



YOUR VIEW

OUR INDIAN RIVER LAGOON

Gary Goforth, *Stuart*

Negron's proposal is welcome news

During a summer plagued by toxic algae blooms and associated environmental and economic adversity due to destructive lake discharges, estuary advocates along both coasts applauded Sen. Joe Negron's announcement of a bold plan to purchase 60,000 acres south of Lake Okeechobee and construct a 120 billion gallon reservoir.

The reservoir would be the centerpiece of activities to convey, store and treat additional water south of the lake to help reduce estuary impacts and restore the historic flow to the Everglades and Florida Bay.

With the necessary outlet structures, conveyance canals and treatment areas, and working in combination with the C-43 Reservoir, the C-44 Reservoir/STA and additional storage north of the lake, the proposed reservoir could reduce lake-triggered high flow events to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries by upwards of 85 percent.

The reservoir would replace storage of lake water that was anticipated in the CERP EAA Reservoir but was reduced through the State's Restoration Strategies Project and the Central Everglades Protection Project.

As such, the funding for the project should qualify for 50 percent federal cost share.

The timing of Sen. Negron's plan is critical, as it affords coordination with the Corps of Engineers' efforts to rehabilitate Herbert Hoover Dike through an additional outlet structure along the southern shore of the lake, coordination with the CERP planning effort to create additional storage around Lake Okeechobee, and coordination with the CERP Western Everglades Restoration Project through additional conveyance of lake water to the Western Basins and western Water Conservation Area 3A.

While short of the ideal goal of stopping all discharges to the estuaries, Negron's plan is a milestone for estuary and Everglades restoration. Thank you, Senator, for continuing to champion the protection of the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.