UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 300303-8960

May 16, 2005

District Engineer, Jacksonville
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232

ATTN.: Ms. Rebecca Weiss
Planning Division

Subject: **Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) Rehabilitation, Reach #1, Lake Okeechobee, Palm Beach and Martin Counties, Florida (CEQ # 20050135 and ERP # COE-E 39050-FL) dated March 2005**

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and Section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, EPA, Region 4 has reviewed the subject document, an evaluation of the consequences of restoring/upgrading the structural integrity of Reach #1 of the HHD (a 22-mile segment from St. Lucie Canal to the Hillsboro Canal). Recent episodes of piping and sand boils along this southeastern segment have created concerns that a major breach was possible in the absence of some significant renovations. Stabilization of the HHD is essential since Lake Okeechobee is central to the region's water supply needs and is a fundamental element of the Central and South Florida Restudy (CSFR). As a planning objective, this and any remaining structural upgrades to the HHD should be consistent with the overall formulations associated with the CSFR. Similar structural problems exist elsewhere along the HHD system and will be the subject of subsequent NEPA documentation.

After further deliberation of the practicable alternatives it was determined by the Jacksonville District (District) that the most effective means to realize this upgrade would involve the use of a pervious hanging cut-off wall on the landward side of the dike together with a relief trench [including a inverted filter and relief berm] on the lakeward side [Alternative #4]. A road will be built on top of the relief trench for routine access and subsequent maintenance. This design lessens the project's footprint and reduces adverse impacts to existing wetlands, wildlife habitat, and groundwater.

From the information provided, it appears that the proposed design option will

meet the primary project objective, viz., preventing a catastrophic dike failure within Reach #1. Moreover, with some minor modifications developed during the detailed design phase, the noted structural components can be installed with acceptable adverse environmental consequences and operational efficiencies. On the basis of our review and the satisfactory responses to our initial comments on this proposal, a rating of LO has been assigned. That is, the environmental ramifications of this action have been generally minimized from the original proposal to the extent that EPA has no significant objections to the subject rehabilitation measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this action. If we can be of further assistance, Dr. Gerald Miller (404-562-9626) will serve as initial point of contact.

Sincerely,

/s/

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office