



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

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March 19, 2004

Susan Brookman, Chairman
Southwest Florida Watershed Council, Inc.
P.O. Box 61063
Fort Myers, FL 33906-1063

Dear Ms. Brookman,

Thank you for your letter supporting our efforts to improve the Water Supply and Environment Schedule for operation of Lake Okeechobee. The relatively wet conditions of the past couple of years have caused water levels in the Lake to rise, necessitating the need to perform flood control releases to ensure adequate flood protection for the lake region. The wet weather has also necessitated releases to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries. While the South Florida Water Management District strives to achieve environmental enhancement, water supply and flood control objectives we are hampered by a system that does not provide the adequate resources to achieve all objects at all times. While we continue our work to improve the system through Everglades restoration, our goal continues to be to manage the Lake and the estuaries in a more environmentally sensitive way.

The District has taken several actions to realize this goal. First the District is examining several modifications to the Lake regulation schedule. These include managing the Lake at a lower level to provide more storage during the wet season. We also are trying to identify changes in the Lake regulation schedule that will allow more low level pulse releases. Both these actions should help reduce the need for large releases. Under the authority of a temporary deviation from the schedule, we have been making low level releases to both estuaries to help lower the Lake during this dry season. In the longer term, construction of storage reservoirs in the Caloosahatchee River Basin, the St. Lucie River Basin and in the Everglades Agricultural Area have been fast tracked and these will be ready for use sooner than originally scheduled.

Again, we appreciate your support and look forward to working with you for better water management in the future.

Sincerely,

Pamela S. Mac'Kie
Deputy Executive Director

PSM:dt

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