



September 6, 2002

B. Terry Johnson
Planning Department
Southwest Florida Water Management District
2379 Broad Street
Brooksville, FL 34604-6899

RE: Priority Schedule for Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs)

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Charlotte Harbor NEP is a partnership program, created by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act, to protect and preserve the Charlotte Harbor estuary, recognized as an estuary of national significance. Since 1996, the Charlotte Harbor NEP has developed and completed a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the estuary and its watershed. This plan was developed utilizing four committees of citizens, industry, scientists, resource managers and policy makers. Our partnership includes, among others, Hardee, DeSoto, Polk and Charlotte Counties; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and both the Southwest and the South Florida Water Management Districts. The management plan was approved by the Management Conference in February 2000 and received its final approval by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in June 2001.

Within the CCMP are 15 Quantifiable Objectives that address the issues of water quality degradation, fish and wildlife habitat loss and hydrologic alterations. Quantifiable Objective HA-1, developed in part, with the cooperation and endorsement of SWFWMD representatives tasks the NEP to:

Establish values for seasonal minimum flows and levels beginning with the Myakka River at State Road 72 and for Big Slough; the Peace River at Bartow, Zolfo Springs, and Arcadia; and for the tributaries Horse Creek, Joshua Creek, Shell Creek, and the lower Peace River/ upper estuary by the year 2005. Achieve these minimum seasonal flows by the year 2020.

The Program is pleased to note that your proposed schedule will meet the timeframe in this goal for the main stems of the Peace and Myakka Rivers and includes waterbodies not specifically mentioned in this goal such as Cow Pen Slough and Lake Hancock. However, we would also like to see that the tributaries Horse, Joshua and Shell Creeks be considered for minimum flows and levels development by 2005 as well. The Program feels that appropriate flow levels should be apportioned separately to each of these tributaries to afford greater protection rather than in combination with the main stem of the Peace River as is currently proposed by the District's schedule.

Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program



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We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding the priority schedule for minimum flows and levels. If you have any questions, please contact either myself or Catherine Corbett at the program office at (239) 995-1777.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa B. Beever". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "L".

Lisa B. Beever, PhD, AICP
Director
LBB/CAC/cac