



Tim Gysan
LOSOM Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District
Via Email: LakeOComments@usace.army.mil

Re: LOSOM Draft EIS Comments

Dear Mr. Gysan

Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida submits this letter in support of the Preferred Alternative as described in the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) and urges that the ACOE and related reviewers accept the DEIS and adopt the LOSOM Preferred Alternative.

CCA Florida is a grassroots organization with nearly 20,000 members, and since 1985 has been committed to preserving and protecting Florida's marine resources. A recent National Marine Manufacturers Association study states that recreational boating provides an economic impact to our state in excess of \$23 Billion Dollars and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) has reported that recreational angling provides an impact of over \$13 Billion Dollars. In 2021, for the first time in history, the FWCC reported the number of boats registered in Florida exceeded 1 million! Recreational fishing and boating are major economic drivers for the state, and clean water is essential to Floridians' health and our state's economic wellbeing.

The Preferred Alternative is intended to reduce Lake Okeechobee releases to the St. Lucie Estuary, enhance Everglades ecology by sending more water south with dry season focus, improve water supply and increase low and optimal flows to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary. These objectives are necessary to protect Florida's state waters. And while CCA Florida supports the Preferred Alternative and the DEIS, it has concerns regarding any Lake Okeechobee flows into the Caloosahatchee River Estuary ("CRE") through S-79 greater than are 6,500 cfs; CCA Florida asks that these flows be managed in a way that will do the least amount of damage. These extreme flows damage the CRE and impact the downstream region that includes San Carlos Bay, Estero Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, some of the dry season benefits to the CRE will not be realized until the C-43 Reservoir is operational. The WCP (water control plan) should consider the Lake Okeechobee as a fresh water source to supply flows to CRE.

CCA Florida has been engaged in CERP/CEPP process and, most recently, LOSOM public comment and participation since its inception, and has previously supported LOSOM Iteration CC. CCA Florida has reviewed the Preferred Alternative and supports it and the DEIS.

Very truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Kennedy".

Michael Kennedy
Chair, CCA Florida Water Resources Committee