

**Report to Congress for Future Water Resources Development (WRRDA 7001) Submission
Package**

Proposal Name: Lake Okeechobee Everglades Ecosystem Protection

Submission Date: 07/26/2017

Proposal ID Number: 952bb171-23f6-433f-a505-5690b78ab67b

Purpose of Proposal: The modification to the existing authorization would be as follows: Section 5158 (3) (G) (127) of title V of the Water Resources Development Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-114) is amended by striking “SOUTH SEMINOLE AND NORTH ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA” and adding “SOUTH SEMINOLE, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY AND OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA” and by striking “the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida” and adding “the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida and Okeechobee Utility Authority, Florida.” Section 5158 (3)(G)(127) of title V of the Water Resources Development Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-114) would now read – SOUTH SEMINOLE, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY AND OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA. – \$30,000,000 for wastewater infrastructure for the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida, and Okeechobee Utility Authority, Florida.” The modification would allow the Okeechobee Utility Authority to move forward with the Corps of Engineers to participate in the Environmental Infrastructure program, and pursue a project that would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, near where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee. As you are aware, Lake Okeechobee is the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions.

1. Administrative Details

Proposal Name: Lake Okeechobee Everglades Ecosystem Protection

by Agency: Okeechobee Utility Authority

Locations: FL

Date Submitted: 07/26/2017

Confirmation Number: 952bb171-23f6-433f-a505-5690b78ab67b

Supporting Documents

File Name	Date Uploaded
Grimsley-OUA.WRRDA.2017-5-23-17.pdf	07/26/2017
Okeechobee Utility Project Map.pdf	07/26/2017
Economic Council of Okeechobee Letter of Support.pdf	08/10/2017
Letter from City of Okeechobee.pdf	08/10/2017
Letter-OUA - Rooney.pdf	08/10/2017
OUA USACOE Letter 072017.pdf	08/10/2017
OUA-SFWMD-Support-June2017.pdf	08/10/2017
Letter of Support Federal WRRDA Grant Funding - Okeechobee.pdf	08/10/2017
Letter of Support to OUA Re. Centralized Wastewater System Treasure Isl....pdf	08/10/2017
Okeechobee Utility Authority 2016-proposal.pdf	08/10/2017

2. Provide the name of the primary sponsor and all non-Federal interests that have contributed or are expected to contribute toward the non-Federal share of the proposed feasibility study or modification.

Sponsor	Letter of Support
Okeechobee Utility Authority (Primary)	The project will collect and treat wastewater that will prevent nutrients from septic tanks systems to enter waters of the State of Florida (Taylor Creek) and Lake Okeechobee (headwaters to the Everglades). This project will directly support the Everglades/Lake Okeechobee Protection Acts, and is consistent with existing Corps of Engineers authority to carry out Environmental Infrastructure projects, which have been authorized in previous Water Resources Development Acts and funded in annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations legislation. In addition, this project will support the goals and objectives of several State agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District, and Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, which have made the protection of the headwaters, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades Ecosystem a priority.
No Data	Attached

3. State if this proposal is for a feasibility study, a modification to an authorized USACE feasibility study or a modification to an authorized USACE project. If it is a proposal for a modification, provide the authorized water resources development feasibility study or project name.

[x] Modification to an Authorized USACE Project : South Seminole and North Orange County Florida

4. Clearly articulate the specific project purpose(s) of the proposed study or modification. Demonstrate that the proposal is related to USACE mission and authorities and specifically address why additional or new authorization is needed.

The modification to the existing authorization would be as follows: Section 5158 (3) (G) (127) of title V of the Water Resources Development Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-114) is amended by striking “SOUTH SEMINOLE AND NORTH ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA” and adding “SOUTH SEMINOLE, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY AND OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA” and by striking “the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida” and adding “the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida and Okeechobee Utility Authority, Florida.” Section 5158 (3)(G)(127) of title V of the Water Resources Development Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-114) would now read – SOUTH SEMINOLE, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY AND OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA. – \$30,000,000 for wastewater infrastructure for the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida, and Okeechobee Utility Authority, Florida.” The modification would allow the Okeechobee Utility Authority to move forward with the Corps of Engineers to participate in the Environmental Infrastructure program, and pursue a project that would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, near where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee. As you are aware, Lake Okeechobee is the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions.

5. To the extent practicable, provide an estimate of the total cost, and the Federal and non-Federal share of those costs, of the proposed study and, separately, an estimate of the cost of construction or modification.

