



**Florida
Oceanographic
Society**

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Colonel Pantano:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water from Lake Okeechobee to both coastal estuaries on March 27th. The purpose stated by the Corps is for concerns about the health of the Lake. The Lake missed a natural spring recession but now it would be too difficult to get the Lake low enough even with releases. The total volume released over the 13-day schedule to both estuaries will be 81,120 acre-feet which is equivalent to 0.17 feet off the Lake level. The proposed 3 releases in a row (39 days) would only be 0.5 feet off the Lake. This will not lower the Lake enough and is killing the adult oysters, larvae oysters and many of the 300 aquatic species on these oyster reefs together with the spring spawn of many critical fish species, including threatened and endangered species, in the St. Lucie Estuary.

These releases from the Lake to the estuaries must stop now. Each 13-day pulse release is also dumping billions of gallons of fresh water (7.9 billion out the St. Lucie and 18.4 billion out the Caloosahatchee). That's a 20-day water supply for the 7.5 million people here in south Florida. A terrible waste of fresh water while destroying these valuable coastal estuaries. Also these releases will not prevent a major discharge in the future. If we get a tropical storm like Fay in 2008 and the Lake goes up 4 feet, all gates will open as an emergency situation no matter how many pulse releases were made before that event. The Corps must stop the releases to the coastal estuaries NOW. Close the S-80 gates and open the flows south of the Lake. Currently there is no flow to the south and those canals are at 10.2 feet in elevation.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Perry
Executive Director

cc:
U.S. Senator Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator George LeMieux
U.S. Representative Tom Rooney
U.S. Representative Alcee Hastings

I support this position and urge you to take action to stop the discharges IMMEDIATELY!

Name