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**DRAFT 11/19/19**

## **Rivers Coalition Lake Okeechobee Operational Change Statement**

Human health concerns demand our government reform South Florida's current water policy. Discharges containing toxic algae from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries are no longer acceptable. The frequency and severity of these toxic discharges rise as the level of Lake Okeechobee rises. Because of the health risks associated with these discharges, Lake Okeechobee must be lowered prior to the start of the rainy season. There are other significant benefits of lowering the lake: Sending maximum dry season flows south (when treatment areas have capacity) relieves hypersalinity in Everglades National Park, recharges South Florida's drinking supply, and helps mitigate the impact of sea level rise. Sending maximum dry season flows west relieves hypersalinity in the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

The Rivers Coalition, and the more than 350,000 individuals who make up their 105 member organizations, resolve to fight against keeping Lake Okeechobee levels artificially high for water storage and will push the Army Corps to maximize dry season flows from Lake Okeechobee to benefit the environment, thereby improving the environment in the dry season across South Florida and reducing the likelihood of breach of the Herbert Hoover Dike and toxic algae discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers in the wet season.

Operational rules that determine when and where water goes throughout the whole South Florida Water Management District, including the current review of Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM), need to manage the system as a system.

The fastest, simplest and cheapest way to ensure toxic discharges are minimized is to lower lake levels by sending maximum, clean, beneficial freshwater flows south to the Everglades National Park and west to Caloosahatchee river during the dry season, with a goal of bringing Lake Okeechobee to a level below 11-feet by June 1st, the start of the wet season, which is in the current Operation Band for the Lake.

**Members: 1000 Friends of Florida, 27-80 Paddlers, American Association of University Women, Arthur R. Marshall Foundation, Audubon Florida, Audubon of Martin County, Ballantrae Anglers Club, Ballantrae Yacht Club, Beau Rivage HOA, Bullsugar, Business Development Board of Martin County, Circle Bay Yacht Club Condo Assn. Inc., Citizens for Clean Water, Coconut Point Yacht Club, Computer Network Services, Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie Co. Inc, Cypress Lake HOA, Dolphin Ecology Project, Driftwood Motel of Jensen Beach. Economic Council of Martin County, Florida Oceanographic Society, Florida Sportsman, Fort Pierce Yacht Club, Four Rivers Property Association, Four Winds Condo Association, Friends of The Everglades, Friends of Harbor Branch - FAU, Gregor Woods HOA, Guardians of Martin County, Harborage Yacht Condominiums, Harbour Ridge Yacht Club, Hutchinson Island Preservation Initiative, Indian Riverkeeper, Indian River Plantation POA, Jensen Beach Chamber of Commerce, Joe's Point HOA, Keep Martin Beautiful, Leadership Martin, League of Women Voters of Martin Co., League of Women's Voters of SLC Co., Lighthouse Point Association Inc., Locks Landing HOA, Lost River Plantation HOA, Marine Cleanup Initiative Inc., Marine Industries Assoc. of Treasure Coast, Marine Resources Council, Martin County Anglers, Martin County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Martin County Conservation Alliance, Martin County Farm Bureau, Martin County Future Group, Martin County Hotel & Motel Association, Martin Soil & Water Conservation Dist, Miramar POA, Nettles Island Community Action Assoc., North River Shores Prop. Assoc., Ocean Research and Conservation Association, Palm City Chamber of Commerce, Palm City Civic Assn, Palm Cove Yacht Club, Palm Cove HOA, Pierpoint Condominium Assoc., Port Salerno Commercial Fishing Dock Assoc., Port Sewall Harbor & Tennis Club Owners Ass, Port Sewall Property Owners Assoc., Port St Lucie Anglers, President's Council of Hutchinson Island, Realtor Association of Martin County, Rio Civic Club, River Club Dock Owners Association Inc., River Kidz, River Kidz of St. Lucie County, River Vista HOA, River Warriors, Royal Harbor Homeowners Assn, Sailfish Point POA, Sailfish Point Yacht Club, Savanna Fishing Club, Seagate Harbor Homeowners Assoc., Sierra Club-:Loxahatchee Group, Snug Harbor Yacht Club, St. Lucie Audubon Society, St. Lucie River Yacht Club, St. Lucie Sailing Club, St. Lucie Settlement Inc., Stuart Corinthian Yacht Club, Stuart Flyrodders, Stuart Heritage, Stuart Rod & Reel Club, Stuart/Martin County Chamber, Surfrider Foundation, Teamsters Local 769, The Garden Club of Stuart Inc, The Estuary at North River Shores, The Junior League of Martin County, Treasure Coast Buddhist Cooperative, Treasure Coast Builders Association, Treasure Coast Democratic Environmental Caucus, Treasure Coast Golf Course Superintendents Association, Treasure Coast Rowing Club, Treasure Coast Unitarian Universalist Church, US Sailing Center of Martin County, Venture Three Community, Windjammer Condo Association**