

July 15, 1979

R3

Honorable President L. Holland  
Federal Reserve Senator  
Room 424, Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Holland:

You will recall our recent conversation and your recent correspondence with Chairman Eugene Furell of the Oklawaha Basin Recreation and Water Conservation and Control Authority in Lake County, concerning a Corps of Engineers study of the possibility of installing flood control as well as navigation on the entire Oklawaha basin. In an effort to provide material that would support our request for such a study, we have prepared the attached report on damage incurred this spring due to high water in the Oklawaha basin of Lake and along the Oklawaha River. The estimates of damage quoted are those reported by the property owners without editing on our part. They are probably somewhat higher than a strict appraisal could support, but the total of \$79,000 certainly indicates that a Oklawaha flood control project could be justified.

The Corps of Engineers estimate that it will cost approximately \$250,000 to make the necessary studies before the possibility of a flood control project could be properly evaluated. We realize that this will require a special appropriation and that it may take several years to secure an appropriation for this purpose. We have recently been informed that the counties along the Withlacoochee River, namely, Taylor, Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties, are seeking an appropriation to activate a previously authorized study of the feasibility of a navigation and flood control project on the Withlacoochee River. Honorable Jack Byrnes, Chairman of the Inver County Committee on procuring this project informs us that the Corps of Engineers estimate such a study would likewise cost \$250,000 or more. Needless to say, we are equally as interested in development of the Withlacoochee River, as we are in the Oklawaha River.

In the meantime, high water conditions prevail in the Oklawaha basin of Lake, while conditions in the Withlacoochee River are measurable near normal. Since the surface elevation of Lake Harris is now 63.5 feet above sea level, and the elevation of Lake Peacorville, tributary to the Withlacoochee River, is about 40 feet above sea level, it has occurred to us that it might be possible to divert water from the Oklawaha basin to the Withlacoochee basin thus relieving the Oklawaha River of some of its present load. Installation of the

Honorable Spencer L. Holland  
United States Senator  
Washington, D. C.

-2-

topography indicates that there is a natural drain from Helena Dam on Lake Harris into Lake Oklawaha and thence south of Wildwood under U. S. Highway 331 and the Seaboard Railroad into a bay head draining to the Withlacoochee River. This route is sketched on the attached map. These streams will need considerable improvement in order for them to carry an appreciable quantity of water, but we are presently engaged in attempting to secure some improvement so that some water could be diverted through this channel this season.

Conversation about these possibilities with the Oklawaha Basin Recreation and Water Conservation and Control Authority and with Mr. Wyzong lead to the suggestion that this might be a less expensive method of flood prevention in the Oklawaha basin than would the improvement of the Oklawaha River itself. Accordingly, we would like to suggest that the Corps of Engineers be requested to consider the possibility of a combined project to provide navigation and flood control in the Withlacoochee River and flood control and possibly navigation in the Oklawaha chain of lakes by means of a canal connecting the two basins. Our thought is that both the cost of the studies and the construction and operation of needed works might be materially less in the combined project than for two separate projects.

As mentioned above, this has been discussed by representatives of both basin authorities and they have agreed to pool their efforts to obtain a combined study. I am sure that they will join us in expressing appreciation for your efforts to secure flood control and navigation projects in these basins.

Respectfully yours,

John W. Vakerfield  
Director

JW:l

cc: State Board of Conservation  
Senator George Mathers  
Colonel Paul Trowler  
Rufe Wyzong  
E. J. Burrell