

## **The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition**

Caribbean Conservation Corporation & Sea Turtle Survival League •  
Environmental Defense • Natural Resources Defense Council • Reef Relief •  
Surfrider Foundation • The Ocean Conservancy

December 10, 2007

Governor Charlie Crist  
Office of the Governor  
The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

RE: Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin

Governor Crist,

In anticipation of your upcoming meetings with Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue and Alabama Governor Bob Riley, the Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition (Coalition) would like to restate our serious concerns regarding the reduction of water flows in the ACF as well as our support for Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Mike Sole's recent letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) dated December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

The Coalition's steering committee organizations represent millions of citizens across the country. In Florida we have over 200,000 members and activists who are deeply concerned for Florida's unique coastal and ocean environment. Apalachicola Bay is a prime example of the complexity and importance of Florida's diverse ecosystems and we support Secretary Sole's assessment of the significant damage occurring to that ecosystem due to reduced water flows in the ACF. We have full confidence that you, Secretary Sole and the DEP team will vigorously defend Florida's coastal resources.

When your meetings commence we ask that you keep two issues in mind. First and foremost is negotiating adjustment of water flows during the spring spawning season that takes place February through May each year. While extensive environmental damage is currently taking place within the lower riverine and the estuarine portions of the ACF system due to implementation of the Corps 'Exceptional Drought Operations' (EDO) policy, continued reductions through this critical period may very well cause an ecological collapse to the Apalachicola Bay ecosystem. This would precipitate not only a catastrophic economic loss to Florida's oyster industry and the loss of endangered species that Florida and the Nation have invested in so immensely to preserve; it will risk losing this unique ecosystem, as we know it, to an altered habitat with unknown long term consequences.

Second, preventative measures are necessary to reduce the likelihood of this situation recurring. All the communities in the ACF basin must become more balanced in their use of the limited water resources the system can provide so as to maintain the ecological integrity of all ecosystems it supports. Long term agreements regarding alternative water sources as well as advanced water treatment, conservation and reuse for all communities within the Tri-State ACF system should be a vital point of discussion.

9 Island Avenue, Suite 501, Miami Beach, FL 33139  
(305) 586-1961 • [info@flcoastalandocean.org](mailto:info@flcoastalandocean.org)  
[www.flcoastalandocean.org](http://www.flcoastalandocean.org)

Clearly, public and stakeholder input were severely compromised when comment periods for the rapidly approved and implemented EDO policy for the ACF system were shortened from 135 days to 14 days. Secretary Sole has brought forth clear, undeniable flaws in Corps policy that was implemented due to limits on open discussion and inadequate consideration of broader impacts of the Corps EDO policy.

We applaud your efforts to continue an open dialogue to ensure the healthy, productive, long term viability for this unique aquatic ecosystem that so connects our State to its old Florida roots. Florida's coastal and ocean resources are truly special. Your resolve and dedication to their protection is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gary Appelson – Caribbean Conservation Corp.  
Sarah Chasis – Natural Resources Defense Council  
Ericka D'Avanzo – Surfrider Foundation  
Paul Johnson – Reef Relief  
Jerry Karnas – Environmental Defense  
David White – The Ocean Conservancy

cc: Honorable Members of Florida's Congressional Delegation Lieutenant General  
Robert L. Van Antwerp, Army Corps of Engineers  
Jim Connaughton, U.S. Council on Environmental Quality  
Dirk Kempthorne, U.S. Dept of Interior  
Dale Hall, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Gail Carmody, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Curtis Flakes, Army Corp of Engineers  
Mike Sole, Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
Ken Haddad, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Distribution