

CONCERNING THE CROSS-FLORIDA BARGE
CANAL

GENERAL SITUATION: The Florida peninsula is a major obstacle to water-borne commerce between the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States. Cargoes normally carried on barges along the coasts and inland waterways must now be carried in ocean going vessels. These vessels travel a route which has more than normal hazards in time of peace and is quite open to enemy action in time of war.

A barge route across Florida now exists by way of the Caloosahatchee River, Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie Canal. This route carries only 8 feet at best and is inadequate for modern barge traffic. Its locks are inadequate in dimension for modern barges and tows. It is without connecting waterways of adequate depth at its western end clear from Ft. Myers to Carrabelle. Its eastern end connects with the shallow and inadequate waterway from the St. Johns River to Miami.

If this Okeechobee Waterway were to be deepened to carry 12 foot traffic, Lake Okeechobee would have to be operated to provide lockage water as well as to maintain a 12 foot depth across the lake. This means that the lake would have to be operated as a facility for navigation as well as a flood control reservoir. Due to the present conditions this dual functioning does not now appear feasible and is certainly to be avoided if possible.

No estimates of costs are available to this office in which the cost of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal is compared with the cost of providing equivalent depths and connecting waterways via Lake Okeechobee. As a rough estimate, however, the two costs are probably quite comparable.

In barge traffic between the Atlantic and Gulf ports the matter of travel time and travel distances is also to be considered. From the entrance channel off Port Inglis to the juncture of the St. Johns River with the Intracoastal Waterway to Miami is 184.4 miles by the proposed Cross-Florida Barge Canal and 599.6 miles by the Okeechobee Waterway, or a difference of 414.2 miles.

From the standpoint of Florida, the Cross-Florida Barge Canal gives all our Gulf ports from Pensacola to Venice a shorter and more protected connecting waterway to all ports on the Atlantic

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coast. This should operate to reduce our present unfavorable freight rates (which handicap the development of our State). Also, the completion of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal will add greatly to the possibility of water-borne commerce in the stretch between Carrabelle and Ft. Myers, thus giving stronger economical justification for completing these waterways along our Gulf coast.

LOCATION: The Cross-Florida Barge Canal was authorized by Public Law 675, 77th Congress, on 23 July 1942. This project, estimated in 1948, to cost \$78,881,000, extends up the St. Johns River past Palatka, thence up the valley of the Oklawaha River across the divide and down the valley of the Withlacoochee River near Port Inglis, with a project depth of 12 feet and minimum bottom width of 150 feet, with five locks 75 feet wide, 600 feet long and 13 feet deep over the sills and a total length of 181.96 miles including the section in the St. Johns River. The St. Johns lock 11.2 miles from Palatka has a 20 foot lift, the Eureka lock and dam 15.8 miles from the town of Sparr has a 20 foot lift. Silver Springs lock 8.9 miles from Ocala, has a 7 foot lift to the summit level of 47 feet above sea level; the Dunnellon lock 2.5 miles from Dunnellon drops the waterway 19 feet, the Inglis lock and dam 11.1 miles from Dunnellon drops the waterway 28 feet to sea level on the Gulf.

From the standpoint of national defense I believe the sooner we build this barge canal the better our defense. From the standpoint of establishment of proper freight rates for Florida I believe that the sooner this project is in operation the better for our economy. From the standpoint of justifying the missing links in our Gulf Intracoastal Waterway between Ft. Myers and Carrabelle, and thence to the Mexican border, the sooner this Cross-Florida Barge Canal is completed the stronger our economic justification for these missing links.

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