



March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2814 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Webster:

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Winter Garden's Community Project Funding request for their Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Project. This investment will help meet the needs of a rapidly growing population while ensuring the continued restoration and protection of Lake Apopka—one of Orange County's most vital natural resources.

Lake Apopka has faced decades of environmental challenges due to nutrient pollution and urban runoff. However, thanks to dedicated efforts from local governments, environmental organizations, and state agencies, we have made substantial progress in improving water quality and restoring critical habitats. Additionally, a cleaner, healthier lake benefits not only our local environment but also our economy—supporting ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and the overall quality of life for my communities of Winter Garden and Oakland. The proposed expansion of Winter Garden's Wastewater Treatment Plant is an essential next step in this effort, as it will enhance nutrient removal, reduce pollutants entering the lake, and increase the production of high-quality reclaimed water.

Investing in this infrastructure project aligns with our county's commitment to responsible growth and environmental protection. As such, I urge you to prioritize funding for this project, as it is essential for both the environmental and economic well-being of Orange County and the surrounding region.

Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your leadership in Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Commissioner Nicole Wilson
Orange County Commissioner, District 1



March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

City of Winter Garden

P: 407.656.4111

300 West Plant Street
Winter Garden, FL
34787
wintergarden-fl.gov

Re: Community Project Funding Request for the Crest Avenue Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Expansion and Process Optimization

Dear Congressman Webster:

Thank you for your continued support of the City's Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Expansion and Process Optimization. The project is under construction. The City of Winter Garden would like to submit another Community Project Funding request for the Crest Avenue Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Expansion and Process Optimization Project for \$5M and certifies that it intends to meet all program requirements.

Stakeholders

Project stakeholders include:

- City of Winter Garden (submitter) – The City will manage the award and benefits from improved effluent water quality, increased production of reclaimed water, which is beneficial for the Floridian Aquifer, source water (Lake Apopka) protection which provides for greater nutrient removal thus minimizing the growth of harmful algae and aquatic vegetation, improve boat navigation, and enhanced ecotourism opportunities.
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) – This project supports its long-term plan to remove nutrients from the lake and meet TMDL requirements.
- Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA) – This NGO represents community residents and their desire for improved water quality and recreational use of the lake.

Project Description

Problem

Lake Apopka is the 4th largest lake in the State of Florida and received honor from the United Nations Environment Programme in February of 2024 as a destination worthy of visiting to see effective restoration efforts in person. Lake Apopka was once lined with dozens of fish camps and in the 1930's was formerly recognized as the bass fishing capital of the Eastern U.S. However, chronic nutrient overloading from agriculture runoff, wastewater treatment plants, sewage sludge, industrial discharges, failing septic tanks, stormwater runoff, and fertilizers have led to degradation in water quality, toxic algal blooms, muck buildup, die offs of healthy, native submerged aquatic

vegetation (SAV), and the proliferation of Hydrilla, one of the fastest growing and most invasive species of nuisance plants that can clog canals and cause flooding in surrounding communities.

Much of the bottom of Lake Apopka is covered by a consolidated muck layer which is mostly decayed plant matter. Above the consolidated muck layer is an unconsolidated flocculant layer made up mostly of dead algae. These muck and flocculant layers contribute to nutrient overloading, inhibit recovery efforts for SAV in the lake, and are a nuisance to boaters.

Native SAV is critical to the health of this ecosystem as it cycles out excess nutrients that can cause algal blooms, cleans and oxygenates the water column, stabilizes sediments to prevent flooding and sediment resuspension, helps to outcompete nuisance vegetation which must be sprayed with costly herbicides, and creates vital habitat for fish and other wildlife.

The muck layer on the bottom of the lake creates shoreline water depths too shallow for boaters to navigate without disturbing the muck layer. Suspended muck sediments cause two undesirable consequences: the presence of malodorous and aesthetically displeasing black plumes of muck, and damage to boat motor cooling systems from muck entrained in outboard engines.

