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

July 19, 2016

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Secretary Darcy:

I write regarding the dire environmental situation taking place on the Treasure Coast. As you know, historic, El Nino-fueled rainfall during our dry season led to a much higher than normal water level for Lake Okeechobee. The Army Corps' resulting actions to discharge polluted, nutrient-rich freshwater from the lake has had a significant, detrimental impact on the health of the Indian River Lagoon, our nation's most biodiverse estuary. Our region, plagued with toxic, blue-green algae, is facing an environmental disaster.

This crisis, decades in the making, will not be resolved overnight. However, the dire situation facing our waterways underscores the urgent need to prioritize solutions that will ultimately provide long-term relief.

As we continue ongoing efforts to plan, fund, and construct ongoing and future Everglades restoration efforts, including CERP, CEPP, and non-CERP projects, I must reemphasize the need for water storage and treatment both north and south of Lake Okeechobee. Following up on my April 21, 2016 letter to President Obama, I urge the Corps to begin the planning phase for Everglades Agricultural Area water storage as soon as possible, currently slated for 2021 per the 2015 update to the Integrated Delivery Schedule. Identifying and planning for water storage both north and south of the lake will demonstrate a true and thoughtful commitment to reducing devastating discharges and restoring the Everglades.

I am proud that Floridians have set aside a dedicated revenue stream for land acquisition and conservation, with 75 percent of voters passing the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, or Amendment 1. To fulfill that effort, I urge the Army Corps to work with the South Florida Water Management District and key environmental stakeholders to begin this work without delay.

Sincerely,

Patrick E. Murphy
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc: Peter Antonacci, Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District