OKEECHOBEE UTILITY AUTHORITY
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, Florida 34974-4221

(863) 763-9460
FAX: (863) 467-4335

December18, 2014

Ms. Lisa Kiefel, Planning Portfolio Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW.
Attn: CECW–CE
Washington, DC 20314–1000

Dear Ms. Kiefel:

I am writing this letter as a follow up to an earlier letter submitted in response to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers request for proposals in accordance with Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014).

The Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) has conducted extensive design and research concerning the construction of a vacuum collection system for the Treasure Island area shown in Attachment A – Treasure Island Service Area. Area surveys, environmental impact studies, wetland assessments and preliminary design layouts are a few of the necessary work items conducted to date.

As shown in the attachment, much of the area is waterfront property due to the significant number navigable waterways. Due to many factors including nutrients, grasses, plants and other vegetative matter (both submerged and emergent) become hazards to navigation.

Attachment A depicts an early conceptual design incorporating the vacuum sewer divided up into a northern and southern district. Each district (see Attachment C) will have a collection system and pump station. The collected wastewater will be pumped to a regional wastewater treatment facility where the water will be treated and disposed of through a permitted effluent disposal facility.

The Treasure Island area is an older established community here in the Okeechobee area. The residences are small and generally owned by retirees or available as rental property to young families. As noted in Attachment B, Okeechobee County in general has an average per capita taxable value of $39,540, which is just over 57% of the statewide value. Treasure Island values are lower than the overall Okeechobee County average.

Please find several letters attached providing support for the conceptual idea of the Treasure Island project.

- Attachment D – South Florida Water Management District
- Attachment E – the Honorable Senator Bill Nelson, Florida
- Attachment F – the Economic Council of Okeechobee

As you can see, the OUA has received support from various aspects of government as well as the local business community. This project not only provides for environmental improvements, but, it will also have a favorable impact to local government and the business community.

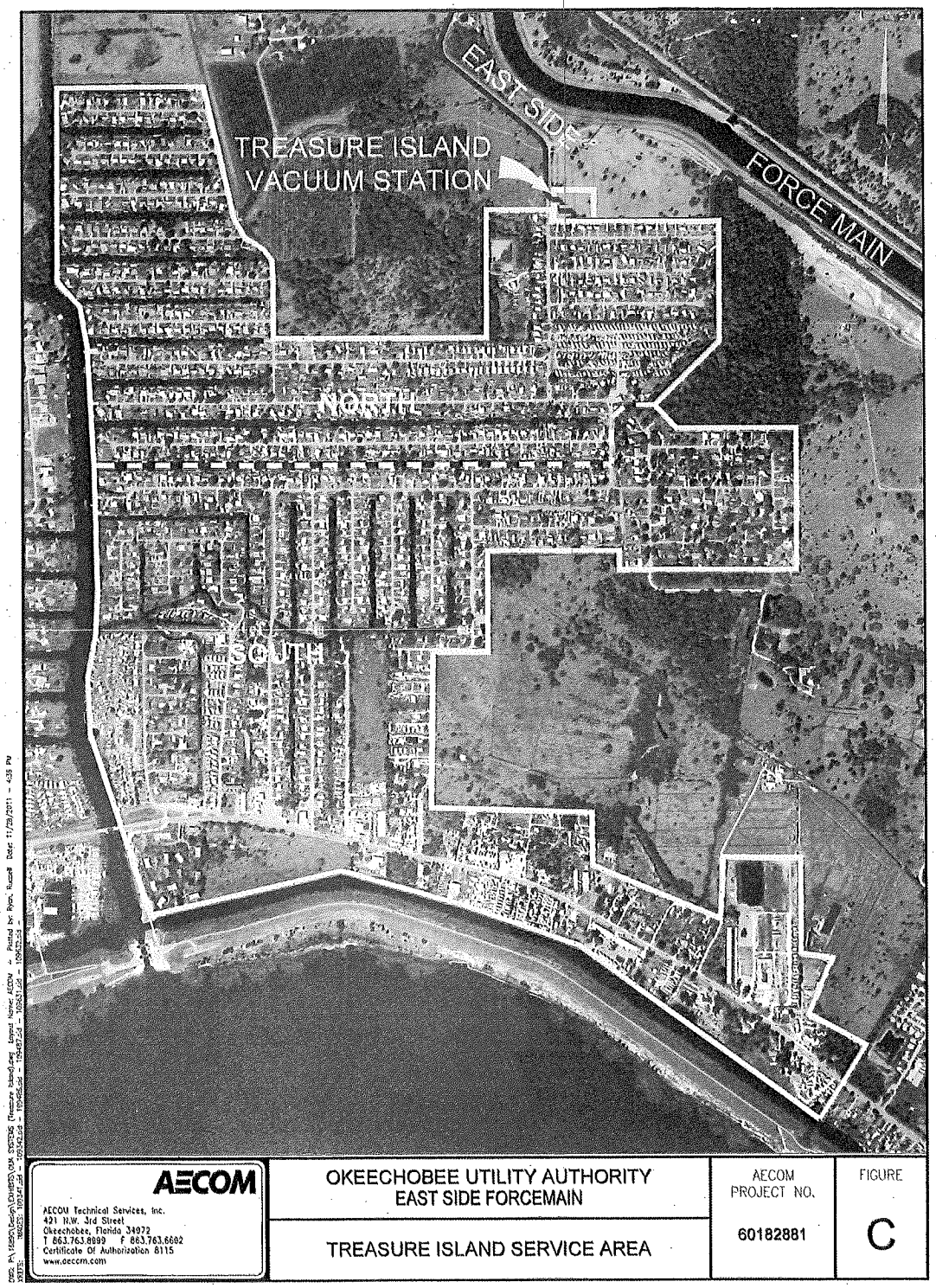
The OUA, as a publicly owned utility providing water and wastewater service to Okeechobee County, is very conscious of the financial impacts of capital projects with respect to rates and fees charged to the customers. While this project should have viable positive impact to the water quality entering Lake Okeechobee, financial impacts to the residents for this cleanup must be evaluated and mitigated where possible.

