



April 23, 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,

Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving North America's wetlands. Driven by science and powered by more than a million members, Ducks Unlimited has restored or protected more than 18 million acres across the continent.

The Lower Kissimmee Basin Stormwater Treatment Area (LKBSTA) is critical to the restoration and sustainability of Lake Okeechobee and all the water bodies connected to it, as well as the communities and wildlife that depend on this precious ecosystem. Ducks Unlimited encourages members of the South Florida Water Management District to advance the LKBSTA project with urgency.

The LKBSTA is uniquely qualified to provide a state-of-the-art solution to Lake Okeechobee's harmful phosphorous levels, which will restore the health of the ecosystem and address the needs of wildlife in the region. Water entering Lake Okeechobee from the Kissimmee River and other canals North of the lake are contributing to algal blooms that have plagued the waterways where waterfowl and other wildlife reside. The completion of this stormwater treatment area is designed for bulk removal, pulling mass amounts of phosphorous from the water to reduce the presence of toxic blooms.

As we've seen in the analysis from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Basin Management Action Plan, this project is the missing puzzle piece and a crucial step toward restoring and making a lasting difference in the water quality in Lake Okeechobee and the broader South Florida region. With the implementation of the LKBSTA, the lake will be able to better provide flood protection, drinking water, agricultural irrigation and recreational activities for the surrounding communities.

Cleaner water directly correlates with a healthier ecosystem for the waterfowl, wildlife and people living throughout the greater Lake Okeechobee region. By making a concerted effort to improve the quality of water flowing through the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee, we can ensure a cleaner habitat for the species that call Florida home.

Ducks Unlimited supports getting this initiative across the finish line to make a real difference in the future for the waterfowl, wildlife and people that live throughout the greater Lake Okeechobee region. I urge you to continue supporting the LKBSTA through each critical stage ahead.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Wiley", with a stylized, cursive script.

Nick Wiley
Chief Operating Officer
Ducks Unlimited

CC: Drew Bartlett, Executive Director, SFWMD