

Letter to the Editor

Guest Opinion: Marti Daltry
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Judah right about Lake O

In his Jan. 25 guest opinion, U.S. Sugar's Robert Coker criticizes Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah's call for a Lake Okeechobee southern flow way through parts of what are now sugar-cane fields. Riverwatch strongly endorses the flow way concept and supports the positions taken by Commissioner Judah.

It is important to remember that the Everglades Agricultural Area was established with funding from the federal government to promote legitimate national priorities of the mid-1900s. State and national priorities of this century have evolved to place greater emphasis on water quality and storage. Now, for the greater good, a portion of these EAA lands need to be converted back to their natural state and used as a cleansing flow way connecting Lake Okeechobee to the Everglades.

To be fair, Mr. Coker makes a good point in asking Commissioner Judah to focus equal attention on Lee County runoff problems. Therefore, Riverwatch asks both Mr. Coker and Mr. Judah to stand up for logical water quality solutions in their respective rural and urban ends of the watershed.

Riverwatch challenges Mr. Coker and U.S. Sugar to endorse the EPA's new proposal to establish a 77 ppb total phosphorus limit on all waters flowing to Lake Okeechobee. As described on the Riverwatch web site, CRCA.caloosahatchee.org, this is EPA's scientific opinion on the best course of action to save our lake, rivers and estuaries.

Furthermore, Riverwatch challenges the Lee County Commission as well as the Fort Myers and other city councils to create stormwater utilities (with permanent funding systems) to improve runoff water quality from residential, commercial and industrial areas. This is the urban equivalent of EPA's recommendation for the rural areas.

We are all part of the problem and we must each become part of the solution.

— *Marti Daltry is president of the Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association (Riverwatch).*