

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

August 10, 2016

Colonel Jason A. Kirk
District Commander
Jacksonville District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

Dear Colonel Kirk:

Still reeling from the 2015 drought, the salinity levels of Florida Bay remain high. This high salinity has caused massive damage to seagrasses, a vital component to a healthy ecosystem. In response, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has proposed improvements to allow for much-needed freshwater to flow into Florida Bay. I write in support of this plan, and urge your immediate consideration of the proposal.

The main source of water reaching Florida Bay is through direct rainfall. Unfortunately, as you are well aware, rain has been sporadic, resulting in Florida Bay's salinity levels registering at twice the level of ocean water. On July 14, 2016, the SFWMD submitted an operational plan that will provide an estimated 6.5 billion gallons per year of freshwater flows to the bay, giving the ecology of the area a fighting chance to rebound. It is important to note this proposal will not require any federal dollars. The improvements will be completely funded by the state, and the SFWMD is prepared to commence the work immediately and complete the project prior to the upcoming dry season.

As water management will always be a crucial task for Florida, we must be vigilant when it comes to the needs of our marine areas and wetlands and not succumb to bureaucratic delay. I respectfully request you review the required permitting necessary for the SFWMD to begin its work in restoring Florida Bay as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator