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Telephone 239.472.2329

February 1, 2011

Frank Mann, Chairman
Lee County Board of County Commissioners
PO Box 398
Ft Myers, FL 33902-0398

RE: Modeling support for Lake Okeechobee Flows to Caloosahatchee

Dear Chairman Mann:

This letter is written on behalf of the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation to request technical support from Lee County to provide critical information to the Army Corps of Engineers on Lake Okeechobee flows to the Caloosahatchee.

As you are aware SCCF has been working very closely with the County and other Caloosahatchee and estuary stakeholders including J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Sanibel to advocate for critical Caloosahatchee dry season flows from Lake O. The SFWMD has not supported flows for the river for the past few months. Despite reports by the SFWMD that October, November and December 2010 were the driest ever recorded, their water conservation solution has been to single out and cut off the water supply for the Caloosahatchee without requiring conservation, let alone cutting off any other water users. A minimal base flow for the Caloosahatchee requires only an inch a month off the lake. Last year the SFWMD issued permits for 2.18 million acre ft of water, equivalent to several feet of lake water, to permitted users.

By contrast the US Army Corps of Engineers has worked with us to provide flows through the fall but as of December 15 they deferred to the SFWMD and cut off flows citing drought concerns and receding lake levels. Over the past six weeks the lake level has remained steady due to periodic rainfall. This past week the Corps recommended a release of water for the first time in six weeks. In conversation with Col Pantano he has expressed his support for estuary releases and is frustrated with the lack of documentation that would provide a basis of support for providing water that would benefit the estuary and river.

His request for information requires modeling water conditions under various flow regimes which the County Natural Resources modelers could possibly provide. Our request is for the opportunity to work with the County to model conditions to document and demonstrate the habitat and water quality benefits of various flow regimes to the estuary.

If there are any questions about this request I'd be pleased to provide additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rae Ann Wessel
Natural Resource Policy Director
Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation

cc: Commissioner Manning
Commissioner Bigelow
Commissioner Judah
Commissioner Hall