Solution

To address the issue, in 2020, The City of Winter Garden commissioned an engineering study to design and permit the Crest Avenue Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Expansion and Process Optimization at 101 E Crest Avenue, Winter Garden, FL 34787. The facility is located on the southern shore of Lake Apopka and near the rejuvenated historic downtown district that attracts locals, tourists, and West Orange Trail riders with its small-town atmosphere and trendy shops and restaurants.

The project will expand the current capacity from 4.75 to 7.5 million gallons per day treatment capacity and modifies the existing treatment standards to achieve Advance Wastewater Treatment (AWT) standards. With increased capacity and achieving AWT, the facility will meet or exceed stringent effluent objectives of (5mg/L BODS, 5 mg/L Total Suspended Solids, 3 mg/L TN, 1 Mg/L TP) which will provide water quality benefits to Lake Apopka by reducing key nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which supports the growth of harmful algae and aquatic plants, such as hydrilla.

While the SJRWMD has made great strides in addressing the lake's issues, this plan is intended to support the District's long-term goal to fully restore the lake.

Funding and Phases

This is a multi-phase project aimed at capacity expansion and process optimization at 101 E. Crest Avenue, that involves upgrading the City of Winter Garden's WWTF, improving effluent water quality to meet FDEP advanced wastewater treatment limits and increasing reclaimed water production. Therefore, lessening the need for potable water from the Floridian Aquifer for irrigation and providing source water protections. The amount of funding being requested is \$5M for the capacity expansion and process optimization. The

City is seeking additional funding through state water quality improvement grants and legislative funding.

Good Use of Taxpayer Dollars

This project is a good use of taxpayer dollars because it:

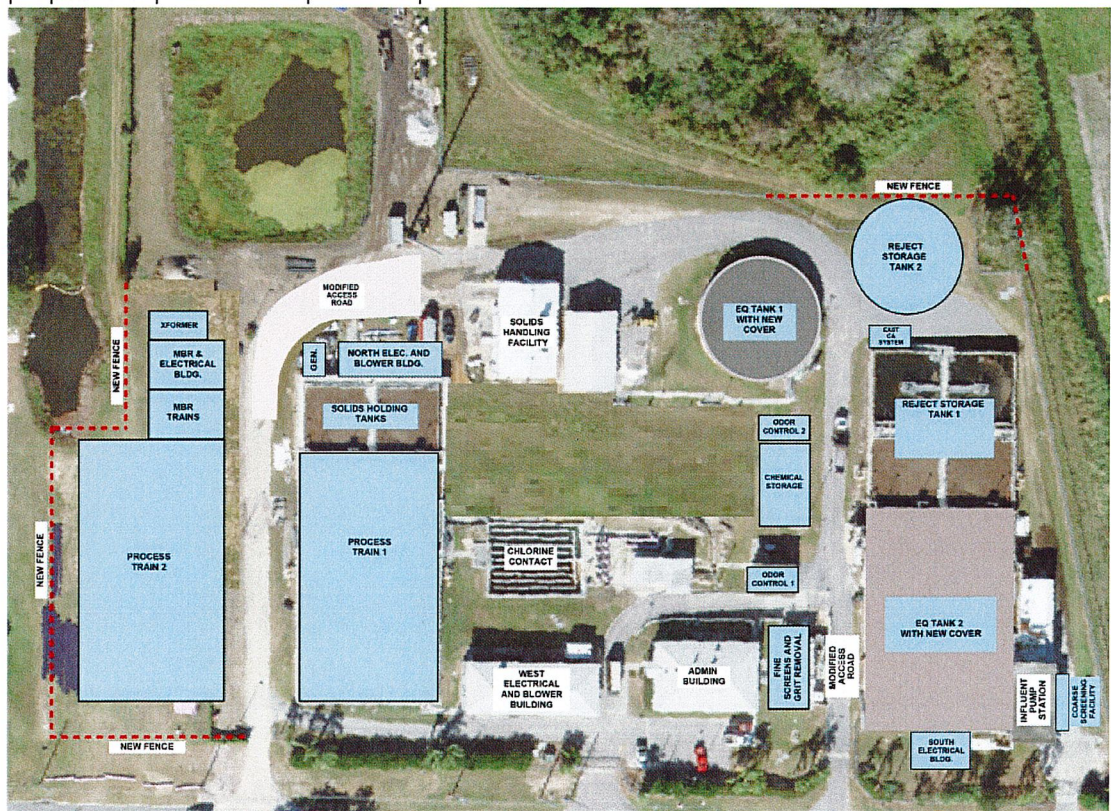
- Offers better process control and more consistent water quality, which leads to less water going to the rapid infiltration basins (RIBs) that drain to Lake Apopka, thereby reducing harmful pollutants that negatively impact the lake.
- Improved efficiency at removing solids, organic matter, and contaminants such as nitrogen, phosphorous, pathogenic microorganisms, and biochemical demand from wastewater which promote the growth of harmful algae and invasive aquatic vegetation.
- Upgrading the wastewater plant's electrical system to Class I Reliability will significantly increase resiliency by providing continuous satisfactory operation during storms, power failures, peak loads, equipment failure and maintenance.
- Enhanced quality of effluent and production of a reclaimed water with significantly less solids will benefit other municipalities that receive reclaimed water from the City. Currently, the City of Ocoee, Town of Oakland and Orange County receive reclaimed water from the City.

