



Charlotte County Government

"To exceed expectations in the delivery of public services."

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April 16, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners, I write to you to request, ideally, a waiver, or at least a significant reduction, of environmental mitigation requirements for a vital coastal restoration project on Manasota Key. Charlotte County, Florida is located on the Western Gulf Coast of Florida and Manasota Key is an essential barrier island that is home to many of our residents, and the destination for many of our winter visitors on vacation. Over the past several years, the beaches on Manasota Key have critically eroded, forcing us to declare several emergencies due to the impact on homes and infrastructure. In 2016, after Tropical Storm Colin, two homes and a condominium building on Manasota Key were destabilized by the erosion and deemed unsafe to enter. In addition, there has been considerable damage to docks, walkways, and other infrastructure.

To respond to the erosion, we are partnering with the State of Florida on a beach nourishment project to stabilize the coastline and prevent additional property damage while also helping to recover from the impacts of last year's Hurricane Irma. The project is scheduled to be put out to bid in the summer of 2019 with construction commencing in the fall.

One of the largest aspects of the project, in terms of both time and expense is required environmental permitting. To address anticipated impacts to "hardbottom habitat", areas that formed during the erosion process, primarily by covering it with sand dredged from the ocean bottom, federal resource agencies are requiring mitigation which will cost over \$7.2 million; nearly a quarter of the total project cost. We are being asked to mitigate lost "hardbottom habitat" via a two to one ratio, one reason the cost is so extravagant. This onerous requirement to address impacts to hardbottom that would not be present were the shoreline healthy, appropriately managed, and thereby covered with sand, is simply egregious.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

18500 Murdock Circle, Suite 536 | Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1068
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Due to the critical nature of this project and your dedication to encouraging infrastructure projects through the elimination of unnecessary permitting requirements, we request a waiver, or at least a significant reduction, from the federal mitigation requirements for the hardbottom impacts of our project. Eliminating or reducing such requirements would expedite our project, protect our community, and appropriately restore our coastline to its previous condition; again, recognizing that the hardbottom we are being asked to mitigate did not originally exist in the first place when the beach was healthy.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to help advance this critical infrastructure project. This is an example of the projects that are essential to the economic vitality of our nation's cities and counties. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or for additional information regarding the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ken Doherty", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Ken Doherty, Chairman
Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

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