

Chairwoman Nita Lowey, Ranking Member Granger and Members of the Committee: as you develop appropriations for the 2021 fiscal year, I respectfully request that you prioritize public health and environmental protection by supporting efforts to combat Harmful Algal Blooms, supporting key restoration projects for America's Everglades, and avoiding taking any action that would undermine our efforts to protect human health.

First, I respectfully ask that you include report language prohibiting funds appropriated to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Control program from being used to spray toxic chemicals that are harmful to human health and detrimental to our environment. Instead, I urge that this funding is redirected towards supporting non-chemical control methods currently available, as well as supporting the research and development of new alternatives to chemical spraying.

In Florida, and across the rest of the nation, the federal government is spending billions of dollars to repair damage to our environment. By spraying additional pollutants, we are undermining our own restoration efforts and wasting our taxpayers' money while endangering their health.

Second, I urge the committee to provide the highest possible funding levels for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work on Everglades restoration. In particular, I request \$250 million in the USACE Construction account for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Program (SFER), as reflected in the President's FY 2021 Budget Request.

Here's why: infrastructure built by the federal government decades ago to alter the flow of water in Florida is now threatening public health in Florida. Water meant to sustain the Everglades and

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Florida's public water needs is instead trapped in Lake Okeechobee until it threatens a massive public safety disaster by breaching the Herbert Hoover Dike. At that point, it is forced artificially to the east coast where it causes massive public health problems.

Frankly, the system puts people in our state at risk even when it is operating exactly as designed. This is because the freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee frequently contain toxic harmful algal blooms above the level that the EPA says is safe for human contact. This system's operations must change and its infrastructure must be substantially upgraded.

In addition to adequately funding these restoration projects, prioritization of the projects is essential to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent where they will have the biggest impact.

For these reasons, I am requesting that this committee include Report language that prioritizes the construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir. The construction of the EAA Reservoir will allow water to flow south to the parched everglades and Florida Bay while reducing the damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the east and west coasts of Florida. It is imperative that this project be prioritized and expedited.

Similarly, it is imperative that robust funding be provided for IRLS components of CERP, specifically for the completion of C-44 Reservoir and to allow design work on the C-23 and C-24 Reservoirs to move ahead at maximum speed.

Funding Everglades restoration efforts while also prioritizing key projects is the only way to protect the health of the people of Florida and our environment.

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Last but certainly not least, much more must also be done to combat HABs and their toxic impacts. We need to learn more about the true extent of the health risks and we need to develop new technology to prevent subjecting the American people to these risks. Therefore, I am also requesting robust funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center (ERDC) Aquatic Nuisance Research Program to support HAB research. In addition to robust funding, I request report language be included that directs the funds towards research and development of strategies to detect, prevent, manage, and reduce negative impacts of HAB species that cause problems in Florida's waterways and waterways all across the country.

I thank the committee for your time and for your consideration of my requests.