Here are the facts about moving Lake Okeechobee water south

Water Facts:

To fix the problem, we have to address the real causes. 95% of all water that flows into Lake Okeechobee comes from as far north as Orlando, and the Kissimmee Basin, as shown on this map. Only 5% of the water flow comes from south of the lake – only when South Florida water managers “backpump” to protect local communities from flooding.

We live here and like you we want harmful releases from Lake Okeechobee to stop. But some special interests unfairly blame farmers instead of addressing the real causes with real solutions. What are some of the causes? An antiquated, 60-year old flood control system, an aging dike that limits Lake Okeechobee’s capacity to hold water, lack of funding for construction of planned projects that would redirect, hold and treat water both north and south of the lake.

We will continue to do our part. Billions of gallons of Lake Okeechobee water already flow south and we use some of that water to irrigate our sugarcane, sweet corn and citrus. That water leaves our farms far cleaner than when it left the lake. Last year alone, water that left our farms was twice as clean as water from Lake O.

Will buying expensive farm land south of Lake Okeechobee solve the problem? For decades, the state and federal governments have bought hundreds of thousands of acres south of Lake Okeechobee. As this map shows, the majority of land south of Lake Okeechobee is already owned by the government and is used as Water Conservation Areas (WCA). The government already bought nearly 120,000 acres...but some of these projects, shown in yellow, have not been fully funded and not all the land is being used to store or move water south.

We must work together to complete projects on land that is already owned. Fix the dike, so Lake Okeechobee can hold more water. Divert, store and treat polluted water BEFORE it reaches Lake Okeechobee, so that we can save the lake, our waterways and the Everglades.

To learn more about how water is truly constrained from flowing south, go to: www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repositor pdfs/jo_pres_system_constrasts_2015_0312.pdf

Who are we:

We’re American farmers – 2,500 strong. For nearly 100 years, U.S. Sugar has been farming in Florida. Our farms are located in and around Clewiston approximately 60 miles southwest of Stuart. A lot of our 2,500 hardworking employees own the company and many of them live in Martin County.

What we do:

We are American farmers who grow sugarcane, sweet corn and citrus. We are scientists and biologists who manage water quality on our farms. We are your neighbors who care about our local waterways, because many of us live right here.

Learn more about U.S. Sugar at www.ussugar.com