



Lake Okeechobee Watershed Program  
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December 14, 2007

Kenneth R. Dugger, Acting Chief  
Environmental Branch  
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers  
P. O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Dear Mr. Dugger:

On behalf of Audubon of Florida, I am pleased to submit these comments on the Corps' Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study (LORSS). We commented on previous drafts of the SEIS on April 24, August 20, and October 10, 2007. Audubon recommends that the Corps adopt the preferred alternative (Alternative E) and maintain it in effect until such time as CERP Band 1, Acceler8 projects, or until the Hoover Dike repairs, create opportunities for greater operational flexibility.

Alternative E tends to keep Lake Okeechobee shallower than desirable for its health. This is acceptable in the short term considering concerns over Hoover Dike safety, and especially in light of the October 30, 2007 "Herbert Hoover Dike Consensus Report" by the external peer review committee that recommended not allowing the lake to exceed 17 feet. Protecting human health and safety must take priority. Audubon supports repairing the Dike as soon as possible, not only for safety reasons, but to be able to return the lake to higher, more beneficial levels. In spite of the Dike's impairment, the Corps did a commendable job during the LORSS process of protecting the estuaries from increased harm, and even improving some functions to the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

This has been a difficult process and we commend your staff for their work throughout. They were accessible, helpful, and patient with us, and others. We look forward to working with them as the Corps works on future schedules that can take advantage of infrastructure improvements throughout the CS&F system.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Gray, Ph.D., Science Coordinator  
Lake Okeechobee Watershed Program