



County Administration

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Verdenia C. Baker

*"An Equal Opportunity
Affirmative Action Employer"*

November 26, 2019

Drew Bartlett
Executive Director
South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Dear Mr. Bartlett,

**Subject: Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project
Letter of Support**

Palm Beach County (County) supports the implementation of regional-scale and local-scale water storage and water quality treatment projects in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed consistent with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

As you are aware, planning for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP), a critical element of CERP, originally began in 2000 but was suspended in 2006. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) re-started planning in 2016 which culminated in a recommended plan that addresses key Everglades restoration, estuary protection and water supply objectives. The recommended plan is expected to mitigate undesirable high-volume freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee to the coastal estuaries, improve ecological conditions within the Lake, increase above-ground and below-ground water storage, restore wetlands within the watershed and provide ancillary water quality benefits.

The County urges the SFWMD Governing Board to communicate its support of LOWRP by providing the Corps with a timely letter of support, which will help ensure Congressional approval in the anticipated Water Resources Development Act of 2020. If needed, additional coordination with stakeholders to address concerns with some of the project elements could occur in parallel with future approvals and authorizations. The County also supports SFWMD expediting the implementation of several LOWRP features consistent with legislative funding.



Please continue to advance Everglades Restoration by supporting this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Verdenia C. Baker".

Verdenia C. Baker
County Administrator

cc: Members, Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
Jeremy McBryan, Water Resources Manager, Palm Beach County
Colonel Andrew Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Lt. Colonel Todd Polk, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Governing Board Members, South Florida Water Management
District