home to over 4,000 species including 36 endanger species. It is the nursery ground for species all along our Atlantic Seaboard. It is in extremis. If it is not dead, it is on life support.

This year has been a very wet, rainy season. Our artificially plumbed ecosystem has delivered critical salvos to our estuaries. Lake Okeechobee releases started on May 8. If there are any oysters left, it is at 1%. Our health department has posted signs warning our residents to avoid all contact with our water all summer because the signs attest the water is toxic. We have had blue-green algae, record number of dead dolphins, dead manatees, and dead pelicans.

Our federal legislators across the board regardless of party affiliation should support the comprehensive Everglades restoration plan. You should not be timid or fearful to save the most important wetland ecosystem in the US. No one will find fault with you. I ask for your support and full funding for the Indian River Lagoon plan, which will create 170,000 acre-feet of water storage and cleansing in reservoirs, storm water treatment areas, and thousands of acres of rehydrated natural wetlands.

We recognize that SERP is a formalized process. Let us proceed and finish the first tier projects in order to build support for the essential future projects. The 16 counties of the South Florida Water Management District urge Congressional support for the Herbert Hoover Dike rehabilitation, Kissimmee River restoration, the C44 project, the C43 project, and passage of a WRDA bill. We are very, very proud to be Floridians and for everyone with us today and the public service you provide us so well in Washington, DC.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Thank you, Commissioner, for being here today. As you lay out the visual aspect and seeing things like this happen to the water, it strikes me. We talked about how we would love for the President come down sometime. We should spearhead a bipartisan letter to the White House to actually ask for the President to come down and see and tangibly visualize. What we are doing today is garnering national attention, state attention, and local attention. To do something like that would be monumental because it is more than just pictures or talking. It is actually, physically seeing it. Again, thank you.

To the next commissioner, we have Larry Kiker. He is a good friend and Lee County Commissioner, serving also as Vice Chairman of the Board.

*Lee County Commissioner Larry Kiker:*

Thank you very much, and many thanks to you Rep. Radel and Rep. Murphy to promoting a bipartisan approach in solving an ongoing environmental calamity. I too, when I look at bipartisanship, have to revert back to the word for partnership. That goes from the federal, to the state, to the local level. I think the thing we have to realize at all points in time is that that partnership begins and ends with the people back home.

The Caloosahatchee River and the estuary in Lake County are essential to the overall health of our beaches and, to a great extent, to a economic viability. It is important that we realize that the prolong periods of excess fresh water and high levels of salt water lead to adverse impacts to one of Florida's most productive estuaries. A clean and healthy environment is one of the most critical cogs of the economic engine that drives Lee County and its number one industry, which is tourism.

A few weeks ago I attended the Florida Governor's conference for tourism, and in that meeting he stated we have over 91 million visitors in the state of Florida last year. His goal is going to be 100 million visitors in Florida this coming year. That racks up about \$47 billion worth of economic impact to us and in Lee County, \$3 billion. One of the things that we have to realize though is that every time we have 85 visitors that show up here, that equates to one job. That means a lot to a lot of people.

Our statistics show that over 90% of the people that visit come for beaches and clean water. As we come here before you today, you should be asking us in terms of partnership what are we doing on a local level to support this effort. Over the years in Lee County, the Commission has been on the forefront in investing in projects and programs that help make certain that our natural resources are preserved and protected. In Lee County, we have spent of \$350 million obtaining 28,000 acres and putting this land into conservation. In the last five years, we have spent over \$110 million just for water quality projects. We have now designated another \$100 million for the continued purchase and maintenance of that property. 28,000 acres also was pretty handy to us for water storage this year as well.

We live in an instant information age. The image of black water along the beaches of Lee County has spread around the world in seconds. Unfortunately, that image stays with us for a long, long time. We have done a local survey and we found that 63% of businesses that deal with accommodations have experienced people actually checking out because of the dirty water. 60% of those said they would not be returning. So, when we look at what is in front of us, you have to realize that we only have one chance for a first impression. The image that we have, I am afraid, is black, murky, unsafe water, making Lee County a place where people decide not only to not come back, but to never come in the first place.