	Federal	Non-Federal	Total
Study	\$275,000	\$175,000	\$450,000
Construction	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$20,000,000

Explanation (if necessary)

6. To the extent practicable, describe the anticipated monetary and nonmonetary benefits of the proposal including benefits to the protection of human life and property; improvement to transportation; the national economy; the environment; or the national security interests of the United States.

The proposed Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee, the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions. Last summer, those flows discharged the noxious blue-green algae into Martin County's coastline, having a detrimental effect on the tourism economy. Since the project is designed to remove nutrients and bacteria, water quality impacts from the septic tank/package treatment plant discharges will be removed. These nutrient rich discharges lead to excessive growth of emergent and submerged plants such as cattails and the noxious blue-green algae. With the removal of these excessively elevated nutrients to the aquatic ecosystem, overall water quality will improve in the receiving body. Water clarity will improve which in turn will allow for native submerged plants (i.e., southern naiad, muskgrass, peppergrass and tapegrass) to thrive, thereby providing cover for marine species and a dependable food source for others.

7. Does local support exist? If 'Yes', describe the local support for the proposal.

Yes

Local Support Description

This project is supported by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, South Florida Water Management District, Okeechobee County, City of Okeechobee and Economic Council of Okeechobee. It also has the support of Senator Bill Nelson and Congressman Tom Rooney.

8. Does the primary sponsor named in (2.) above have the financial ability to provide for the required cost share?

Yes

Primary Sponsor Letter of Support

(As uploaded)

Grimsley_OUA.WRRDA.2017_5-23-17.pdf



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

COMMITTEES:

Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, *Chair*
Ethics and Elections, *Vice Chair*
Agriculture
Appropriations
Appropriations Subcommittee on Pre-K - 12 Education
Governmental Oversight and Accountability

SELECT COMMITTEE:

Joint Select Committee on Collective Bargaining

SENATOR DENISE GRIMSLEY

26th District

May 23, 2017

Mr. John Creasman, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to offer my support to the Okeechobee Utility Authority's Water Resources Reform and Development Act Grant application for removal of private septic systems and the East Side Force Main Project.

As you know, I have supported the Authority's actions at the state level to provide clean, safe, sanitary sewer services and the conversion of 'septic to sewer' that is much needed in the Lake Okeechobee region. Your efforts to be good stewards in assisting the state's clean water goals is appreciated.

The Nubbin Slough Watershed is a good project and I wholeheartedly offer my support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Grimsley".

Denise Grimsley
State Senator, District 26

DG/mm

REPLY TO:

- 295 E. Interlake Boulevard, Lake Placid, Florida 33852 (863) 465-2626
- 212 East Stuart Avenue, Lake Wales, Florida 33853 (863) 679-4847
- 410 Taylor Street, Suite 106, Punta Gorda, Florida 33950 (941) 575-5717
- 413 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5026

Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

JOE NEGRON
President of the Senate

ANITERE FLORES
President Pro Tempore

Map Document

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Okeechobee Utility Project Map.pdf

Additional Proposal Information

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Economic Council of Okeechobee Letter of Support.pdf



Economic Council of Okeechobee
Post Office Box 718
Okeechobee, Florida 34973
(863) 467-0200

July 19th, 2017

Mr. John Creasman, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

RE: Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project

Dear Mr. Creasman:

The Economic Council of Okeechobee supports the efforts of the Okeechobee Utility Authority to complete the Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project contingent upon the availability of grant funding to cover the total costs of the project.

Our economically-disadvantaged community has already contributed significant funds to this project and our designation as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern necessitates Federal funding to complete the construction of the project.

We recognize the significant impact that removing 1,600 septic tanks and drain fields would have on the environmentally-sensitive ecosystem in the Taylor Creek Watershed near Lake Okeechobee. Tourism and seasonal visitors account for a large portion of Okeechobee's economy, an industry that depends heavily on the health of Lake Okeechobee and its surrounding water bodies.

Completing this project would allow Okeechobee Utility Authority to grow their customer base benefitting the utility through improved operational efficiency. A more-efficient utility would in-turn benefit Okeechobee's economy making the community more attractive to new industry and business.

In addition, the Okeechobee Utility Authority will be able to meet their commitments to developers located in the project area.

For these reasons, and should funding become available, we support the Okeechobee Utility Authority's Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project.

If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank Irby".

Frank Irby, Chairman

Additional Proposal Information

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Letter from City of Okeechobee.pdf



City Of Okeechobee
55 SE 3rd Avenue
Okeechobee Florida 34974
(863) 763-3372
www.cityofokeechobee.com

Okeechobee City Council
Mayor Dowling Watford
Noel Chandler
Mike O'Connor
Gary Ritter
Monica Clark

July 18, 2017

Mr. John Creasman - Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA)
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

RE: WRRDA Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project Application

The City of Okeechobee is extremely concerned with nutrient runoff to Lake Okeechobee. We have been joining forces with municipalities and our county partners in an effort to alleviate these unwanted pollutants.

