



December 14, 2023

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

Dear Mr. Bartlett:

The undersigned organizations support the Lower Kissimmee Basin Stormwater Treatment Area (LKBSTA), a critical initiative to store and treat water before it reaches Lake Okeechobee.

Lake Okeechobee, the Northern Estuaries, and the Everglades, are world-class environmental treasures. Restoration of the River of Grass will improve the quality of life not only for wildlife, but also for the communities that live and recreate in South Florida. Located in the northern Everglades, Lake Okeechobee's watershed has unfortunately been under-represented in Everglades restoration investments. Without additional efforts, the state will continue to be at risk for widespread harmful algal blooms as a result of discharges to the estuaries to the east and west of Lake Okeechobee. This freshwater Lake is vital to our ecology and economy, and we must prioritize its restoration.

By designing the LKBSTA in the currently proposed location, we anticipate increased direct on-site water treatment capacity for one of the most phosphorus-enriched basins north of Lake Okeechobee. This project will not only reduce phosphorus loading to the Lake during the wet season, but its proximity to the C-38 canal can keep it hydrated during the dry season, which is necessary for its efficiency. By storing and treating water before it reaches the Lake, LKBSTA will support water quality goals while complementing other initiatives, including the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project and the Lake Okeechobee Component A Reservoir. Together, these projects will improve the health of the Lake, Northern Estuaries, and the Greater Everglades ecosystem.

We urge you to continue moving forward with this high-priority project, maximizing acreage to ensure the greatest benefit to this nutrient-laden watershed.

Thank you for your leadership and ongoing commitment to restoring America's Everglades.

Sincerely,

Kelly Cox, Esq. | Director of Everglades Policy  
Audubon Florida

Anna H. Upton | Chief Executive Officer  
Everglades Trust

Michele Arquette-Palermo | Water Policy Manager  
Conservancy of Southwest Florida

Matt DePaolis | Environmental Policy Director  
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

Raechel Littman, PhD, MPP | Program Manager  
Florida Bay Forever

Cara Capp | Senior Everglades Program Manager  
National Parks Conservation Association

Bradley Watson | Vice President of Policy and Engagement  
The Everglades Foundation

Mark Perry | Executive Director and CEO  
Florida Oceanographic Society