Budget Breakdown

If awarded, the \$5M will be used to construct and purchase the necessary equipment and treatment facilities needed to complete the capacity expansion and process optimization.

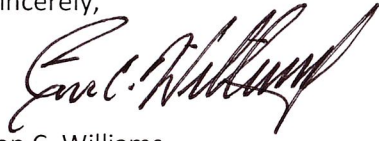
Plans/Maps

The project is fully designed, permitted, and under construction. Below is a map of the proposed expansion and process optimization.



Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our community and our nation.
Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon C. Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jon" being the most prominent.

Jon C. Williams
City Manager
City of Winter Garden
300 W Plant Street, Winter Garden, FL 34787
407-656-4111 ext. 2267 | jwilliams@cwgd.com



120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida 32703-5346

Phone: 407-703-1700

www.apopka.gov

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Community Project Funding request for increased capacity of Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Facility

Dear Congressman Webster:

As the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River Basin, Lake Apopka is a crucial water resource for the State of Florida. Cities and communities surrounding Lake Apopka continue to work toward its restoration. As Florida's 4th largest lake, Lake Apopka is home to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, which is a great ecotourism attraction drawing nearly 200,000 visitors each year. Projects that improve the water quality of the lake will further ecotourism in the area, which is a benefit to all the nearby cities.

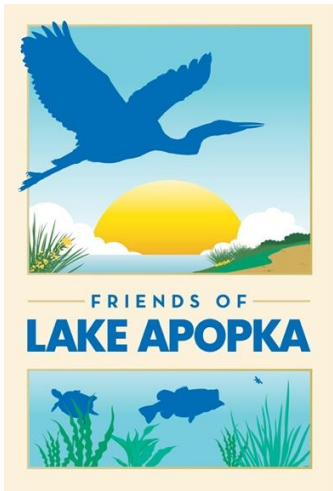
As such, the City of Apopka strongly supports the City of Winter Garden in their pursuit of improving water quality by upgrading their Wastewater Treatment Facility on the south shore of Lake Apopka. This \$5M project will improve effluent water quality, increase production of reclaimed water (which is beneficial for the Floridian Aquifer), protect source water (Lake Apopka), thereby providing greater nutrient removal which will minimize the growth of harmful algae. All of which will increase native aquatic vegetation, improve boat navigation, and enhance ecotourism revenues.

Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your effective representation of our region in Washington. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bryan Nelson
Mayor, City of Apopka

Mayor Bryan Nelson



March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Community Project Funding request for increased capacity of Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Facility

Dear Congressman Webster:

Founded in 1991 by local biologist Jim Thomas, the Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA) is a citizen advocacy group that actively advocates for the continued restoration of Florida's 4th largest lake. As the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River Basin, Lake Apopka is a crucial water resource for the State of Florida.