We fully support the OUA in their WRRDA application submittal in an effort to remove approximately 1,600 septic tank systems and several small wastewater package treatment plants in the Treasure Island area. The outfall for Taylor Creek to Lake Okeechobee is the S-193, which is directly affected by this project.

The proposed project will remove these possible nutrient rich waters, which if not captured, can easily make their way into Taylor Creek. These nutrient rich waters also speed the eutrophication and lead to aquatic emergent vegetation growth, such as blue green algae.

While we both realize that the project area is actually outside of the City of Okeechobee, it will improve the water quality in our region.

Again we fully support OUA's application, not only as one of our city's community partners, but as responsible stewards of our area. Working together we can make Okeechobee and our surrounding areas a better place to live and work, while being environmentally responsible.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Dowling R. Watford, Jr.
Mayor
City of Okeechobee

Additional Proposal Information

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Letter_OUA - Rooney.pdf

THOMAS J. ROONEY
17TH DISTRICT, Florida

DEPUTY WHIP

2180 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5792
<http://rooney.house.gov>

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1917

July 21, 2017

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. Douglas W. Lamont
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Headquarters, US Army Corps of Engineers
441 G. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Mr. Lamont,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Okeechobee Utility Authority's proposal to authorize a viable public utility infrastructure project that will protect Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystems and provide for the health and safety of residents and visitors in the Lake Okeechobee region.

This project will directly support the aquatic ecosystem restoration of the Indian River Lagoon, Caloosahatchee River/Estuarine System and the Everglades/Lake Okeechobee Protection Acts, and is consistent with existing Corps of Engineers authority to carry out Environmental Infrastructure projects, which have been authorized in previous Water Resources Development Acts and funded in annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations legislation.

The proposed Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, near where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee. As you are aware, Lake Okeechobee is the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions.

Since the project is designed to remove nutrients and bacteria, water quality impacts from the septic tank/package treatment plant discharges will be removed. These nutrient rich discharges lead to excessive growth of emergent and submerged plants such as cattails and noxious blue-green algae. With the removal of these elevated nutrients to the aquatic ecosystem, overall water quality will improve in the receiving body. Water clarity will improve which in turn will allow for native submerged plants (i.e., southern naiad, muskgrass, peppergrass and tapegrass) to thrive, thereby providing cover for marine species and a dependable food source for others.

Thank you for your consideration of this project. If you have any questions, please contact Ethan Abner in my office at Ethan.Abner@mail.house.gov or at (202) 225-5792.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress

Additional Proposal Information

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OUA USACOE Letter 072017.pdf



OKEECHOBEE UTILITY AUTHORITY
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, Florida 34974-4221

(863) 763-9460
FAX: (863) 467-4335

July 20, 2017

Ms. Lisa Kiefel, Planning Community of Practice
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW.
Attn: CECW-CE
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Re: Section 7001 Water Resources Reform and Development Act 2014

Dear Ms. Kiefel:

This letter is submitted in response to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers annual request for proposals in accordance with Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014). On behalf of the Okeechobee Utility Authority, I am submitting a proposed modification to environmental infrastructure projects that were authorized prior to the date of enactment of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (December 16, 2016).

I respectfully request that the Corps modify an existing authorization for an environmental infrastructure project in Florida, (Section 5158(3)(G)(127) of title V of the Water Resources Act of 2007) that has never been utilized to allow the Okeechobee Utility Authority to support a viable public utility infrastructure project that will protect Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystems and provide for the health and safety of residents and visitors in the Lake Okeechobee region. The Okeechobee Utility Authority would act as the local sponsor for the project.

This project will directly support the aquatic ecosystem restoration of the Indian River Lagoon, Caloosahatchee River/Estuarine System and the Everglades/Lake Okeechobee Protection Acts, and is consistent with existing Corps of Engineers authority to carry out Environmental Infrastructure projects, which have been authorized in previous Water Resources Development Acts and funded in annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations legislation.

The proposed Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields

indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, near where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee. As you are aware, Lake Okeechobee is the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions.

Since the project is designed to remove nutrients and bacteria, water quality impacts from the septic tank/package treatment plant discharges will be removed. These nutrient rich discharges lead to excessive growth of emergent and submerged plants such as cattails and noxious blue-green algae. With the removal of these elevated nutrients to the aquatic ecosystem, overall water quality will improve in the receiving body. Water clarity will improve which in turn will allow for native submerged plants (i.e., southern naiad, muskgrass, peppergrass and tapegrass) to thrive, thereby providing cover for marine species and a dependable food source for others.

