

GUS M. BILIRAKIS
12TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0912

December 4, 2017

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Mayor Chris Alahouzos
City of Tarpon Springs
324 East Pine Street
Tarpon Springs, Florida 34689

RE: Update on Federal Progress to the Anclote River Dredging Project

Dear Mayor Alahouzos:

The Anclote River Dredging Project continues to be a major priority for me while executing my duties representing the people of Tarpon Springs.

As you know, I have advocated for the authorization and funding of this project for years. A number of recent events have led me to provide an update on our progress. While the project is authorized, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers originally deemed the project a "low-priority" which forestalled federal funds.

However, in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, the Army Corps conducted a new bathymetric survey of the river, which revealed significant worsening of the shoaling. In response, I led a bipartisan letter with the entire Greater Tampa Bay congressional delegation highlighting the need to reevaluate the importance of the Anclote River project. A copy of the document, addressed to Colonel Kirk of the Army Corps, is included with this letter.

Additionally, I met with U.S. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen to discuss the importance of the Anclote River and the need to continue funding Army Corps dredging projects generally, due to the backlog of authorized projects seeking funding. At this time, Chairman Frelinghuysen and I are planning a second meeting on this issue that will include Army Corps representatives.

The economic value of the Anclote River is of significant importance to the City of Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County, and the Tampa Bay region at large. I will continue to do my part to ensure the project is completed so that our businesses that rely on the river can flourish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gus M. Bilirakis". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 8, 2017

Colonel Jason A. Kirk
District Commander
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

RE: Anclote River Dredging Project Post Hurricane Irma

Dear Colonel Kirk:

As Representatives of the Greater Tampa Bay area, we write to express continued support for funding the Anclote River dredging project.

The economic value of the Anclote River is of significant importance to the City of Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County, and the Tampa Bay region at large. According to a 2016 Economic Impact Study, the river services over 150 marine and tourism related businesses, accounting for \$252 million in commerce. These businesses and the river's natural beauty attract more than 1.1 million visitors to Tarpon Springs each year. Additionally, Tarpon Springs accounts for 56% of all commercial fish landed in Pinellas County.

As outlined in prior letters, silt build up on the riverbed has created shallow water levels, which can be less than three feet deep at low tide. These risks have not only impacted businesses along the river and the Tampa Bay region, but threaten the Tarpon Springs port as a harbor of safe refuge for endangered vessels.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted a new bathymetric survey of the river, which shows significant worsening of the shoaling. This can only lead to a weakening of the fishing and tourism related businesses in the Tampa Bay area, subject nearby residents to increased flooding dangers, and further imperil ships seeking refuge in a crisis.

In light of this new survey, we suggest that the Anclote River dredging project be reviewed for an elevated priority status for FY18 funding. The only way to protect the community's business development and coastal safety is through completion of this authorized project.

Thank you for your consideration and review of this request.

Sincerely,



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



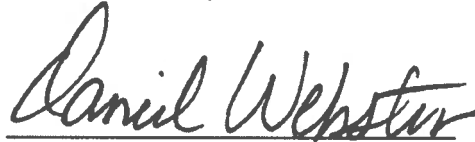
Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
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