Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2016

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Majority Leader
2421 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McCarthy:

Florida's waterways are in crisis and under assault by toxic blue-green algae. The pollution is devastating the economy, residents' way of life, small businesses, and wildlife along the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers. Local departments of health have placed advisories at several beaches and access points in the affected areas advising the general public to avoid contact with the water.

While this problem has been decades in the making, 2016 is uniquely dire. Historic, El Niño-fueled rainfall during our dry season led to early and ongoing polluted, freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee into the St. Lucie River to the east and the Caloosahatchee River to the west. As we enter the wet season and approach the more active months of hurricane season, the Army Corps of Engineers continues to discharge. These discharges are wreaking havoc on our nation's most biologically diverse estuary, the Indian River Lagoon, home to more than 4,000 species of plants and animals, including dozens of threatened or endangered species, dolphins, pelicans, and nearly 1/3 of America's manatee population. Conditions have led to a sadly predictable outbreak of toxic, blue-green algal blooms, calling forward memories of the economically and ecologically devastating "Lost Summer" of 2013.

While no problem of this magnitude can possibly be solved overnight, stakeholders at all levels of government must act. The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) is a subset of high impact Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects that will ultimately clean and store polluted Lake Okeechobee water before sending clean water south into the heart of the Everglades. Once complete, CEPP will reduce the need for harmful discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and help restore the natural sheet flow of water where it is most needed: Everglades National Park, Florida Bay, and Biscayne Bay .

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With the advocacy of our united delegation, the Water Resources Development Act (H.R.5303) will allow CEPP construction to commence. As you know, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has ordered the bill to be reported favorably, while S.2848 has been placed on the Senate Calendar. We respectfully urge you to schedule a vote on H.R.5303 as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,

Patrick E. Murphy
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Alcee L. Hastings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bill Posey
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Thomas J. Rooney
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Frederica S. Wilson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Lois Frankel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

David W. Jolly
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Curt Clawson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Carlos Curbelo
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc: The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader