

BRIAN J. MAST
18TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

January 3, 2020

Stuart City Commissioners
121 SW Flagler Avenue
Stuart, FL 34994

Dear Commissioners:

As you are aware, our community has experienced harmful summer discharges during 9 of the last 12 years, which has led to a public health crisis in Stuart and beyond. I am writing to urge you to join me in taking action to defend our community from harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges.

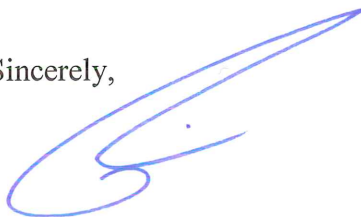
There is no doubt that 2019 was a good year for our waterways. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined on May 22, 2019 that water containing more than 8 parts per billion of microcystin is now considered harmful for human contact. For the first time ever, this led the Army Corps to admit during Congressional testimony on July 10, 2019 that they had knowingly discharged toxic water into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers.

Moreover, during 2019, our community received a taste of what proper management of Lake Okeechobee could look like. Instead of holding the Lake artificially high during the dry season, the Army Corps heeded our calls and allowed the Lake to naturally recess, which prevented the need for summer discharges—despite being in the anticipated path of a category five hurricane—and allowed environmental recovery on the Lake.

Nonetheless, the Army Corps has now stated that during the 2020 dry season, instead of repeating the success of 2019, the Army Corps plans to “focus...on retaining water” on Lake Okeechobee. This irresponsible decision increases public health risks and is far more likely to again lead to toxic algal blooms discharged to the Treasure Coast.

Therefore, I urge you to take all available action as soon as possible to protect the City of Stuart from this danger.

Sincerely,



Brian Mast
Member of Congress