In addition, this project will support the goals and objectives of several State agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District, and Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, which have made the protection of the headwaters, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades Ecosystem a priority.

The project has the direct support of Okeechobee County and the City of Okeechobee, Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the South Florida Water Management District are all aware of the project.

The total cost for this project is approximately \$20,000,000. The Okeechobee Utility Authority has the financial ability to provide up to 50% for this project.

Please find several letters attached providing support for the conceptual idea of the project.

Thank you for your consideration of this project. We look forward to discussing it with you further. If you have any questions for us, please contact our Washington consultant, Jim Davenport at 703-841-0626, or the Okeechobee Utility Authority Executive Director, John Hayford at 863-763-9460.

Sincerely,



John F. Hayford, P.E.
Executive Director
Okeechobee Utility Authority

Additional Proposal Information

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OUA_SFWMD_Support_June2017.pdf



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

June 30, 2017

Mr. John Creasman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

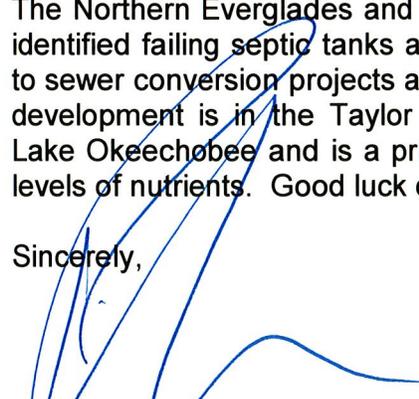
**Subject: Support for Okeechobee Utility Authority Treasure Island
Septic to Sewer project**

Dear Mr. Creasman:

The Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) is currently seeking a grant under the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) 2017 for the Treasure Island Wastewater Collection Expansion Program. Older or improperly maintained sewage and septic systems can leak. These kinds of leaks can contaminate interconnected water systems. Systems at risk range from individual yards and neighborhood or community lakes or waterways to the regional systems that flow eventually into wetlands, aquifers and the oceans, bays and estuaries surrounding Florida.

The Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (373.4595 Florida Statutes) identified failing septic tanks a contributor to degraded water quality and includes septic to sewer conversion projects as measures to improve water quality. The Treasure Island development is in the Taylor Creek Nubbin Slough Sub-watershed, which drains into Lake Okeechobee and is a priority area for water quality improvements due to elevated levels of nutrients. Good luck on this well-conceived undertaking.

Sincerely,



Peter Antonacci,
Executive Director

PA/tcb

Additional Proposal Information

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**Letter of Support Federal WRRDA Grant Funding -
Okeechobee.pdf**



Cary Pigman
Florida House of Representatives
District 55

cary.pigman@myfloridahouse.gov

Sebring Office

205 S. Commerce Ave., Suite B
Sebring, FL 33870-3626
(863) 386-6000
(863) 386-6002 fax

Okeechobee Office

55 South Parrott Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974-2968
(863) 462-5019

Tallahassee Office

214 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
(850) 717-5055

May 25, 2017

Mr. John Creasman, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

RE: Support for Federal WRRDA Grant Funding

Dear Chairman Creasman:

We appreciate the efforts by your Authority to prevent nutrients and polluted effluent, through the efforts of Septic Tank conversion, from entering the Treasure Island waterways that lead into the waters of Lake Okeechobee, into the Indian Riven Lagoon and further in the Everglades.

We understand that your application to be included in the upcoming WRRDA application will provide for removal of many private septic systems and the East Side Force Main Project. As you know we have been working to provided assistance to OUA in your wastewater projects and we will continue these efforts, however with State funding being limited your Federal Funding Grant search is commendable.

Because the Treasure Island project is located in the Nubbin Slough Sub-watershed and drains into Lake Okeechobee we offer this letter in support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cary Pigman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cary Pigman
Representative, District 55

Health Quality Subcommittee, Government Accountability Committee; Health & Human Services Committee;
Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee; Natural Resources & Public Lands Subcommittee;
Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee

Additional Proposal Information

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**Letter of Support to OUA Re. Centralized Wastewater System
Treasure Isl....pdf**

Board of County Commissioners Okeechobee County

From the desk of Terry Burroughs, Chairman, District 4

304 NW Second Street - Room 123 • Okeechobee, Florida 34972
Telephone 863-763-6441 Ext. 1 • Facsimile 863-763-0118



July 12, 2017

Mr. John Creasman, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

Re: Centralized Wastewater Collection System
Treasure Island Area

Our File No: 1114

Dear Chairman Creasman:

The Okeechobee Board of County Commissioners is pleased to submit this letter of support on behalf of Okeechobee Utility Authority, regarding the centralized wastewater collection system for the Treasure Island Area here in Okeechobee.

