



May 3, 2024

South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Dear Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District,

On behalf of the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Lower Kissimmee Basin Stormwater Treatment Area (LKBSTA). ASA is the nation's recreational fishing trade association and represents sportfishing manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, and angler advocacy groups, as well as the interests of America's 54.5 million recreational anglers, over 4.3 million of whom reside in or frequent Florida. ASA also safeguards and promotes the social, economic, and conservation values of sportfishing in America, which result in a \$148 billion per year impact on the nation's economy. In Florida, the Fishing Capital of the World, this translates to a significant \$13.9 billion economic engine supporting over 120,000 jobs and makes clean waters, abundant fisheries, and access to fishing opportunities in the state of paramount importance to our industry.

The LKBSTA is critical to the restoration and long-term health of Lake Okeechobee, and the fish that rely on this sensitive ecosystem. ASA urges the South Florida Water Management District to advance the project.

As it stands, Lake Okeechobee's high phosphorous levels are harmful to fisheries in the region. All too often, algal blooms caused by excess phosphorus deplete oxygen in the water, result in fish kills, and negatively impact recreational fishing opportunities on and downstream of the Lake. The LKBSTA is an innovative solution that can reduce the toxic levels of nutrients that can contribute to algal blooms, restoring the quality of water entering Lake Okeechobee from the Kissimmee River and other canals North of the lake. The stormwater treatment area would remove phosphorous in bulk, drastically reducing the likelihood of algal blooms.

When discharges from Lake Okeechobee occur, high phosphorus levels also cause problems for fish, aquatic ecosystems, and ultimately recreational fishing opportunities in the rivers, estuaries, and coastal areas that receive high-nutrient water from the Lake. This kills jobs, closes businesses and deters tourism tied to sportfishing.

As part of the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan, the LKBSTA is part of the solution to the water quality issues cause by high nutrients in the South Florida region. This project can make a lasting difference in water quality of Lake Okeechobee and across the broader region.

AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

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The American Sportfishing Association strongly supports the LKBSTA and urges the SFWMD to move forward with this project expeditiously. Thank you for your consideration throughout these critical stages.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martha Guyas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Martha" being more prominent than the last name "Guyas".

Martha Guyas  
Southeast Fisheries Policy Director  
American Sportfishing Association

CC: Drew Bartlett, Executive Director, SFWMD