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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society – Friends of the Refuge

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

LOSOM's Overall Framework Might be Finally Decided

By Jim Metzler, DDWS Advocacy Committee Co-chair

As we have discussed in previous articles, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in the final stages of a four-year project that will determine how water will be released out of Lake Okeechobee for at least the next 10 years. The new water release schedule will be called the Lake Okeechobee System Operations Manual (LOSOM).

Over the last several months, the Army Corps held numerous public meetings seeking input on LOSOM. We attended the meetings and, along with partners, provided input on how LOSOM should be constructed to provide the greatest benefit to the J.N. 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, we issued a call-to-action to which several hundred of you responded and let the corps know your feelings about LOSOM.

After months of taking input and optimizing alternative plans, in November the Army Corps [announced](#) LOSOM's general framework. While the Corps is still working on some operational considerations, it is expected, barring any outside influences, that the general framework will be put into operation some time in 2023.

One of the key issues that LOSOM addresses is how much of the water that is released out of the lake will flow west down the Caloosahatchee River and how much will flow east down the St. Lucie River. While neither coast got all that they wanted, each coast will benefit from LOSOM.

Because LOSOM will benefit 'Ding' Darling, it is important that it be implemented as soon as possible. Unfortunately, [a legal suit](#) by three groups of sugar farmers may potentially delay the implementation.

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