



June 18, 2025

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: SB 2500 Veto Request – 1525B OCKLAWAHA RIVER RESTORATION

Dear Governor DeSantis,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, I urge your veto of line item 1525B in SB 2500 that proposes the removal of Rodman Reservoir, also known as Lake Ocklawaha. For nearly six decades, this impoundment on the Ocklawaha River has been a cornerstone for recreational anglers and local economies. The unnecessary and costly removal of Rodman Reservoir would not only eliminate a top bass fishing destination in the state but would also require further significant taxpayer investments in long-term restoration efforts that likely will not achieve any appreciable environmental gains beyond the current functions of the reservoir.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Since its creation in 1968, Rodman Reservoir has become one of the nation's most celebrated largemouth bass destinations. Frequently found on the list of "Hall of Fame Club" waterbodies producing 13-pound fish or larger in FWC's Trophy Catch program, it stands as a jewel for anglers. Over its long history, the reservoir has provided countless families and outdoor enthusiasts with unforgettable experiences, whether from a kayak or a bass boat. Removing it would erase local heritage and well-established economic benefits to area businesses such as bait shops, hotels, rental properties, restaurants, and more.

For generations, residents and anglers from Putnam and Marion counties have voiced unanimous opposition to the removal of Rodman Reservoir, yet this proposal continues to be pushed by a vocal minority of outside interest groups. Today's opposition is no different – the removal is not supported

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by most people living near the reservoir, many of whom partially or entirely rely on the reservoir for their livelihoods.

Furthermore, without accompanying authorizing legislation, it is unclear as to how the proposed \$6.25 million will be spent and what the long-term goals of the provision hope to achieve. It seems irresponsible to allocate taxpayer dollars to an incomplete idea with no clear outcome and no estimate of additional costs to achieve the unspecified goal of “Partial Restoration”. 1525B sponsors and supporters should instead work with local constituents and governments to jointly develop a plan for Ocklawaha River restoration based on clearly defined goals and objectives that benefit the river while maintaining the culturally and economically important Rodman Reservoir.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to veto line item 1525B in SB 2500 that ambiguously seeks to remove Rodman Reservoir. This premier recreational fishery should be preserved as it serves myriads of outdoor enthusiasts and stimulates both the state and local economies. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Mark Lance
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