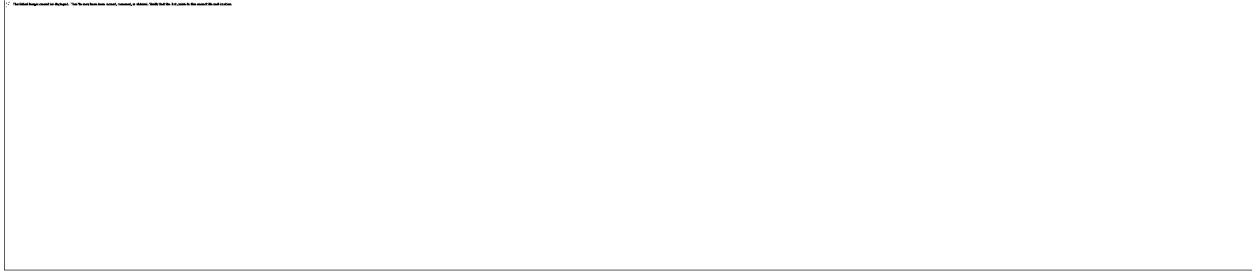


From: Governor's Press Office [Governor'sPressOffice@eog.myflorida.com]
Sent: 8/10/2018 10:40:55 PM
Subject: Gov. Scott: With Federal Action Uncertain, Florida Lays out Clear Plan for Lake Okeechobee
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Scott: With Federal Action Uncertain, Florida Lays out Clear Plan for Lake Okeechobee

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, after touring the St. Lucie River in Martin County, Governor Rick Scott directed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to take additional steps to reduce harmful water discharges from Lake Okeechobee controlled by the federal government.

These actions include:

- ✓ Additional scientific analysis of water management decisions to reduce the need for water discharges that cause harmful algal blooms in Florida communities;
- ✓ Additional public awareness of what key Everglades restoration projects are awaiting federal government approval and funding;
- ✓ Continued urging of the Corps to revisit their Lake Okeechobee water release management plan now that Governor Scott has secured full funding for the rehabilitation of the federal Herbert Hoover Dike; and
- ✓ A complete study of what benefits full federal funding of \$200 million annually for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan would provide.

Governor Scott said, “For too long, Floridians have had to deal with harmful algal blooms caused by the federal government releasing water from Lake Okeechobee into our rivers and coastal estuaries. Although the State of Florida has made progress on important projects to help alleviate the impact that chronic federal underfunding of this federal water system is causing, more needs to be done.

“As Governor, I will direct our state agencies to help solve this problem and will stop at nothing to protect Floridians, but we need the federal government, especially Congress, to come to the table. **They are currently short nearly a billion dollars in their fair share of contributions for Everglades restoration. Also, the important EAA Reservoir project that we accelerated in Florida to store more water south of Lake Okeechobee is awaiting Congressional approval.** While we continue to wait, the South Florida Water Management District and DEP will again step up to take additional action to mitigate this disaster.”

The Governor is directing DEP and SFWMD to do the following:

- **Governor Scott is directing the SFWMD to not only continue to analyze all water management actions it can take during the wet season, but also actions that can be taken during the dry season to reduce damaging discharges in the future.**
 - To bolster the continued efforts of the talented and knowledgeable staff of the SFWMD, he's also directing them to coordinate with state research institutions, like a public university with expertise in water management, and state agencies as needed to provide sound science and information to inform future decisions regarding the management of Lake Okeechobee.
 - This study should include consideration for the Corps of what the full capacity of the Dike would be once it is fixed and fully operational and what this would mean for understanding maximum and minimum lake levels.

- **Now that Governor Scott has secured full funding for the federal Herbert Hoover Dike, it is unacceptable that the Army Corps of Engineers' hasn't revisited its long-range plan for the Lake. The Corps must immediately act and ensure that Lake operations are analyzed to identify opportunities to further minimize discharges while Florida waits for the Corps to revise the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS).**
 - The current Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule was established by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2008.
 - The LORS, an interim schedule, was scheduled to be updated after three years, but due to the continued federal delays in repairing the federal Herbert Hoover Dike, this plan has not been updated.
 - LORS controls how much water can be stored in the Lake, and when and how the water from the Lake is moved to surrounding areas, including the harmful discharges to the coastal estuaries, causing algal blooms.
 - Florida cannot afford another wet season without looking at lake operations to ensure they consider all factors of public safety, water supply needs for communities and environmental protection, including impacts to coastal communities and wildlife.

- **Governor Scott is also directing SFWMD to analyze how quickly key Everglades restoration projects could be expedited should the federal government start to contribute their fair share to Everglades restoration.**
 - As of August 2018, Florida has contributed more than \$2.3 billion (\$2,301,443,938) to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, a 50/50 state-federal partnership. The federal government has only contributed \$1.3 billion (\$1,349,032,924). **This means that the federal government is short \$952,411,014.**
 - Since the federal government continues to lag behind Florida's Everglades funding by nearly \$1 billion, despite Florida's continued requests for increased federal funding, the Governor is directing SFWMD to assess the ecosystem benefits of further expediting Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.
 - It is imperative that Congress understands the benefits that could be provided and impacts that could be mitigated, and when that could occur, if Congress lived up to this restoration partnership.
 - Under Governor Scott's leadership, Florida has expedited a number of key projects to clean, store and move water south in the Everglades. This includes the Governor's historic Restoration Strategies Plan, the C-43 reservoir, the C-44 storm water treatment area, as well as the EAA Reservoir.
 - Governor Scott is also the only Governor in Florida's history to dedicate state funding to repair the federal Herbert Hoover Dike, investing \$100 million in the project.

- **Governor Scott is also directing SFWMD to provide the public with updates, twice-a-month, of the status of the EAA reservoir, which is key to reducing harmful discharges and moving water south.**
 - The SFWMD expedited design and planning for this vital project.
 - Last month, it was approved by the White House Office of Office of Management and Budget, and transmitted to Congress, where it still awaits action.
 - This imperative project cannot move forward without Congressional authorization, and the public deserves frequent updates on the status of this critical project. Since Congress is not providing these updates, the state will.

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