If I may, I would like to quote from one of our local chambers. They were talking to some of the folks who were visitors; “my 20 month old grandson is going to be with us at the beach. My family has been going to Fort Meyers Beach for four generations, 40 years. I wanted my grandson to love Fort Meyers Beach the way my family has through the years. That is a difficult thing to do when going in the water and it just seems gross. I hate to think about it, but next year I have to consider going somewhere else.”

May I remind you that not that long ago, Hurricane Charlie was awful for our community. Then, we had red drift algae. I believe you remember that. We had up to two to three feet of red drift algae, and it stunk the place up. People not only did not want to visit there, but it was kind of hard to live there. Then, we must not forget the BP oil that came right behind that one. I think we are never going to forget that. Now, we have these unrealistic releases that are coming out of Lake Okeechobee. We can attend to one-time occurrences and we are a very resilient community. But, sustaining the year-end year out Lake Okeechobee discharges is something we cannot keep doing. Our environment and economic plight is real, and we need action and we need it now.

We are proud to join the other counties that developed a regional focus to help concentrate valuable resources that appear to be just out of our reach all of the time, and that is too many times. We need completion.

I have been sitting in the back, and I think we can say this for everyone. I think we here you, and we hear your commitment. I think you are going to make this happen for us, and I intend to take that message back home with me and I am going to share that with our businesses, our families, and with our visitors. They have shared their resources and their money, and they give us their hope. We must give them answers. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Thank you. Next up is the mayor of Sanibel, Mayor Kevin Ruane. Again, a good friend that currently is serving his second term as mayor was appointed Chairperson of the Florida Municipal Insurance Trust Board of Trustees, also served as a member of Sanibel’s City Council. Since 2007, you have seen first hand what this has done to our beaches, and your beach in particular.

*Sanibel Mayor Kevin Ruane:*

Thank you, Congressman Radel and Congressman Murphy. I am Kevin Ruane and Mayor of Sanibel. I sit on the Tourist Development Council and Sanibel happens to be the largest contributor of the bed tax. I sit as the Chair of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, so I appreciate your transportation and infrastructure issues. I sit as a Florida League of Mayors, which is 22 mayors and 410 cities.

Everyone is talking about short-terms and long-terms. But this is an economy-based situation. We have jobs and the governor is certainly talking about jobs. We have the fortune of having Hertz coming to our area. Could you imagine another Fortune 100 company coming here with waters looking the way they do.

Let us go one step further. My neighbor to the south is Collier County. We work very closely with them. If you look at the property values of Lee County and Collier County together, that is \$150 billion. Imagine a 10% decrease in property values (\$1.5 billion). You look at property tax (\$2 billion). Then you look at jobs. You put Collier and Lee County together, it is a \$4.4 billion impact and 85,000 jobs.

Why do I talk about these things? I grew up as an accountant and it is real simple. This is an investment that needs to be made, with a return on an investment. As someone that was a CFO of a Fortune 500 company, I get it and I understand. What we need to do is make an investment on a long-term basis. We need to fund the projects, and not only C44, but also C43. It is a requirement for us, and there is a return on the investment. Just look at it. We are asking for \$500,000, which is a lot of money. 10% decrease in property values would be \$1.5 billion in one year.

Second thing, it has been an honor to work with you all from the federal and state level. Sen. Negron has been a champion, and actually asking and working together. We have been working with the governor. One of the requests we have had, as a mayor of Sanibel but also amongst five mayors, is to look at the law's 2008 schedule. I applaud Sen. Negron and Sen. Benacquisto for their actions. What we are looking at is a release schedule that if you take into consideration the risk element, you take into consideration the \$300 million worth of improvements that are made, you take into consideration the forecasting and the improvements. I understand laws 2008. I got in office in 2007. You know what was on our beaches: Three feet of algae on our beaches. You know what we are looking forward to: possibly the same situation.

I understand the impacts, but what we do in life is we pivot. What we did as a government is balanced our budget for seven years. I have cut taxes for seven years. We lived within our means and paid down debt. We pivot, and I am asking you to put whatever pressure you can on the Army Corps of Engineers, because the short-term solution has no money is actually look at the release schedule and look at the risk that is there. Take into consideration what is actually being achieved, and then obviously implement that. Instead of waiting for a 30% process that the protocol calls for, we pivot. That is what every house in America has. They did not want this recession. They did not want to deal with, but they had to. Cut your grocery bill, cut your food bill, and we do the same exact thing. So, we ask the Army Corps of Engineers to pivot and stop the release. You want to know exactly what you do? You turn off the faucet. That is what the releases do, and there is no cost.

We are almost out of hurricane season, and we are grateful that we are where we are today. But I ask each and every one of you to continue to put this pressure on. I would love to have the President to come to our beaches. The Governor was nice enough to come to Fort Meyers and saw first hand. Together, I am optimistic as a local leader to look to the state and have the leadership from the governor, and to look at people like Sen. Negrón and Sen. Benacquisto that are working together, and now I look to you and give you the challenge to get the money necessary to fund these projects. I can assure you that the return on the investment is one that will pay back ten-fold. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Next up is Roland Ottolini, Director of the Lee County Department of Natural Resources.

*Roland Ottolini:*

Many thanks for inviting us today to talk about the impacts from the Caloosahatchee and Lake Okeechobee releases. Also, many thanks to all of your staff, who have been great hosts while we have been here, and they work very hard.

You are aware that the Caloosahatchee River Estuary is one of the national state refuges in protection. You have Ding Darling, Caloosahatchee, and Matt Lachey wild life refuges, as well as Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay Aquatic Preserves. They are all interlinked and dependent on the fresh water flows and timing and distribution of water from the Caloosahatchee River. Like all estuaries, it requires a proper balance of fresh and salt water to insure productivity of sea grasses, oysters, and other species that are independently needed for the overall health.

Unfortunately, the river is highly influenced by an overly managed system. When we have releases such as those, the Caloosahatchee River watershed expands east, then north all the way to the Kissimmee River basin and up to Orlando. That is a vast watershed that brings a long many point source pollutants and as well as many non-point source pollutants, eventually making its way to the gulf through the river. Yet, in the dry season when we need minimum flow for the estuary for the freshwater species, we are essentially cut off. At times a lock will be closed and water there will be capture and sent back to Lake Okeechobee for water supply purposes.

So, no doubt estuaries are resilient to naturally occurring drought and floods. But what seems to be happening is that we are subjecting it to yearly extremes, where the harm will take years to recover from. In considering periods of too much water, we also receive a large influx of nutrients. Caloosahatchee River has been verified as impaired for total nitrogen, which done by the Florida DEP. They have actually written a plan called the basin management action plan that has been talked about earlier and describes a necessary pollutant load reduction that is required to maintain health of the estuary. This is a multi-year, multi-million dollar commitment that will be shared by several stakeholders, including Lee County. The majority of the loading comes from east of Lee County. So maybe 5% of the loading is identified east of the Franklin Locks, and 60% of the loading is from Lake Okeechobee itself. So, you can see that these issues are important to us as the downstream community.

As Commissioner Kiker pointed out, there are economic impacts as well as those to the ecosystem. The good news is exist solutions do exist. Each involves more water storage, but also finding ways south so we can return the water to its historic path to the Everglades. Also, we have been staunch supporters of several projects that have been initiated by the Army Corps and south water management district. Specifically, we support the rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike, the re-bridging of the Tamiami Trail, construction of the C43 reservoir, CEPP, and many components of SERP.

We realize these are long-term solutions, but the project in our back yard, the C43 reservoir, is nearing authorization with the hopeful passage of WRDA. However, we still need funding from both the federal and state governments if we are going to move forward to construction.

We also support short-term solutions, as the estuary needs immediate relief until the larger components are constructed. We applaud the South Florida Water Management District because they found lands to store temporarily store water, and they are also actively looking at moving some of the plugs south to the Florida Everglades National Park, and we appreciate that.

Also next, we should look at the Lake Okeechobee operations schedule. Now, the lake provides a huge storage opportunity. One foot equals approximately 500,000 acre-feet of storage. That amount of water in the lake, however stored and managed at the top end based on the structural integrity of the dike, and the bottom end for the ecology of the lake, provides a drought proof water supply for nearby users.

Hopefully by storing more water in the lake you can reduce the harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries. Questions do remain, though. Are we leaving the lake level too high during the dry season meant to prevent water shortages while also too higher before the onset of the rainy season and therefore, getting the releases? Can we allow higher lake levels before releasing? Are there incremental benefits of reduced risk of dike failure as the components of the dike rehab are completed?

Understand that we do not expect the system to be managed entirely for the Caloosahatchee favor or benefit. We do expect that all users, including the estuaries, national park, water supply, and dike integrity will all have some shared adversity that is equitable. We understand there are many stakeholders, including systems that compete against each other. The decisions that cause direct harm to the estuaries are now being weighed against the risk of a breach, or the risk of flooding, or risk of drought, and marginal increase of pollutant levels in the national park.

During historic rainfall events like we have had, we asked that the federal and state agencies recognize the need to protect the health of our coastal estuaries by allowing much more needed stability and water management. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Next up is Todd Bonlarron. Todd is the Director of Legislative Affairs for Palm Beach County. Todd formerly served as the Executive Director of the Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation, working for all elected legislators that represent Palm Beach County. Prior to that, he spent four years working for the Florida House of Representatives. Thank you for being here.

*Todd Bonlarron:*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy and Congressman Radel. We appreciate your leadership on this issue, and I can tell you in the last 13 years I have represented Palm Beach County up here, outside of a regularly scheduled committee meeting, to have 25 members of Congress who have joined us at various parts of this meeting is unprecedented in any meeting that I have ever been involved in on any issue. I think it is a testament to a lot of the folks who came up here today, but also to the hard work that both of you have done. I know that there are some doors that are closed this week in Washington, DC, but it is refreshing to see that both of yours are wide open and you are working hard to address this important issue to us. So, I want to reiterate our thanks to both of you on that particular issue.

I also want to thank you for including Palm Beach County in this discussion, and I think the significance of Palm Beach County being included in it is that when we look at this issue, we need to take a holistic approach. We look at these individual projects, but they are all interrelated into this larger system of Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades, and the Kissimmee River Basin. When all of these ideas come forth, I think it is important to keep that in mind and keep the focus on the plans that have been in place. I think that Sec. Vinyard said that we have some good projects that are out there, we need to keep going and get them done, like the Kissimmee River and some of the other ones that are near completion. So, please keep your focus on those particular issues and keep that holistic approach.

Obviously, the storage is the big issue that we like to talk about because that is really going to be one of the big saviors to how we figure this out. We have talked a lot about the Caloosahatchee River and also the St. Lucie, but in the C51 canal that comes down into Palm Beach County, which is our main drain into the Lakeworth Lagoon that spans most of Palm Beach County's coast, we have seen in the last six months where 146 billion gallons of fresh water have been dumped in the St. Lucie Estuary, 85 billion gallons have been dumped in the lagoon. The same types of things we are seeing in St. Lucie with their sea grasses and oyster beds are identical to what is going on. It is a little more shocking when you see the photographs of what is going on in the St. Lucie River, but the same fresh water and silt is flowing into our lagoon, which we have spent almost \$60 million locally with the state in partnership in cleaning those things up. I think we need to continue to have that larger focus that there are some other effected areas that are out there.

When we talk about issues like the Corps of Engineers and others, there are obviously some regulatory issues that we can streamline and work through. Those are some of the things you tried to address in your WRDA bill and I commend you for doing that. I also thank your inclusion of our study report in that WRDA bill as well. We will do everything we can to help you in conference if we get to that point to make sure both of those issues are addressed.

I think that I would just end by saying that we have come up here as a local government and committed a lot of resources to this issue. The state has come up and committed a lot of resources. We are obviously looking to the federal government to commit some. We do not want you to feel that the entire burden of everything is on your shoulders. This is a partnership and we are in this together. We are here to help and assist you. However, we can and want to be a resource for you as you work hard for us. So I think you for that and look forward to carrying forward this partnership.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Our final panelist is Dr. Brian LaPointe, from the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. He is a research professor at Harbor Branch at Florida Atlantic University. His expertise includes the areas of nutrient pollution and coral reef ecology. Dr. LaPointe supports recent legislation and policy legislation that are intended to improve water quality by reducing excessive nutrient pollution of south Florida's coastal waters.

*Dr. Brian LaPointe:*

Thank you, Congressman Murphy and Radel, and thank you so much for your leadership on these critically important issues in south Florida. What I would like to speak to today is some of the research we are doing at Harbor Branch on the St. Lucie Estuary. I also wanted to back up on slide and also make a point that in the right hand photograph of the Indian River Lagoon, is one of the most recent blooms, the harmful algae bloom species, the brown tide, is effecting the northern Indian River Lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon.

