

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

RESOLUTION NO. 16-6.12

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA REQUESTING THAT THE GOVERNOR REQUEST A FEDERAL DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY UNDER THE STAFFORD ACT, AND REQUESTING SPECIFIC SUPPORT FROM THE AGENCIES OF FLORIDA, INCLUDING STAFF SUPPORT, APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS, EMERGENCY WATER MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS, AND OTHER AVAILABLE MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON AND THE ST. LUCIE ESTUARY, AND OTHER FLORIDA ESTUARINE AREAS IMPACTED BY EXCESSIVE BLUE GREEN ALGAE.

WHEREAS, extensive historical modifications to the south Florida ecosystem and regional watersheds have significantly altered the hydrology of the region. It is recognized that Lake Okeechobee is part of a managed hydrologic system that receives inflows from various sources, including agricultural runoff and stormwater water from surrounding land uses. It is further recognized that the federal government and state water managers coordinate their efforts to maintain the lake levels for adequate flood protection and water uses consistent with federal and state regulations. To meet the regulatory requirements and achieve adequate lake levels during extreme storm events, at times state and federal water managers release Lake Okeechobee water through the C-44 canal. Lake releases can occur in massive volumes in short time periods, depending on the severity of the storm event. As a result, the Lake releases carry large influxes of low saline and nutrient rich water into the Northern Estuaries, including the St. Lucie Estuary. The increased discharges lower salinity levels and reduce water quality in the estuary, causing economic, environmental, and societal damage; and

WHEREAS, the recent volume of Lake Okeechobee releases in 2016 have resulted in abnormally low saline water combined with high nutrients in the C-44 and St. Lucie Estuary, creating ideal conditions for blue green algae blooms; and

WHEREAS, harmful blue green algae blooms and/or fish lesions have been observed in the St. Lucie Estuary in 2005, 2007, 2013, 2015, and 2016, all of which were years where damaging and excessive freshwater flows were made to the St. Lucie from Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, due to the presence of blue green algae, Martin County has posted "no human contact with the water" in and around the Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie Estuary, and coastal waters; and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners has consistently urged the state and federal governments to lessen the harmful Lake Okeechobee releases to the estuary through accelerated implementation of critical water management projects such as the Herbert Hoover Dike repairs, full implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), completion of the Kissimmee River Restoration, authorization of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), and the identification of additional storage and conveyance; and

WHEREAS, the residents of Martin County have directly contributed to these solutions through acquisition of 45,000 acres for various CERP projects, the funding for which has been voluntarily assessed, generating \$75 million for land acquisition costs, including \$27 million for the C-44 Reservoir Project; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Florida's voters overwhelmingly approved Amendment 1, an amendment to the Florida Constitution, requiring the state to generate dollars that can be used to fix an outdated water management system that is currently designed to divert massive quantities of lake water to the estuaries on each coast of Florida during high rain events; and

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie Estuary, and coastal waters and beaches are critical to our sub-regional economy through tourism, marine-related industries, real estate, commercial and recreational fisheries, and other economically essential industries; and

WHEREAS, history shows that when natural or manmade disasters strike, the tourism industry often experiences significant economic losses. Moreover, according to groundbreaking research by Oxford Economics, the damages experienced by the tourism industry are often predictable, long-lasting and far beyond the areas of immediate physical impact. It is also true that travelers and tourists can serve as the leading edge of economic recovery. Attracting tourists to an area that has experienced a crisis is one of the most effective means of rapidly spreading new dollars throughout an economy (Source: US Travel Association Road to Recovery report); and

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners passed a Declaration of State of Local Emergency, followed by the Governor's signing of Executive Order 16-155 declaring a State of Emergency, recognizing that toxic blue green algae poses a danger to health, life, property and the economic well-being of Martin County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, THAT:

1. Martin County requests that Governor Rick Scott make a request to President Barack Obama to declare a federal state of emergency pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act ("the Stafford Act");

2. Martin County requests that the State of Florida coordinate the implementation of air and water quality testing as well as any other testing that assesses recreational exposure at Martin County waterways and beaches affected by blue green algae and other locations (businesses, residential) where mats of algae have accumulated and have the potential to become inhaled and/or aerosolized;
3. Consistent with the Declaration of Emergency Executive Order 16-155, Martin County requests that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission continue surveying for detection of offshore blooms and to include in marine mammal necropsy procedures an analysis for the Microcystin toxin in the livers or other applicable organs of recovered animals;
4. Martin County requests that the State of Florida continue monitoring for blue green algae species and toxicity levels within locations where the algae is present. Additionally, we request that long-term research monitoring begin and continue in order to identify the cause(s), lifecycles, and impacts of blue green algae blooms on both people and environmental resources (e.g. oysters, seagrass, manatees, bottlenose dolphins, juvenile green turtles, fish, avian species, coral reefs) and to develop and implement preventative actions and recovery measures;
5. Martin County requests the State of Florida ensure state agency coordination in dealing with this state of emergency, and require that all state agencies report monitoring results in one location on the FDEP website, as well as create one map showing all monitoring locations for water, air, and wildlife, the type of monitoring equipment, and the parameters being tested;
6. Martin County requests that the South Florida Water Management District store additional water north of Lake Okeechobee in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes; work with state and community partners to explore every opportunity to increase water flowing south from Lake Okeechobee; store additional water through dispersed water storage projects; utilize temporary pumps in any location to facilitate the water management operations mentioned above; set budget amounts for these specific projects; and within 30 days of the date of this Resolution, publish a timeline for project milestones and project completions.
7. Martin County requests the State of Florida, consistent with its Declaration of Emergency Executive Order 16-155, immediately issue an emergency Request for Qualifications / Proposals for technologies to remove or render harmless the blue green algae in Lake Okeechobee and the C-44 canal prior to freshwater releases through the S-80 structure, and remove blue green algae in areas where it has accumulated throughout the estuary and provide an evaluation and ranking of responses to its RFQ/P and identify funding sources;

8. Martin County requests that the state and federal partners expedite the implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, including full implementation of the Indian River Lagoon-South project, and in addition, use Amendment 1 or any other appropriate funds to acquire additional land and design additional water storage, treatment, and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee, to redirect water that would otherwise be discharged into the estuaries, as recommended in the 2015 Independent Technical Review by the University of Florida Water Institute titled "Options to Reduce High Volume Freshwater Flows to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Move More Water from Lake Okeechobee to the Southern Everglades;"
9. Martin County requests immediate emergency and long term funding from the State of Florida to provide crisis and post-crisis funding for grants, marketing and other programs to repair the negative fiscal impacts to Martin County's economically essential industries, including but not limited to: tourism; marine-related; real estate; and commercial and recreational fishing. The purpose of such financial support should be to provide direct financial assistance for impacted businesses to recoup lost revenues due to the presence of pervasive toxic blue green algae bloom across the waterways in Martin County resulting from massive water releases form Lake Okeechobee.

DULY PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 6TH DAY OF JULY 2016.

ATTEST:


CAROLYN TIMMANN, CLERK OF THE
CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA:


ANNE SCOTT, CHAIR

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:


MICHAEL D. DURHAM,
COUNTY ATTORNEY