



June 6, 2004

Honorable John Albion
Lee County Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 398
Fort Myers, Florida 33902

Dear Commissioner Albion,

As you know, the Southwest Florida Watershed Council has been supportive of better management of the Caloosahatchee River and its estuary through improved collaboration, consensus building and education. The recent decision by the Lee County Board of County Commissioners to request additional releases from Lake Okeechobee is greatly appreciated.

It appears that estuarine conditions are still deteriorating prior to the advance of the full rainy season, and we hope that you will consider making an additional request of the South Florida Water Management District to continue the pulsed releases to prevent further deterioration of the Caloosahatchee Estuary. The upper estuary vegetation that is used as the ecosystem indicator for the Minimum Flow Rule has not significantly recovered from the adverse impacts it suffered during 2000 and 2001. It appeared that significant recovery might have occurred this year with better flow conditions from pulsed releases, but current conditions are such that recent progress for vegetation recovery will be set back yet another year. If this occurs it will represent five consecutive years of deteriorated conditions in the upper estuary compared to the 1999 distribution and abundance of submersed vegetation.

Again, thank you for your recent request of the Governing Board for additional releases. We hope you will immediately request another pulse release. Every additional day of high salinity is critical at this point in time.

Sincerely,

Susan Brookman
Chairman

The mission of the Southwest Florida Watershed Council is to protect, conserve, manage and/or restore the land and water resources of the Caloosahatchee and Big Cypress Watersheds. Through increased awareness, participation and cooperation among all stakeholders in consensus building, planning and decision making, we are working to meet the economic, natural and cultural needs for this and succeeding generations.