I would like to speak more even broadly than just to Indian River Lagoon, but to all the areas I have worked all around in south Florida during my 30 years at Harbor Branch. This is including the impacts of the C43 in southwest Florida, particularly with the red tides. Also, that water, if it goes south to Shark River and comes out above western Florida Bay, it effects the Florida Bay as well as the Florida Keys. That water we are talking about, like large releases such as this water moving south with Plan 6, carries a lot of nitrogen. We have not hear a lot about cleaning up the nitrogen in the Everglades, but is all based on cleaning up the phosphorous. So, we are going to take a look at what happened the last time the water went south down in the Florida Keys.

Just to quickly look at some of the work we did. You may have the paper I publish in the Journal of Coastal Research last year looking at the impacts of the excess fresh water discharges on this estuary in 2005. Clearly, they were massive. The low salinities were the biggest issue, killing oysters and se grasses. But also, there was the blue-green algae that came in from Lake Okeechobee. Once in the estuary, it becomes fertilized by nutrient pollution within the basin, not just nutrients in Lake Okeechobee. So, it is a multi-faceted problem.

The coliform bacteria that become very high results from the low salinities. They create an environment where things like septic tanks can become a much bigger problem when we have these excessive fresh water discharges. So, it is not just Lake Okeechobee, and we have to also look at within basin impacts as well.

We got expand our research lagoon wide in 2011 and 2012 and works all the way from Ponce Inlet in the north to Jupiter Inlet in the south. This was very timely because this was when things really began to go to the next levels in terms of worsening condition in the IRL, particularly the northern IRL. For example, in the summer of 2011 for the first time we had a super plume of algae in the Banana River. That was followed by in the next summer this brown tide I showed earlier. What we found was nitrogen was exceedingly high in the northern part of the Indian River Lagoon. The N to P ration, the ratio of these to nutrients, is critical as to what types of algae grow. It turns out the brown tide like this very high nitrogen conditions.

One of the most important things we found in sampling the algae in the bottom, the red drift algae that had overgrown the sea grasses, is we used those as an observatory to tell us what the source of nitrogen is by looking at the isotopic signatures. It turned out that the primary source of nitrogen fueling these algae blooms is wastewater nitrogen, sewage nitrogen. We heard a lot about cleaning up fertilizers to control this problem, but now we have very important new information. If you look at the northern Indian River Lagoon, there are hundreds of thousands of septic tanks. If you calculate the amount of nitrogen going into the ground water flowing into the lagoon, it is a huge number.

The conditions have gotten to the point where the federally endangered manatees are dying, and I think you are well aware of that. We are looking at this problem, as conditions have gotten worse with algae blooms. Reduced light has led to loss of sea grasses. The manatees are now eating this red drift algae gracilaria, which we are finding toxins in. So, this is very important. We really need to look at other toxins that could also be affecting the manatees and other wildlife.

The other thing we are doing at Harbor Branch is we are expanding our water quality monitoring capability with these instruments called 'low bows.' These are state of the art instruments that can monitor real time nitrate and phosphate in the water, as well as other water quality variables like salinity and temperature.

This is our website that you can go to and download this data real time to see what is happening in the Indian River Lagoon. You see the green: that is the salinity in the Harbor Branch at the IRL from June to September and you see the big dip. That is all the rainfall we got in July. The red that goes up is the phosphorous. That is very likely the response that initiated those algae blooms in the northern Indian River Lagoon two years ago. We did not have the data up there to show what happened, but we need to have this type of data so we can better understand and model these problems.

With the C-43 flows going west, I have worked with Lee County in the past on these issues. You can see the small inset photo, and that is the red drift algae that plagued the beaches in 2004. We recently constructed this timeline of flows from the C43 going west and we have lined that up with major red tide events from 1970 to 2012. You can see very clearly that all the major releases of water coming from Lake Okeechobee line up with all the major red tide events. So, that is a prerequisite for the largest red tides that I know of in the world.

