

# CONTINENTAL

COUNTRY CLUB 

A RESIDENT OWNED-COMMUNITY

November 18, 1999

Mr. Al Coogler, Chair Ex-Officio  
Withlacoochee River Basin Board  
Southwest Florida Water Management District  
2379 Broad Street  
Brooksville, FL 34609-6899

Subject: FY2000 Funding Request for Lake Okahumpka  
Outfall Retrofit

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Dear Mr. Coogler:

This letter is a request for assistance in restoring Lake Okahumpka's water surface levels to pre-1997 elevations. The following paragraphs briefly explain sequential events and efforts that have transpired in attempt to address the declining levels of Lake Okahumpka in Sumter County.

In September 1998 Mr. Dick Meek, a resident of the Continental Country Club and member of the Save Okahumpka Committee, requested the District to investigate the declining level of Lake Okahumpka. In response, the District launched an investigation and for the past year I have had the pleasurable opportunity to work with District staff in earnest efforts to determine the cause. My active participation in the investigative process enabled me to spend many hours accompanying staff during field investigations.

The investigation included a comprehensive look at the conveyance system and the watershed. This necessitated coordination efforts with St. Johns River Water Management District and Lake County Water Authority. Two public meetings were conducted at the Continental Country Club with the most recent being on October 14, 1999. During this meeting District staff presented the investigative findings to Mrs. Gale Bass of State Representative Everett Kelly's office, Sumter County Commission Chairman Benny Strickland, and approximately 75 citizens. The staff investigation concluded that the 1997 replacement and subsequent failure of two culverts, which allow water to both enter and exit the lake, to be a major contributing factor in the recent lake level decline.

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These culverts are in the berm situated along the southern edge of the lake and link the lake to the wetland to its south which in turn flows to Hogeye Sink. The erosion induced lowering of these culverts has created a draining effect on the lake. From this, public use and enjoyment of the lake has been restricted due to loss of boat ramp access, increased aquatic vegetation, and navigational difficulties associated with low water levels. Staff recommended that one corrective option would be to replace and modify the culverts which would then retain water on the lake side of the berm instead of allowing the water to flow into Hogeye Sink. This would aid in restoring the lake to previous levels.

Please consider this letter as a formal request for the Withlacoochee River Basin Board to take on this project in efforts to restore the water surface elevations of Lake Okahumpka to pre-1997 levels. Implementation of this project would aid in restoring the public use and enjoyment of the lake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. L. Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

W. L. "Bill" Mitchell  
Chairman

Save Lake Okahumpka Committee of The Continental Country Club  
Board of Directors

cc: Representative Everett A. Kelly, House District 42  
Withlacoochee River Basin Board Members  
E.D. Vergara, Executive Director, SWFWMD  
Bruce Wirth, P.E., Director, Resource Management Department  
Gene Altman, E.I., Project Manager, Resource Management Dept.  
Benny Strickland, County Commissioner, Sumter County