

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 7, 2012

Colonel Alfred A. Pantano, Jr.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207-0019

Dear Colonel Pantano:

We write to share our support for the Sun West Park and Channel project in Pasco County, Florida. As Congressional representatives from Florida's Gulf Coast, we are encouraged to hear of your personal involvement in the permit discussions for the Sun West Park and Channel permit. We urge you to provide the leadership necessary to ensure this permit review is conducted fairly, consistent with policy, and provide Pasco County, Florida with a permit decision prior to your change of command.

Pasco County has a complete design for this public park and channel project. It is shovel ready and fills the overwhelming need for public access to the Gulf. We urge you to personally review the facts pertaining to this project which serves to protect our aquatic resources without precluding recreational activity in the area.

We fully understand, support, and embrace the goal of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff in meeting its resource protection objectives. After more than six years of extensive scientific analysis, studies, presentations and negotiations, this project appears to be subjected to additional requirements beyond those of other projects in the area. This is not the first channel permitted in the area but it appears the review process has changed course as the permit application has been evaluated. It seems to us that this project has been subjected to review using multiple methods with changing criteria; we urge you to make certain the County is being treated fairly, using existing policies. Please ensure for us that the County's mitigation plan evaluation is science-based, consistent with the mitigation standards used previously for permit issuance and follows Federal requirements to protect our aquatic resources.

The public interest in the park and access to the Gulf is overwhelming. Pasco County's lack of public access is acute. It is clear that the County has studied their entire coastline; this location is unquestionably the "least damaging environmental alternative." After extensive State review, Governor Scott and the Cabinet unanimously approved the State permit. We expect this park and public channel to be a centerpiece for local revitalization efforts in Northwest Pasco County and bring much needed jobs and economic activity to the region. While we are frustrated at the length of time and required public funds spent to get this environmental permit, we are excited that boaters could soon be serviced by this great project.

We thank you for your service to our Nation and your contributions to the people of Florida. We hope we will be able to count this permit decision as one among the many of judgments you made that improved the quality of life of our citizens.

Respectfully,



GUS BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress



RICHARD NUGENT
Member of Congress



C.W. BILL YOUNG
Member of Congress