Finally, this is what happens when the water goes south. This is Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary. This is a long-term record, from 1984 to 2012. There was a call for more water in Florida Bay. Some scientists thought the water had become too salty in the Florida Bay in the early 1990s. You can see the response. The blue line is the flow of water coming down through the Everglades via Shark River, and you can see the spike in nitrogen, the green line, during that time. You see that red line, and that is the threshold that the nitrogen went over at that time. So, between 1992 and 2000 we lost 40% of the living coral in the Florida National Marine Sanctuary. We now have the least coral cover of any country in the wider Caribbean region.

So, this is a water quality problem. A lot of this has to do with nitrogen in the water. Just some suggestions going forward, we clearly need to get on top of the toxins in the Indian River Lagoon. We need emergency funding to keep that research going. We obviously need water storage and treatment capacity for the removal of both nitrogen and phosphorous, not just phosphorus. We need more real time data in both the IRL and Caloosahatchee and Shark River for monitoring and modeling how we can move this water around and the relative impacts in these different areas. Lastly, we can look at what they did in Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor, where they focused on cleaning up the nitrogen in wastewater initially and then in storm water. They have turned those estuaries around

and are on a very positive trajectory of recovery. We need to do the same thing in the Indian River Lagoon and other areas in south Florida Bay and the Florida Keys. When the President comes to Florida, please tell him he is very welcome to come to Harbor Branch, and we will show him all the great research we are doing there.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

If I could, there is an organization represented, I believe on both coasts: the Conservancy.

*Community Question – Jennifer Hecker:*

Thank you. I am Jennifer Hecker on behalf of our members at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and again, thank you for hosting this. We have provided a hand out that talks about some of the different things we see that the state and federal government can be doing to address this problem. We are strongly supportive of a Congressional and funding of Everglades restoration projects like the C43 and CEPP to move the water back south of Lake Okeechobee through the Everglades agricultural area where it historically belonged.

However, we are very concerned with water quality and that it is continuing to deteriorate with current efforts focusing almost exclusively on clean up rather than pollution source control. The state is primarily responsible for water quality and pollution control, but it is the role of the federal government to provide oversight that the Clean Water Act is being properly implemented. That oversight is not only appropriate, but necessary in instances such as this where more and more waters are becoming unsafe.

To truly restore our waters in the Everglades, we also need to control pollution at its source by keeping it out of upstream flowing waters. The state's nutrient standards plan excludes setting pollution limits for most upstream flowing waters until only after downstream waters become unsafe. Coastal local governments and taxpayers are doing what they can locally to clean up their waters, but they cannot afford more pollution flowing downstream with already having more clean up projects than tax dollars and no jurisdiction to control pollution flowing from out of their limits.

Our question is what can Congress do to support local governments by having EPA require the state of Florida to set numeric nutrient pollution standards for all upstream flowing waters to truly control pollution at its source?

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

I do not have the immediate answer for that, but I am happy to get with you. As a matter of fact, I believe you have emailed with Greg, and he will be back. I encourage you to stop by my office and we will have a chat about that.

*Community Question – Don Voss:*

My name is Don Voss and I am from Fort Pierce. I am one of the river-lutionaries that came up here on the bus and raised the \$8,000. We do not have anything bad to say. We thank you for this opportunity today. You said keep the pressure up, and we have not even started to put the pressure on. We have grown from a few hundred people to over 105,000 people in the last few weeks. Do not worry; we will put the pressure on. You do your work, and we will do our work. Thank you very much.

There is Ten Mile Creek project in St. Lucie County that could be finished that we could use to take care of our own wastewater. If someone could help us finish that, we would appreciate that. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you for your efforts. This is teamwork, so thank you for acknowledging that. We all work together and recognize that. Ten Mile Creek was brought up earlier, and I have seen it and toured it. It is in the Department of Justice right now, so we are doing everything we can to speed that process up. I can tell you more about that later. Thank you.

*Community Question – John Jackson:*

We have some new, innovate technologizes and some machines that can actually take the algae, skim it, and remove it from the river. Every minute that goes by, we are not removing what is there. It is like a clean up crew. We would like to see if you would like to see a demonstration of the product being used and getting the algae out of the water. Save our water. Thank you.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

There has been a lot of great local ideas. In my district, there has been some great oxidation and filtration systems developed, and skimmers, etc. I am not sure if Sen. Negrón is still here, but I would want to talk to him and Secretary Vinyard about this, and with some of the commissioners here if they want to address anything they can do to help fund some of these projects and get them off the ground. I have been trying to get any sort of funding from the federal level, but that sort of thing is very difficult and always has been, especially in fiscal times. Hopefully we can work with some of the local and state agencies to get some of these P3s and P4s off the ground. I do not know if anybody has some ideas from the commission.

*Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard:*

Yes, Martin County is a great innovator in this respect and we recognize that ecosystem restoration is going to be huge business in the upcoming decades. Many, many billions of dollars are going to be spent, and we have just decided to have a new economic development plan and a newly business development board in Martin County. One of the things we are tasking them with doing is making sure that we are the epicenter of doing those wonderful pilot projects using new technology to save ecosystems.

*Community Question – Nicole Mader:*

My name is Nicole. I would like to speak on behalf of two things, and there are two reasons why I am here. One of them is because of the dolphins. As you all know, dolphins are marine mammals, and they have to live in this polluted water in the east coast and the west. He have to think about how that they are intelligent and they live in social groups and we need to think about the dolphins. Of course, we need to think about our children. I am representing the River Kids, and we started two years ago with two young ladies: my daughter Naya and her friend Evie. They have been working very hard and I would like to present to Congressman Murphy and Congressman Radel some letters that the River Kids have gathered to present to them and hopefully give to President Obama when you spearhead that bipartisan letter. Maybe you can put these kids' letters with that, and thank you very much for everything.

*Community Question - Richard Silvestri:*

I am Richard Silvestri. I am one of two river-lutionaries along with my wife that drove up here yesterday, the 950 miles in 14 ½ hours. I know that Commissioner Hutchinson mentioned the clean up thing at Ten Mile Creek and the gentleman mentioned it. I do not think repeating it has any arm. You have about 25 Congress members in here. I think maybe if you can get to all of them, the Department of Justice lawsuit on that water retention area notwithstanding, why can't we just go ahead like eminent domain and open the thing? That is something that is paid for, it is built, I have taken my kayak alongside by it. You have to go up in an airplane to look at it. It is millions of dollars sitting there doing nothing. It could be put to work right now. All you have to do is put the pressure on the DOJ and the Army Corps of Engineers to open that facility. Thank you.

*Community Question – John Heime:*

Thank you. My name is John Heime. I am from the west coast of Florida, Fort Meyers Beach in particular. I also took the bus trip up with the east coast people. In a matter of fact, I am the only west coast person on the bus, so I would like to take a quick second to recognize them as extremely kind people and dead serious on this movement. As a movement of the people, we plan on working with you.

My question is really quick. If my ten-year-old daughter can understand why Plan 6 is the only fix, I can't understand why we can't as politicians understand that. TO point out one more quick reference, I am going to take the opportunity to pass the microphone and void the extra time to the mayor of my hometown, Alan Mandel. Thank you.

*Community Question – Mayor Alan Mandel:*

Thank you for your leadership, and this is great to see. One thing I would like to add is the \$3 billion in Lee County that is tourist dollars, please keep in mind when you discuss this with Congressman from all over the country that of that number, 22% is from outside of our country. It is very significant to us. We do not want to lose that. We do not want to most of the \$3 billion looking further south for vacations. But keep in mind, 22% of \$3 billion is very significant. Thank you.

*Rep. Trey Radel:*

Again, I would go back to what I started with. In these days of pessimism when we go walk on the floor, we may vote differently here. But there are things that unite us, and I hope that today's meeting can be that sense of optimism that you take away from here and know that both of us, not as Democrat or Republican, Conservative or Liberal, as Floridians, and as Americans, and we are in this together, and we are working to serve you the best as we can. Thank you very much.

*Rep. Patrick Murphy:*

Thank you all. I just want to thank you all for being here. As Trey said, this is bipartisan, this is bicoastal, and this because we all care about Florida. Thank you all for taking the time for being here. I want to thank all the panelists. I want to thank all the members of Congress, especially Trey for putting this on. I want to thank my staff for all their hard work for the last several months. Like Trey said, despite the shutdown, we are not going to let that get in the way. We have priorities and we are going to get those done. So, please join us. We are literally going to take this to the steps of the United States Congress and make sure other members of Congress see this. I am bringing the bottle, and then we are going to have a press conference so we can help spread this word. So, thank you all very much.