



Dixie Crossroads, Inc.

Serving Cape Canaveral's Finest Seafood

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Applicant: SpaceX Florida
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Brevard County
Hangar X

To Whom it May Concern:

For four generations, my family has made a living in Brevard County in the seafood and tourism industries. Our fishing pier, seafood markets and seafood restaurants relied on a healthy Indian River Lagoon (IRL) for success. In fact, prior to development of the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) on the barrier island and a massive increase in human population on the mainland, the IRL supported hundreds of families like ours through the commercial and recreational fishing industries and tourism activities.

Today, commercial fishing activity has nearly ceased and recreational fishing guides have fled the area for other locations where they can find fish for their clients. Founded nearly forty years ago with a menu based on local seafood products, we now serve nothing from the IRL at my restaurant.

In the early 1960s, my grandparents were among the first residents who had to relocate when the Apollo program began. Their home was on the west shore of Happy Creek, less than two miles from Launch Complex 39 B. The oysters were so thick along the banks of Happy Creek that homeowners couldn't pull their boats up to the shore. They had docks that extended out over the oyster beds to access open water. The water was crystal clear at this magical place and we caught many different species of fish from my grandparents' dock.

As a teenager in the late 1960s, I fished gillnets in Banana Creek. A causeway had been built over the creek to accommodate the widening of SR 3 and a railroad track. Before the causeway was built, you could drive a boat from the Banana River to the Indian River through Banana Creek. A culvert was placed under the roadway for stagnant water to drain out of eastern Banana Creek's once pristine waterways, which were now completely severed from the life-giving waters of the Indian and Banana Rivers by the Shuttle Crawlerway and the SR 3 Causeway.

At that time, oysters were still hanging on in Banana Creek. I know they were there because I couldn't work my gillnet too close to the shoreline without tangling it in the oysters.

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I could run my boat into all three prongs of Moore Creek – the dike was yet to be built that would cut it off from Banana Creek and the Indian River. And yes – there were oysters in Oyster Prong. I'm an old lady now. Heartbreak and helplessness only scratch the surface of what I've experienced through the decades as I've watched the Indian River, once one of Florida's most productive estuaries, die.

One of the most resounding impacts to the IRL has been from the increase in freshwater and its contents. The river is definitely less salty than it was in my youth – freshwater alone from a non-natural source pollutes an estuary – added contaminants aren't even needed to alter its delicate balance. This portion of the northern IRL is 62 miles from Sebastian Inlet.

Models have shown that the residency time for water here is greater than one year. In other words, what goes in the water stays in the water. That includes freshwater, which lowers the salinity. Past studies have shown that seagrasses in the IRL are impacted by reduced salinity. Massive projects to introduce clams back into the waters of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge are planned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Clams are extremely sensitive to lower salinities. The IRL desperately needs seagrass and it needs clams. Anything that might hamper that progress should not be allowed to take place.

Freshwater is a valuable and scarce commodity. As Florida's population continues to grow, it will become even more precious. Florida has to stop squandering its freshwater. Surely there are better ways to utilize the freshwater that cools the air conditioning units at Hanger X rather than channeling it into a canal and ultimately into an impoundment that is connected to the imperiled IRL.

Could the extra freshwater be used for landscape irrigation? The Hanger X stormwater ponds are located 2.5 miles from Oyster Prong, which is connected to the IRL through culverts located under dikes. Is there somewhere along that 2.5-mile distance where the extra freshwater could be spread over the landscape in order to soak into the ground and into the aquifer rather than running it down a ditch to affect the Indian River? Would it be possible to construct a large regional stormwater holding area that could accommodate the discharges from multiple businesses rather than allowing them to individually dump their freshwater into the IRL?

This is just one request to discharge freshwater into the Indian River among many that will be received. When viewed as a single entity, it may not seem like a lot. But when it is added to future requests from the development of thousands of acres of KSC property, the cumulative impact to the Indian River could be devastating.

I ask that this discharge permit be denied and that the applicant be challenged to find a way to keep their stormwater and the cooling water from their air conditioners from going 2.5 miles down a canal and into the Indian River. Past KSC development harmed the Indian River. Please don't allow a precedent to be set as, once again, the Kennedy Space Center enjoys monumental growth. Use this opportunity to find a better way to handle freshwater rather than adding it to the Indian River.

Sincerely,


Laurilee Thompson

Co-owner, Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant
Titusville, FL