

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2016

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army – Civil Works
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

I write today with urgency in requesting immediate relief for Florida's Treasure Coast, which is experiencing an overgrowth of cyanobacteria, or "blue-green algae." This harmful algal bloom is encasing portions of Martin and St. Lucie Counties, forcing the closure of many beaches and eliciting rightful concerns over the health implications to Floridians and of our cherished ecosystems.

Discharges from Lake Okeechobee, which have been ongoing since January, have sent billions of gallons of water into the estuary. This has inundated the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon with an influx of fresh water, leading to lower levels of salinity, and as recent press reports have noted, have pushed the algae into the habitat. The blooms have created areas unsafe for people and animals, and are creating unknown damage to the environment.

I fully understand and respect the goals of the Army Corps of Engineers, and its commitment to ensuring the safety of lives surrounding the Herbert Hoover Dike. However, as the discharges continue to harm the delicate ecosystems, which so many Floridians rely on both environmentally and economically, I request the Corps take any actions possible to cease discharges until the balance and health of the area can be restored. The occurrence of natural disasters, such as the situation we currently face, is a time to work together to find solutions. I implore you to do all you can to ensure the ecosystems are given every opportunity to recover. While this request is under consideration, I welcome you to visit the area to experience the algal bloom firsthand.

Respectfully,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator