

STOP DESTROYING OUR WATER QUALITY NOW!

--AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT FROM THE SANIBEL CITY COUNCIL



Blue/Green Algae, Dead Fish and a Dead Dolphin

Dear South Florida Water Management District Governing Board:

As the elected representatives of the citizens of Sanibel, we are alarmed and strongly object to the current major fresh water discharge into the Caloosahatchee River and estuary that you began last week. As with your past releases, this discharge will have extremely adverse impacts on the coastal marine systems and devastating economic impacts on our ecosystem and local industries.

Your action is a direct assault upon the estuaries. What makes this so difficult to comprehend is that it does not appear that feasible alternatives are being realistically considered, such as releases into agricultural areas of sugar cane fields south of Lake Okeechobee already damaged by Hurricane Wilma.

In a recent letter, you stated, “fresh water discharges from Lake Okeechobee do not, in any way contribute to red tide outbreaks.” To the best of our knowledge there is no credible scientific evidence that the releases do not exacerbate red tide outbreaks.

In this letter, you failed to respond to our critical concerns that these freshwater releases may be devastating the sea grasses, oyster bars and fish communities of Charlotte Harbor. Please demonstrate that the freshwater releases do not impact these estuarine organisms. You acknowledged in your letter that the Lake Okeechobee releases, “do make the blue/green algae blooms larger.” We are requesting copies of all scientific reports on the impact on blue/green algae.

We welcome you to attend a Sanibel City Council meeting to specifically discuss the District’s policy of directing the Lake Okeechobee freshwater releases towards the Caloosahatchee River rather than to the south.

In conclusion, we request that the South Florida Water Management District address the following issues:

- Immediately stop releases from Lake Okeechobee into the Caloosahatchee River
- Rapidly look into the feasibility of redirecting the releases to the south rather than into the Caloosahatchee River
- Maintain Lake Okeechobee at a lower level in the range of 11’ to 13’ thus eliminating the need for emergency releases

Sincerely,
SANIBEL CITY COUNCIL

A CALL FOR CITIZEN HELP

All of us who care about our region’s water quality can help take action to solve this crisis. Please take a few minutes to contact the following key individuals to add your name to a growing list of people concerned about these devastating releases. Remember--every voice counts.

OFFICIAL	ADDRESS	EMAIL	FAX
Governor Jeb Bush	The Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001	jeb@myflorida.com	(850) 487-0801
Kevin McCarty SFWMD Board Chairman	3301 Gun Club Road, W. Palm Beach, FL 33406	kmccarty@sfwmd.gov	(561) 682-6200
Carol Wehle Executive Director SFWMD	3301 Gun Club Road, W. Palm Beach, FL 33406	cwehle@sfwmd.gov	(561) 682-6200
Alice Carlson AJC Associates, SFWMD Local Board member	2730 Leeward Lane, Naples, FL 34103	acarlson@sfwmd.gov	(239) 825-7723
Donald L. Blasham Chief of Engineering and Construction SE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	441 G. Street, NW, Washington, DC 20314-1000	donald.l.basham@usace.army.mil	(202) 761-1016
John E. Zediak Chief, Water Management & Meteorology Section Jacksonville District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	701 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32207	john.e.zediak@saj02.usace.armu.mil	(904) 232-1772

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