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April 9, 2007

Senator Burt Saunders, Chairman
Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee
325 Knott Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Senator Saunders:

On behalf of Audubon of Florida, I applaud your interest in the Ocklawaha River and want to thank you for the leadership you exhibited in scheduling a presentation on Rodman Reservoir by DEP before the Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee on March 29th.

Since the 1970's, Audubon support for full restoration of the Ocklawaha River and removal of the Rodman Dam and reservoir has been one of the longest held positions of our organization. During the past decade, we along with most of Florida's major environmental organizations have been frustrated by the inability of DEP and the St. Johns River Water Management District to resolve the final remaining issues and begin actual work on restoration.

Particularly frustrating has been the misuse of a water quality argument posed by small but vocal groups of restoration opponents.

These individuals argue that the Rodman Reservoir holds not just the river's water but also its nitrate pollution. They claim it prevents much of those nitrates from reaching the St. Johns River. Accordingly, they suggest the reservoir should be maintained to prevent nitrate pollution from reaching the St. Johns River. In reality, the Ocklawaha River, the Rodman Reservoir, and ultimately the St. Johns River itself are all "waters of the state," deserving equal water quality consideration. Maintaining the dam achieves nothing under either Florida or federal water quality law.

Most of Florida's other spring-fed rivers also suffer similar nitrate pollution, and while this very real problem needs to be addressed for all our springs (through reduction of groundwater pollution), it is not a valid reason to advocate that spring-fed rivers be blocked by dams as a control mechanism for water quality downstream. We are confident that any required nutrient and water quality issues can be managed through a well designed construction plan, and are concerned that the St. Johns River Water Management District and DEP have deliberated far too long in response to this misused argument. We hope that the

Florida Senate will require or urge Florida's environmental agencies to move past these unproductive arguments and get moving on restoration.

Our organization remains committed to the restoration of the Ocklawaha River by breaching Rodman Dam. The effort to restore this river enjoys a broad base of support from across Florida; we thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DAVID ANDERSON', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Anderson,
Executive Director
Audubon of Florida

CC: Sen. Nan Rich, Vice-Chair
Sen. Paula Dockery
Sen. Don Gaetz
Sen. Dennis Jones
Sen. Charlie Justice