

## SURVEY OF CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER DRAINAGE AREA IN FLORIDA

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JANUARY 28, 1927.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the  
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

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Mr. DRIVER, from the Committee on Flood Control, submitted the  
following

### REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 16622]

The Committee on Flood Control, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 16622) authorizing a survey of the Caloosahatchee River drainage area in Florida, and of Lake Okeechobee and certain territory bordering its shores in Florida, have duly considered same and hereby makes its report to the House, with the recommendation that the same be amended as follows:

First. Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the following words and figures, to wit:

That the Secretary of War be, and is hereby, authorized and directed to cause a survey of the Caloosahatchee River drainage area to determine what controlling works are necessary for navigation in connection with flood control and the cost thereof, and also a survey of Lake Okeechobee and certain territory bordering its shores, and from Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic Ocean to determine what measures are necessary for flood control, such as additional diking and outlets, and further lowering of the levels of Lake Okeechobee and the cost thereof.

SEC. 2. The sum of \$45,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby authorized to be expended out of any funds heretofore or hereafter appropriated for the improvement of rivers and harbors to carry out the provisions of this act.

Under the provisions of an act of Congress approved the 25th day of February, 1925, authority was given to the Secretary of War to make a preliminary examination of the Caloosahatchee River, and in obedience thereto, the Chief of Engineers caused such examination to be made and the report thereof is now filed in his office, recommending a complete survey for the purpose of determining the character of channel improvement and flood-control work necessary in order to afford protection to the territory affected and to ascertain an estimate of the cost thereof, together with the amount of contributions to be made by the local interests involved, the authority for which is carried in the bill here reported.

The importance of flood-control improvement in the area affected is difficult to estimate. Lake Okeechobee is 40 miles in width by 50 miles in length, and is the largest inland lake, that is, a body of water entirely within the boundary of a State, in any State of the Union, and is at the north end or head of an enormous area of lowlands known as Everglades in the southern portion of the State of Florida. This area is of such incomparable fertility that reclamation works are and should be prosecuted with every diligence to the development of the potential values contained in this large area of fertile soil. The State of Florida has expended \$13,000,000 in the development of the Everglades to date, and has, in cooperation with local interests, constructed many canals to care for the surface waters accustomed to pool therein, but without the measure of protection which must be afforded against the waters of Lake Okeechobee, such expenditure will be without permanent value, nor will the residents of such reclaimed area be protected in the improvements placed on the lands therein. In fact, without such control the lives of the inhabitants will be continuously endangered and the vast values already produced will be destroyed and the potential values inherent in the soil will never be realized.

Lake Okeechobee is the reservoir for the surface waters of the northern and central sections of the State of Florida draining through Kissimmee River. It is a navigable lake bearing commerce of great value, with a maintained level of 15 feet above the sea level. The Caloosahatchee River is the natural outlet commencing on the west side of the lake and flowing for about 50 miles in direction slightly southwest into the Gulf of Mexico, with defined banks and ample water for navigable purposes from Fort Myers to the Gulf, but between Fort Myers and the point of origin the banks are low and swampy in character, with much of the distance spreading over considerable areas of flat land without bank definition and with a capacity of not exceeding 2,000,000 cubic feet of water per second. On the east an artificial waterway known as the St. Lucie Canal, 12 feet in depth and 200 feet in width, has been constructed, through which a small flow of water is carried from the lake into the Atlantic Ocean. The rainfall during the summer and fall seasons is very heavy in the State of Florida, and it is during such seasons that overflows are produced and the natural outlet through Caloosahatchee River and the artificial waterway into the Atlantic Ocean are rendered insufficient in carrying capacity to relieve against the flood waters and consequent inundation of the large area subject thereto. The residents of this territory, and parties financially interested therein, are able and willing to conform to the demands for adequate flood protection, but the Kissimmee and Caloosahatchee Rivers, together with Lake Okeechobee, are navigable streams under the jurisdiction of the War Department, and therefore removed from any scheme for flood control works and protection through the operation of local agencies, and the great interests involved must have the measure of cooperation sought in this bill and such protection projects must be accomplished under the direction and control of the Army Engineers.

Disastrous floods occurred in this locality in the years 1922 and 1923, causing the loss of many lives and multiplied thousands of

dollars damage in the destruction of improvements. Again, in the year 1926, because of the water conditions on Lake Okeechobee, a disastrous storm which laid waste large areas in the State, resulted in breaching the dikes constructed through local activities and flood waters to cover all of the property within the area mentioned, destroyed farms and towns and caused the loss of more than 450 lives through drowning in the flood waters. It is believed by capable engineers that through enlarging the carrying capacity of the outlets of the lake, a uniform depth of water may be maintained in the overflow periods and the destruction heretofore visited upon the people and property of the area mentioned be guaranteed against the loss of their property and the protection of their lives in the future, and will provide a direct navigable waterway of ample capacity to afford transportation facilities from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico across the Florida Peninsula.



