

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2016

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

RE: Maintenance of the Anclote River Federal Channel

Dear Colonel Kirk:

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

The Anclote River has a long history and tradition in the area. It is home to our prominent Gulf Coast fishing industry and serves as a channel for the shipment of goods. It also helps allow the Tarpon Springs sponge docks to serve as a major tourist destination. The Tarpon Springs port is also a harbor of safe refuge for vessels as defined in Section 175.400 of Title 46, of the Code of Federal Regulations. This classifies the port as an area where a vessel can navigate and safely moor in heavy seas or emergency conditions.

Unfortunately, silt has built up on the riverbed over the last 18 years. This has caused many large boat operators to experience trouble navigating the river without causing damage to their fleet or running aground. In some areas, the water level is less than three feet deep at low tide. These risks have prevented a significant number of other annually-ported vessels from docking at Tarpon Springs to offload their goods, which severely impacts many industries in the Tampa Bay area.

Additionally, the extremely shallow conditions obstruct the port's ability to continue to serve as a harbor of safe refuge, potentially putting vessels and crew at risk. Tarpon Springs is the only working port between North Tampa and Apalachicola, which is a distance of roughly 300 miles. Vessel operators will have limited options for safe harbor and docking if the Anclote River is not dredged in the near future.

Dredging the Anclote River will both ensure the Gulf Coast economy remains strong and protect vessels and crew as a harbor of safe refuge.

Thank you for your consideration and review of this request.

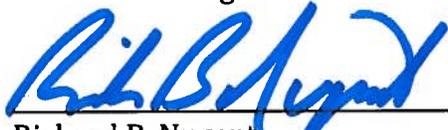
Sincerely,



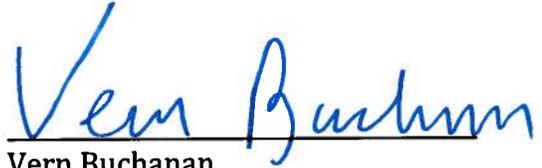
Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



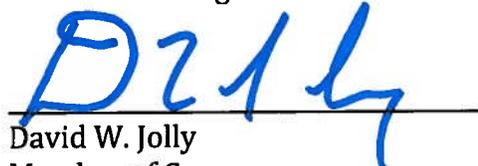
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Richard B. Nugent
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



David W. Jolly
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress