



City of Port St. Lucie

"A City for All Ages"

March 8, 2016

City Council

Gregory J. Oravec
Mayor

Linda Bartz
Vice Mayor
District 1

Michelle Lee Berger
District 2

Shannon M. Martin
District 3

Ronald E. Bowen
District 4

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
State of Florida
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

On behalf of the City Council, staff and citizens of Port St. Lucie, this letter serves to transmit the enclosed Resolution 16-R12 of the City Council, which requests that you:

1. Activate all available emergency and relief resources to protect the Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie Estuary.
2. Release funds to the South Florida Water Management District for temporary pumping and redirection of water to maximum capacity on District lands or other state lands, including but not limited to the Holey Land, Rotenberger Tracts and Water Conservation Areas.
3. Work to make state and federal economic assistance available to businesses damaged by the discharges.
4. Support and sign the Legacy Florida Bill.
5. Use Amendment 1 funds to move water south away from our estuaries.
6. Complete CERP.

We thank you for issuing Executive Order Number 16-69, declaring a state of emergency in Lee, Martin, and St. Lucie Counties, and for then activating the Business Emergency Operations Center. We hope that these are the first of many actions taken to address the state of emergency and its underlying causes (collectively, the "Problem") because the years have shown us that talking about the Problem is not enough and El Niño is an all too frequent phenomenon.

As you know, a big part of what makes Florida special is our waterways, and this is certainly true in Port St. Lucie and on the Treasure Coast. The Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie River are at the heart of who we are, our lifestyle and local economy. Tragically, right now, that heart is dying. Over our waters, the local office of the Florida Department of Health has posted signs which warn our residents and visitors from even touching the River. We believe this situation is untenable and hope you do too.

After our local taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars on converting septic tanks to a state of the art sewer system, on hundreds of acres of stormwater treatment areas and best practices for stormwater management, while continuing to pay property taxes to the South Florida Water Management District, how can we ask them to tolerate having a St. Lucie River

which cannot even be touched? As it relates to jobs and tourism, what should we tell the guests and ownership of the only Club Med in the continental United States, or how about Captain Ray Clarke, who just closed his boat tour operation for good (please see the attached letter)? Should we just chalk it up to El Niño and advise them to wait another decade for a comprehensive solution?

Governor, we know this Problem was not created in a day and there are many countervailing forces at work. As a result, we do not expect a perfect solution to be implemented in a day either. However, living with a River that cannot be touched is completely unacceptable, and it requires meaningful action to be taken now. Rather than waiting for that perfect solution—the home run, can we work together to hit some more singles and doubles? The State and City have a proven track record of working together to complete stormwater improvement projects, and we could make a substantive difference by storing water on the City's McCarty Ranch Property. How about if the State Department of Health, South Florida Water Management District and local State University partners help us locate the source of the bacteria that is making our waters unsafe to touch, and propose a solution that could be implemented by a State/local government coalition? These are just a couple of the many ways that we could attack the problem, and we remain your eager partner. I really believe if we just took the singles and doubles as they presented themselves, perhaps there would be a little less excitement than swinging for the fences, but we would end up winning nonetheless.

Thank you for your consideration and hard work on behalf of the people of Florida.

Very truly yours,



Gregory J. Oravec
Mayor

C: Vice Mayor & City Council
City Manager & City Attorney
Joseph Negron, Senate President-Designate
Denise Grimsley, Deputy Majority Leader
Gayle B. Harrell, Representative
Larry Lee, Jr., Representative
Cary Pigman, Representative
Debbie Mayfield, Representative
St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners
Martin County Board of County Commissioners
US Army Corps of Engineers

RESOLUTION 16-R12

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA, REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA, THROUGH EXECUTIVE ORDER AND/ OR OTHER POWERS AVAILABLE UNDER THE LAW, TO ACTIVATE ALL AVAILABLE STATE AND LOCAL EMERGENCY AND RELIEF RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON AND ST. LUCIE ESTUARY

WHEREAS, the Indian River Lagoon is a diverse, shallow-water estuary stretching across 40 percent of Florida's east coast; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon is an important commercial and recreational fishery and economic resource to the state and region. The total estimated annual economic value of the lagoon is \$3.7 billion, supporting 15,000 full and part-time jobs and providing recreational opportunities for 11 million people per year; and

WHEREAS, the St. Lucie River and Estuary is an ecological jewel on Florida's Treasure Coast that is integral to the environmental and economic well-being of Martin and St. Lucie Counties. The St. Lucie River is part of the larger Indian River Lagoon system, the most diverse estuarine environment in North America with more than 4,000 plant and animal species, including manatees, oysters, dolphins, sea turtles and seahorses; and

WHEREAS, extensive historical modifications to the St. Lucie River and its watershed have altered the hydrology of the region and as a result, heavy rainfall can bring large influxes of fresh water into the St. Lucie Estuary from storm water runoff within the basin, Lake Okeechobee releases or both. The increased freshwater flows affect salinity levels and water quality in the estuary, potentially causing environmental harm; and

WHEREAS, the Lagoon is at a turning point. The coming months could herald a slow recovery of this unique ecosystem or an imminent collapse of the remaining portion of the estuary that has been sustainable up to this point; and

WHEREAS, since the beginning of this year, the St. Lucie River Estuary water quality has been poor, in part due to low salinity levels and high bacteria content. Prolonged exposure to low salinity levels has been demonstrated to cause harm to natural shellfish communities and habitat.

WHEREAS, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners passed Resolution No. 16-2.3 on February 9, 2016, requesting the Governor take necessary action for the protection of the St. Lucie Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon.

WHEREAS, On February 10, 2016, the Florida Department of Health released a public advisory urging residents to avoid contact with the North Fork of the St. Lucie River due to high enteric bacteria levels.



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WHEREAS, on February 11, 2016, Governor Rick Scott sent a letter to the Secretary of the US Army Corps of Engineers requesting that the Corps take immediate action to relieve the flooding in the Everglades Water Conservation Areas and the releases of water from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries.

WHEREAS, this Council requests that the Governor declare an emergency so that the Counties can proceed to seek direct assistance with any and all agencies of the State of Florida as may be needed to meet this emergency.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. The City Council requests that the Governor of the State of Florida consider issuing an Executive Order, and/or other powers available under law, to activate all available State and Local emergency and relief resources and mechanisms to protect the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie Estuary.
2. The City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie requests that the State release funds to the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for temporary pumping and redirection of water to maximum capacity on SFWMD designated lands or other state lands, including but not limited to the Holey Land and Rotenberger tracts, and Water Conservation Areas.
3. The City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie requests that the State and Federal Government provide economic assistance to the businesses damaged by the discharges.
4. The City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie supports the passage of HB 989/SB 1168 "Legacy Florida," providing dedicated funding for Everglades restoration and funding in the House and Senate to provide short and long term storage and water quality treatment options.
5. The City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie requests the Legislature use Amendment 1 funds for design of 507,000 acre- feet of additional storage, treatment, and conveyance south of Lake Okeechobee, and for the associated purchase of identified land for said storage to redirect water that would otherwise be discharged into the estuaries, away from the estuaries, as recommended in the 2015 Independent Technical Review by the University of Florida Water Caloosahatchee Estuaries and Move More Water from Lake Okeechobee to the Southern Everglades.
6. The City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie urges completion of the CERP.
7. The City Clerk shall forward this Resolution to the Governor of the State of Florida.
8. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

RESOLUTION 16-R12

After motion and second, the vote on this resolution was as follows:

Mayor Gregory J. Oravec	<u>YES</u>
Vice Mayor Linda Bartz	<u>YES</u>
Councilwoman Michelle Lee Berger	<u>YES</u>
Councilwoman Shannon Martin	<u>YES</u>
Councilman Ronald E. Bowen	<u>YES</u>

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie, Florida, this 3rd day of March, 2016.



ATTEST:

BY: Karen A. Phillips
Karen A. Phillips, City Clerk

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE

BY: [Signature]
Gregory J. Oravec, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

BY: [Signature]
Interim City Attorney

RECEIVED

MAR 04 2016

PARKS & RECREATION DEPT.

St Lucie River Princess

"C" Larke Marine LLC d/b/a

1582 SE Ballantrae Ct

Port St Lucie, FL 34952

March 1, 2016

Sherman Conrad, City of Port St Lucie, Director of Parks and Recreation

2195 SE Airoso Blvd

Port St Lucie, FL 34984

Dear Sherman,

It is with sadness that I must notify you that I will be ceasing the Rivergate operation of the St Lucie River Princess effective at the end of this month.

It used to please me when passengers expressed joy in living here in Port St Lucie and pleased me even more when passengers said they'd like to live in Port St Lucie. In the last six years I've had the pleasure of showing OUR RIVER to over 15,000 passengers. I've been proud to tell them how a little fish camp on the River in a community of 400 residents became the catalyst for the development of the fastest growing city in the United States, now exceeding 175,000 residents.

The continued and unabated degradation of the River by the very governmental agencies in charge has reached the point where it is an embarrassment to take passengers out for an ecological and historical tour. Sixteen miles of the St Lucie River flows through the city of Port St Lucie. Like the 19 miles that flow through Martin County it has become an open sewer. Tragically our city's most treasured asset, OUR RIVER, is now a place to be avoided.

I'm in my 80's now so I probably won't be around when reason finally prevails - and it will. Clean water will flow once again in OUR RIVER. It will once again provide some 800 varieties of fish access to their former spawning estuary on the edge of the tropics. The birds will again nest at Bird Island. The bottle nosed dolphins will come back. A new River Princess will appear. Older residents will vow NEVER AGAIN, and younger residents will have trouble believing that THEIR RIVER was ever allowed to become a sewer.

Let us pray for that day.

Respectfully,


(Captain) Ray Clarke

Ps: Sherman, it has been my pleasure to work with you, Brad Keen and the rest of you staff. Best wishes to you all.

Cc: Brad Keen