

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

October 26, 2007

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

Governor Crist,

The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition would like to commend you for your swift and decisive leadership in the growing dispute over the State of Georgia's effort to restrict releases of water into rivers that empty into the Apalachicola Bay estuary and Gulf of Mexico. The Coalition shares the concerns you so eloquently addressed to President Bush, and supports your strong leadership on this critical issue.

We are also extremely pleased with your teams at the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; they quickly reacted to this issue when it reached a critical level last week. The Department's statement to the Army Corps of Engineers showed genuine concern for the working waterfronts and environmentally sensitive estuarine areas and endangered and threatened species of the Panhandle affected by Georgia's actions that both the state and the nation have invested so much to protect.

The waters off Apalachicola, in the Panhandle, produce 90 percent of the oysters in Florida and 15 percent of the oysters harvested in the United States. The continued health of ecosystems such as this is critically important and we are most appreciative that you're standing strong to protect such habitats from additional degradation.

Through copies of this letter, we call on Florida's Congressional Delegation, relevant federal agencies and the White House Council on Environmental Quality to strongly oppose current efforts by the State of Georgia to significantly reduce water flows to Florida's Gulf Coast estuaries. While we recognize and appreciate the significant challenges that Georgia faces to address water shortages due to the current drought, we strongly urge that any proposed remedy must not come at the expense of the economic and ecological health of Florida's Gulf Coast.

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
Mike Sole, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Ken Haddad, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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