

Kathleen,

The Deepwater Shrimp AP has been reporting problems resulting from the Lake Okeechobee discharge out of Port St Lucie locks for 13 years. I have submitted pictures of the algae and we have reported a dead zone on the bottom from Port St Lucie north. This year, we have had LO discharges starting December 13, 2024 to present, in preparation for the 2025 hurricane season. The dead zone now extends out beyond 500 feet in depth and northward more than 18 miles north of the OHAPC southern boundary. Fin fish fishermen have been complaining about this as well (comments from the last council meeting).

Add to this, the billions of gallons per day pouring out of the outfalls in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties directly into the Gulf Stream.

It seems so ironic that we can't come to terms over returning a small sliver of the eastern edge of the OHAPC northern expansion that has been fished for decades when we have increasing destruction of valuable fishing bottom and highly protected Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern with zero attention or action in 13 years.

Please address this with the Coral and Habitat committee as this is having a major impact on Fisheries, Habitat and Coral.

If you have any questions, I have a lot of fishermen knowledge and history regarding this area or can get input from any of the fishermen.

Mike Merrifield

Deepwater Shrimp AP

Cape Canaveral Shrimp Co