



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON  
FLORIDA

June 29, 2016

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

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy,

The water washing up on the beaches in Martin County, Florida is bright neon green. Officials there are concerned about the potential health risks associated with the blue-green algae plume forming off their coast and have closed several South Florida beaches as a result, just days before the popular Fourth of July holiday.

To prevent this environmental and economic crisis from spreading, I strongly urge the Army Corps of Engineers to take immediate action.

Business owners along the coast could incur significant financial losses if residents and visitors are forced to avoid the algae-laden waterways and beaches for long periods of time.

Earlier this year, the Army Corps was able to effectively lower Lake Okeechobee's water level and send more water into the southern part of the system by raising the water level in the L-29 canal. I strongly urge the Corps to consider doing that again.

While raising the water level in the L-29 canal would provide a short-term solution, I would urge the Corps to also evaluate storage options in the entire system as a long-term solution to send more water south. Restoring the natural flow of water south into the Everglades is a fundamental component of Everglades restoration and must be addressed immediately. In order to restore that natural flow, there must be multiple places to store water so that the timing and distribution more accurately mimic the historic sheetflow.

The next series of restoration projects should be well underway when Congress authorizes the Central Everglades Planning Project in the next water resources bill likely to come up for a vote soon. We cannot allow construction to stall unnecessarily. If these projects require land purchases, the state has Amendment One funds available that Florida voters expressly approved for that purpose.

I understand that this problem was not created overnight. It's a long-term problem that requires a long-term solution. But in the meantime, we must continue to take any and all corrective steps we can to avoid permanently damaging the state's ecosystem and tourism-driven economy.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this very serious matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

CC: Secretary Jewell, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Peter Antonacci, South Florida Water Management District