Therefore, if I may provide any other project information which will mitigate or lessen the impact to residence while at the same time strengthening our project position to be included in the final analysis of projects to be included in the WRRDA 2014, please contact this writer at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your consideration of this project. We look forward to discussing it with you further. If you have any questions for us, please contact our Washington consultant, Jim Davenport at 703-841-0626, or the Okeechobee Utility Authority Executive Director, John Hayford at 863-763-9460.

Sincerely,

John F. Hayford, P.E.
Executive Director
Okeechobee Utility Authority



Attachment A – Treasure Island Service Area

1/17/2014

Executive
Director

Marshall Stranburg

To: John Hayford

From: Property Tax Oversight, Research and Analysis

Subject: Okeechobee County

Below is the requested information related to per capita taxable value and percentage of assessed property that is exempt from ad valorem taxation.

Statewide

Total Just Value	$1,822,429,900,783
Taxable Value	$1,274,129,214,427
Exempt Amount	$421,739,974,071
Population	18,949,364
Per Capita Taxable Value Average	$67,239
Percentage of Exempt from Taxation	23.14%

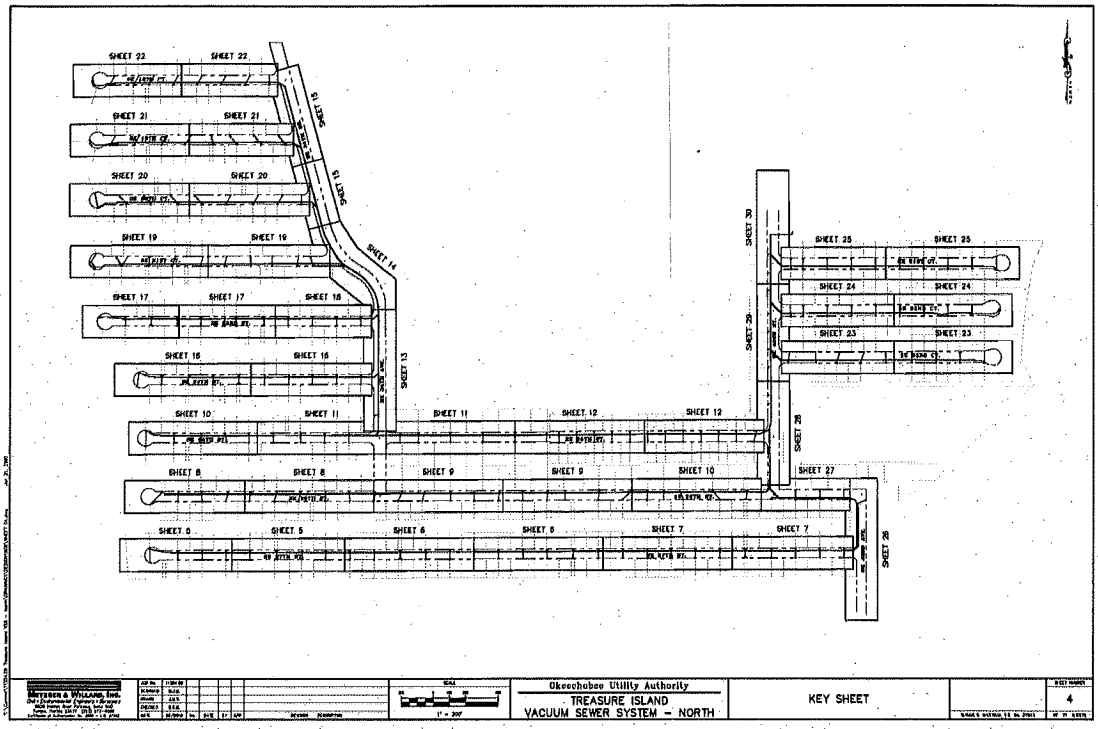
Okeechobee County

Total Just Value	$2,503,112,656
Taxable Value	$1,499,240,900
Exempt Amount	$572,704,341
Population	37,917
Per Capita Taxable Value Average	$39,540
Percentage of Exempt from Taxation	22.88%
Millage	8.5470

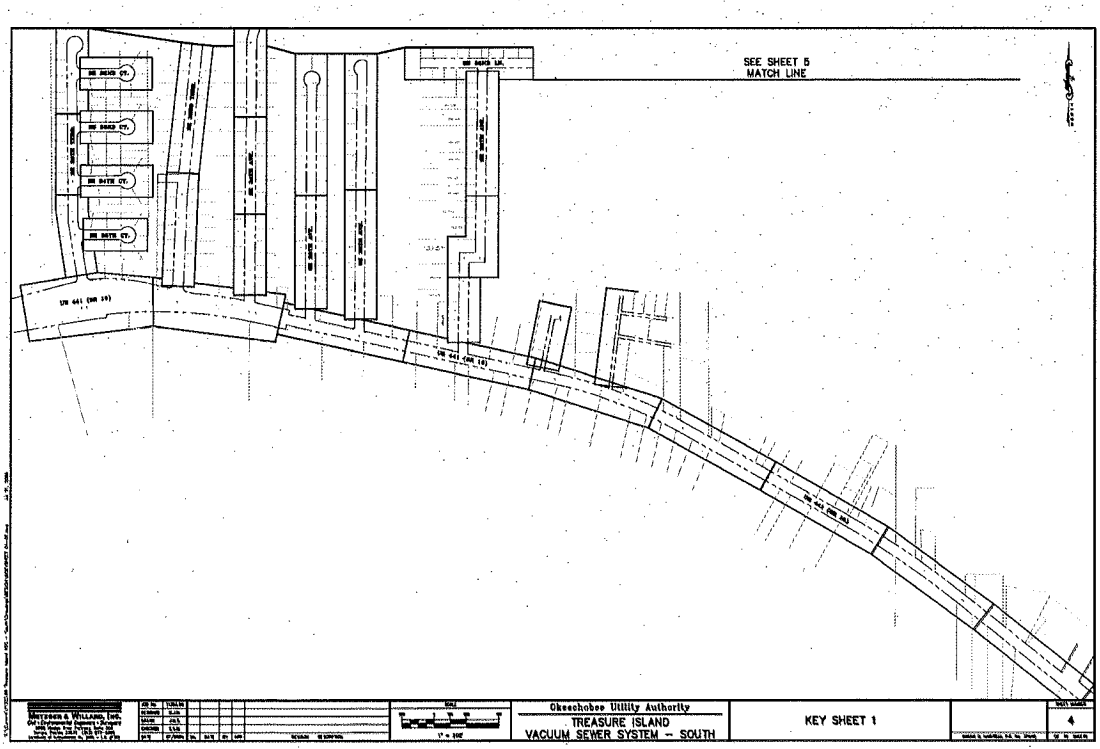
Source: "Ad Valorum Data Book 2012" (FL DOR) and "Florida Estimates of Populations 2012" (UF).

Child Support Enforcement – Ann Coffin, Director · General Tax Administration – Maria Johnson, Director
Property Tax Oversight - James McAdams, Director · Information Services - Damu Kittikrishnan, Director
www.myflorida.com/dor
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0100

Attachment B – Okeechobee County Average Taxable Property Values

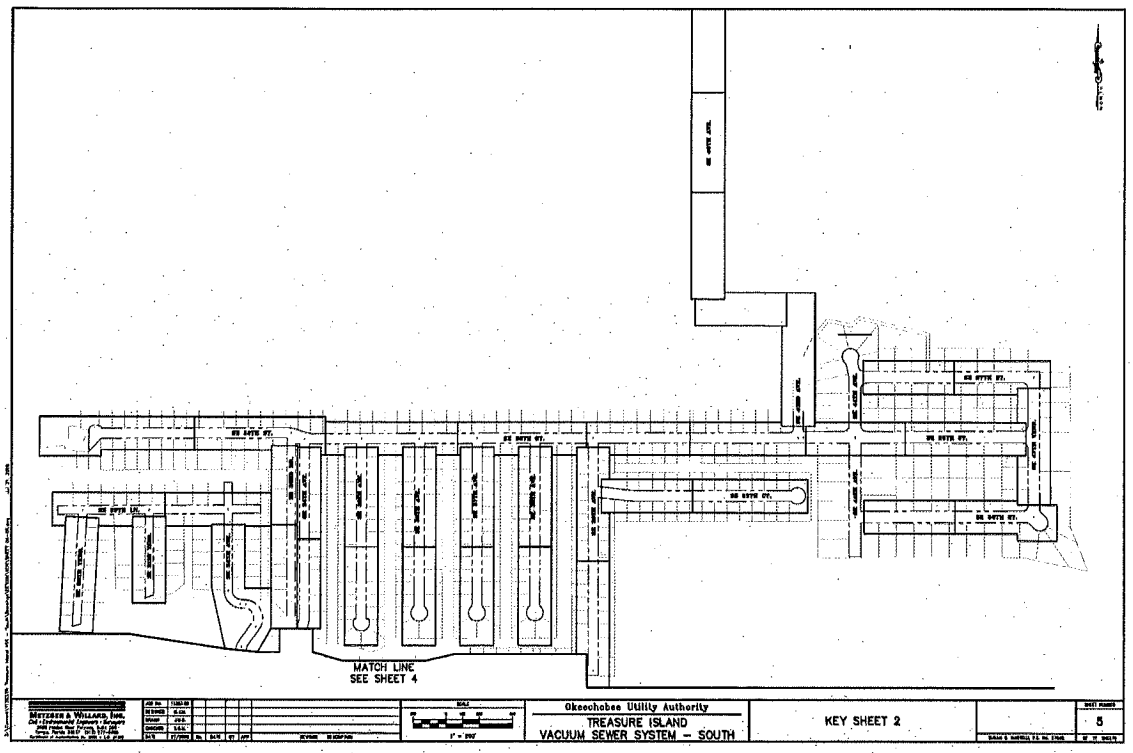


Treasure Island North Vacuum Sewer



Treasure Island South Vacuum Sewer - Sheet 1

Attachment C – Treasure Island System Layout



Treasure Island South Vacuum Sewer – Sheet 2

Attachment C – Treasure Island System Layout

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

December 15, 2014

Mr. Tommy Clay, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

Subject: Treasure Island Vacuum Sewer System and East Side Force Main Project

Dear Mr. Clay:

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) understands that the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA) is seeking a grant under the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) 2014 for the Treasure Island Vacuum Sewer System and East Side Force Main Project. The SFWMD is submitting this letter to indicate that the proposed septic to sewer project is included in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan and it supports the goals of the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.

The Watershed Protection Plans associated with the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (373.4595 Florida Statutes) identified failing septic tanks as a contributor to degraded water quality and includes septic to sewer conversion projects as measures to improve water quality. The Okeechobee Utility Authority Treasure Island Vacuum Sewer System and East Side Force Main Project, to remove the dependency of septic systems in this area, was included as a specific management measure in the 2014 update to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan to help improve the quality of water entering Lake Okeechobee. The Treasure Island development is located in the Taylor Creek Nubbin Slough Sub-watershed which drains to Lake Okeechobee and is a priority area for water quality improvements due to elevated levels of nutrients.

Sincerely,

Lennart J. Lindahl, P.E.
Assistant Executive Director

LJL/lb

c: Lesley Bertolotti, SFWMD
Mark Elsner, SFWMD
Beth Lewis, SFWMD
Jeff Sumner, SFWMD
Tom Teets, SFWMD

3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406 • (561) 686-8800 • FL WATS 1-800-432-2045
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 24680, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680 • www.sfwmd.gov

Attachment D – Letter of Support SFWMD

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

December 10, 2014

Assistant Secretary Jo Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army of Civil Works
Department of the Army, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20314-1000

RE: Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014

Dear Secretary Darcy:

I am pleased to provide this letter in support of the Okeechobee Utility Authority's efforts to obtain a federal grant. The goal of their proposed project to conduct a feasibility study and to protect the Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystems. I respectfully request your consideration of this organization's application for federal funding.

The Okeechobee Utility Authority would act as the non-Federal sponsor for this project, providing for the removal of approximately 1,600 septic tanks and associated drain fields and several small wastewater package treatment plants which impact both environmental and aquatic ecosystems. If funded, the project will seek to remove nutrients and bacteria as well as water quality impacts from the septic tank/package treatment plant discharges, improving overall water quality and allowing for native submerged plants to thrive. This project supports the goals and objectives of several State agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers, which have made the protection of the headwaters, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades system a priority.

Again, I encourage your consideration of this worthy cause. If I can be of further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

BN/jm

CC: Ms. Michelle McGovern, Regional Director, U. S. Senator Bill Nelson

United States Senator Bill Nelson, Landmark Two, 225 East Robinson Street, Suite 410, Orlando, Florida 32801
Telephone: (407) 872-7161 • Toll-Free *in Florida Only* (888) 671-4091 • Fax: (407) 872-7165
http://billnelson.senate.gov

Attachment E – Letter of Support Hon. Senator B. Nelson, Florida

ECO
Economic Council of Okeechobee

Economic Council of Okeechobee
Post Office Box 718
Okeechobee, Florida 34973
(863) 467-0200
www.ecok.org

December 19, 2014

Mr. Tommy Clay, Chairman
Okeechobee Utility Authority
100 SW 5th Avenue
Okeechobee, FL 34974

RE: Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project

Dear Mr. Clay:

The Economic Council of Okeechobee supports the efforts of the Okeechobee Utility Authority to complete the Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project contingent upon the availability of grant funding to cover the total costs of the project.

Our economically-disadvantaged community has already contributed significant funds to this project and our designation as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern necessitates Federal funding to complete the construction of the project.

We recognize the significant impact that removing 1,600 septic tanks and drain fields would have on the environmentally-sensitive ecosystem in the Taylor Creek Watershed near Lake Okeechobee. Tourism and seasonal visitors account for a large portion of Okeechobee's economy, an industry that depends heavily on the health of Lake Okeechobee and its surrounding water bodies.

Completing this project would allow Okeechobee Utility Authority to grow their customer base benefitting the utility through improved operational efficiency. A more-efficient utility would in-turn benefit Okeechobee's economy making the community more attractive to new industry and business.

In addition, the Okeechobee Utility Authority will be able to meet their commitments to developers located in the project area.

For these reasons, and should funding become available, we support the Okeechobee Utility Authority's Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem Protection Project.

If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jon Geitner
Chairman

Attachment F – Letter of Support Economic Council Okeechobee