



# Clewiston News

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## Letters to the Editor

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### Get the facts straight

Ray Judah ought to make a New Year's resolution to get his facts straight.

It is not in anyone's best interest for Mr. Judah to continue his radical agenda by misrepresenting the truth in public presentations.

There are very serious issues involving Lake Okeechobee water quality and the impact of flood control releases to the coastal estuaries. But, Mr. Judah's insistence that the Caloosahatchee River and estuary problems can be solved by shunting the polluted lake water south to the sugar farming area is dishonest. Both the South Florida Water Management District and

the Ft. Myers News Press have pointed out that more than half the dirty water flowing down the river is local basin runoff.

Yet, during the Nov. 30, 9-County Coalition meeting, Judah ignored that fact and claimed that "absolutely" Lee County's runoff meets all current water quality standards. Rather than rely on water quality studies that point to local runoff as some of the most polluted water in the river, Mr. Judah sticks to emotional and political rhetoric.

Rather than deal with water quality problems at the source, Mr. Judah wastes taxpayer time and money fixating on sugar farms south of Lake Okeechobee.

Mr. Judah blames sugar farmers for the poor water quality in Lake Okeechobee, but the fact is farms to the south were never more than nine percent of the inflow to the lake and today represents less than three percent.

It is also a fact that the Everglades Agricultural Area is the only part of the 16-counties in the South Florida Water Management District that has been responsible for cleaning its own water. More than 100,000 acres of formerly productive farmland has been taken to provide water storage and treatment for farm water and lake water before it flows into the Everglades. It is disingenuous for Mr. Judah to demand we be responsi-

ble for storing or treating more water at the expense of the Everglades for his benefit.

Lee County is represented far better by the officials who are working to find ways to deal with local runoff and participate in a reasonable fashion with large stakeholder groups to find ways to store and treat vast volumes of water north of the lake. That makes sense. When more storage and treatment areas are built north, east and west of Lake Okeechobee similar to those in the southern farming area, both water quality and quantity will be greatly improved throughout the system.

Sincerely,  
**Robert E. Coker**