

## Tell the Army Corps What the Refuge Needs from Lake O

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One of the primary determinants of the water level in the Caloosahatchee River is the Army Corps of Engineers' water control plan, referred to as the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). The way this schedule was written and implemented was a major contributor to the ecological attack that the Refuge experienced last summer and fall.

The Army Corps is just beginning a study that could take as long as four years, and that will result in new guidelines for the operation of Lake O. These new guidelines are referred to as the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). See [more](#). The city of Sanibel has developed a set of recommendations and comments that it wants the Corps to consider as it develops LOSOM. Many of these recommendations and considerations have been discussed in previous newsletters, and we deem them to be critical to the long-term health of the Refuge.

Some of the key components of the city's letter are:

- It is important to not wait four years to eliminate at least some of the components of the current release schedule that are harmful to the Refuge.
- The new release schedule must reflect shared adversity on behalf of all the impacted constituencies. To put this in context, some people are encouraging the Corps to not consider the impact of red tide or blue green algae on our environment when it establishes a new release schedule for Lake O. See [more](#). We think that as the Corps develops LOSOM it is essential that it takes into consideration factors such as water quality and nutrient load.
- It is critical that the Caloosahatchee River receives an appropriate amount of water from Lake O in the dry season to ensure the health of the river. In similar fashion, it is critical that water levels in Lake O not be held at artificially high levels leading into the wet season.
- The Corps should evaluate whether the optimal water levels as specified in the current release schedule (12.5 feet to 15.5 feet) should be lowered.

The current release schedule has been in place for more than a decade, and it is reasonable to believe that LOSOM will be in place for a lengthy period of time. Given that and the impact of the release schedule on the Refuge, **it is vitally important that as many people as possible write to the Corps** and express their support for the recommendations and comments made by the city of Sanibel.

Please click [here](#) to send a letter to voice your support of the city's recommendations.

P.S. In case you missed it: The Florida legislature is in session until May 3. Governor DeSantis needs the support of the legislature to accomplish the environmental goals he has established. See [more](#).