



HENDRY COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hendry County Opposes Land Buy South of Lake

Negative and Misleading Coverage of Lake O, Hurts Hendry County

(January 10, 2017) – LaBelle, Fla. – On August 23, 2016 the Hendry County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution opposing actions that do not provide solutions for excessive water releases to the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River Estuaries.

The resolution specifically opposes efforts which do not provide solutions to Lake Okeechobee releases such as purchasing land south of Lake Okeechobee.

“Hendry County is committed to working with all of our partners to ensure the quality of the water flowing out of Lake Okeechobee meets or exceeds the standards set. However this can and should be done without sacrificing any agricultural lands in the process,” said Chairman Michael Swindle.

Agriculture is the chief industry in Hendry County. If agriculture declines, it will create a damaging ripple effect throughout the local economy. Local farmers produce 10 percent of all sugar produced in the United States and half of Florida’s sweet corn crop. Hendry is the State’s top citrus-producing county with over 90 million gallons of premium orange juice packaged each year. Purchasing agricultural lands south of the Lake will have a direct effect on the quality of life in our County and all communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee.

Hendry County works tirelessly with South Florida Water Management in implementing the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS) and their projects for Everglades’ restoration.

The resolution speaks specifically to the need for the acceleration of funding and completion of existing approved projects identified in the IDS affecting Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie River. It also calls for the continued and increased commitment of State and Federal funding to complete critical projects.

Hendry County recognizes and agrees with South Florida Water Management that water stored north of Lake Okeechobee provides the greatest flexibility for operating the water management system to balance and improve missions of flood control, water supply, water quality and natural systems.

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Coverage over water discharges from Lake Okeechobee have been both inaccurate and one-sided, with the most recent being the Weather Channel's documentary "Toxic Lake". Hendry County strongly agrees with Congressman Rooney's statement about this piece: ["While I'm pleased that the Weather Channel is drawing more attention to the struggles surrounding the Lake, I strongly disagree with their one-sided reporting on this complicated and years-long issue."](#)

Tourism in Hendry County has a \$30 million dollar economic impact to the area with the majority of those funds being generated by activities on Lake Okeechobee. The recent misguided media coverage will unfortunately have a lasting effect on tourism to the area.

Lake Okeechobee is not toxic as evident by the largemouth bass that are frequently caught by anglers. The endangered snail kite population has seen a large boost to its numbers in recent years due the favorable conditions of the Lake it calls home. These are but a few examples of the splendor Lake Okeechobee holds. Hendry County welcomes visitors to come and see the wonders of Lake Okeechobee and our agricultural community first hand.

"We hope everyone will take the time to come and decide for themselves the beauty of the second largest lake in the U.S., Lake Okeechobee, and discover more about Hendry County," said Commissioner Darrell Harris, Chair Hendry County Tourist Development Council.

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(Please feel free to contact us for an interview, discussion or questions.)