This project will remove approximately 1,600 septic tank systems and several small wastewater package treatment plants. The Treasure Island project area is very close to the S-193 structure which is the outfall for Taylor Creek in to Lake Okeechobee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terry W. Burroughs", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Terry W. Burroughs, Chairman
Okeechobee County
Board of County Commissioners
TWB/tlr

[1114-00015890.1ADMIN]

David Hazellief District 1	Bryant H. Culpepper District 2	Bradley G. Goodbread District 3	Terry Burroughs District 4	Kelly Owens District 5
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Additional Proposal Information

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Okeechobee Utility Authority 2016_proposal.pdf

1. Administrative Details

Proposal Name: Lake Okeechobee Everglades Ecosystem Protection

by Agency: Okeechobee Utility Authority

Locations: FL

POC Name: John Hayford

POC Phone: (863) 763-9460, Ext. 218

POC Email: jhayford@ouafl.com

Date Submitted: 09/15/2016

Confirmation Number: 6ab9d149-0d59-4fd9-adfe-44bc566d6171

Supporting Documents

File Name	Date Uploaded
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2. Provide the name of the primary sponsor and all non-Federal interests that have contributed or are expected to contribute toward the non-Federal share of the proposed feasibility study or modification.

Sponsor	Letter of Support
Okeechobee Utility Authority (Primary)	<p>The project will collect and treat wastewater that will prevent nutrients from septic tanks systems to enter waters of the State of Florida (Taylor Creek) and Lake Okeechobee (headwaters to the Everglades). This project will directly support the Everglades/Lake Okeechobee Protection Acts, and is consistent with existing Corps of Engineers authority to carry out Environmental Infrastructure projects, which have been authorized in previous Water Resources Development Acts and funded in annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations legislation. In addition, this project will support the goals and objectives of several State agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District, and Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, which have made the protection of the headwaters, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades Ecosystem a priority.</p>

3. State if this proposal is for a feasibility study, a modification to an authorized USACE feasibility study or a modification to an authorized USACE project. If it is a proposal for a modification, provide the authorized water resources development feasibility study or project name.

[x] Modification to an Authorized USACE Project : South Seminole and North Orange County Florida

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Section 5158 (3)(G)(127) of title V of the Water Resources Development Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-114) would now read –

SOUTH SEMINOLE, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY AND OKEECHOBEE COUNTY, FLORIDA. – \$30,000,000 for wastewater infrastructure for the South Seminole and North Orange County Wastewater Transmission Authority, Florida, and Okeechobee Utility Authority, Florida.”

The modification would allow the Okeechobee Utility Authority to move forward with the Corps of Engineers to participate in the Environmental Infrastructure program, and pursue a project that would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, near where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee. As you are aware, Lake Okeechobee is the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions.

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Explanation (if necessary)

6. To the extent practicable, describe the anticipated monetary and nonmonetary benefits of the proposal including benefits to the protection of human life and property; improvement to transportation; the national economy; the environment; or the national security interests of the United States.

The proposed Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project would provide for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. The flow from these facilities either directly or indirectly flow into tributaries to Taylor Creek, where Taylor Creek flows into Lake Okeechobee, the headwaters for the Everglades. Additionally, flows from the lake are periodically diverted towards marine estuaries located on both the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal regions. This summer, those flows discharged the noxious blue-green algae into Martin County's coastline, having a detrimental effect on the tourism economy.

Since the project is designed to remove nutrients and bacteria, water quality impacts from the septic tank/package treatment plant discharges will be removed. These nutrient rich discharges lead to excessive growth of emergent and submerged plants such as cattails and the noxious blue-green algae. With the removal of these excessively elevated nutrients to the aquatic ecosystem, overall water quality will improve in the receiving body. Water clarity will improve which in turn will allow for native submerged plants (i.e., southern naiad, muskgrass, peppergrass and tapegrass) to thrive, thereby providing cover for marine species and a dependable food source for others.

7. Does local support exist? If 'Yes', describe the local support for the proposal.

Yes

Local Support Description

This project is supported by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, South Florida Water Management District, Okeechobee County, City of Okeechobee and Economic Council of Okeechobee. It also has the support of Senator Bill Nelson and Congressman Tom Rooney.

8. Does the primary sponsor named in (2.) above have the financial ability to provide for the required cost share?

Yes