FOLA strongly supports the City of Winter Garden in their pursuit of improving water quality by upgrading their Wastewater Treatment Facility on the south shore of Lake Apopka.

This \$5M project will improve effluent water quality, increase production of reclaimed water (which is beneficial for the Floridian Aquifer), protect source water (Lake Apopka), thereby providing greater nutrient removal which will minimize the growth of harmful algae. All of which will increase native aquatic vegetation, improve boat navigation, and enhance ecotourism revenues.

Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your effective representation of our region in Washington. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

JP Dunn Jr

Joe Dunn
Board of Directors
Friends of Lake Apopka

joe.dunn@foia.org
(352) 433-6975



March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2814 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Webster:

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Winter Garden's Community Project Funding request for their Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Project. This investment will help meet the needs of a rapidly growing population while ensuring the continued restoration and protection of Lake Apopka—one of Orange County's most vital natural resources.

Lake Apopka has faced decades of environmental challenges due to nutrient pollution and urban runoff. However, thanks to dedicated efforts from local governments, environmental organizations, and state agencies, we have made substantial progress in improving water quality and restoring critical habitats. Additionally, a cleaner, healthier lake benefits not only our local environment but also our economy—supporting ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and the overall quality of life for my communities of Winter Garden and Oakland. The proposed expansion of Winter Garden's Wastewater Treatment Plant is an essential next step in this effort, as it will enhance nutrient removal, reduce pollutants entering the lake, and increase the production of high-quality reclaimed water.

Investing in this infrastructure project aligns with our county's commitment to responsible growth and environmental protection. As such, I urge you to prioritize funding for this project, as it is essential for both the environmental and economic well-being of Orange County and the surrounding region.

Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your leadership in Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicole Wilson".

Commissioner Nicole Wilson
Orange County Commissioner, District 1



From the Desk of

Mayor Rusty Johnson

City of Ocoee, 1 North Bluford Avenue, Ocoee, Florida 34761

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Community Project Funding request for increased capacity of Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Facility

Dear Congressman Webster,

As the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River Basin, Lake Apopka is a crucial water resource for the State of Florida. Cities and communities surrounding Lake Apopka continue to work toward its restoration. As Florida's 4th largest lake, Lake Apopka is home to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, which is a great ecotourism attraction drawing nearly 200,000 visitors each year. Projects that improve the water quality of the lake will further ecotourism in the area, which is a benefit to all the nearby cities.

As such, the City of Ocoee strongly supports the City of Winter Garden in their pursuit of improving water quality by upgrading their Wastewater Treatment Facility on the south shore of Lake Apopka. This \$5M project will improve effluent water quality, increase production of reclaimed water (which is beneficial for the Floridian Aquifer), protect source water (Lake Apopka), thereby providing greater nutrient removal which will minimize the growth of harmful algae. All of which will increase native aquatic vegetation, improve boat navigation, and enhance ecotourism revenues.

Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your effective representation of our region in Washington. Please feel free to contact me if have any questions.

Sincerely,


Rusty Johnson
Mayor



March 6, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representative
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support of Community Project Funding Request for City of Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Project

Dear Representative Webster,

On behalf of the Town of Oakland, I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Winter Garden's Community Project Funding request for the expansion of its Wastewater Treatment Plant. This critical infrastructure project will play a vital role in improving regional water quality, particularly in Lake Apopka, and ensuring sustainable growth in West Orange County.

Lake Apopka, Florida's 4th largest lake, has long suffered from nutrient pollution and water quality degradation. As a neighboring community, the Town of Oakland is deeply invested in ongoing restoration efforts to improve the lake's health and ecological balance. The expansion of the City of Winter Garden's Wastewater Treatment Plant will enhance wastewater treatment capacity, reduce nutrient loading into the watershed, and support the broader restoration initiatives aimed at revitalizing Lake Apopka.

Furthermore, this project aligns with regional efforts to promote responsible growth while preserving our natural resources. By increasing treatment capacity, the expansion will allow for improved wastewater management, reducing the risk of excess nutrients entering the lake and supporting continued environmental recovery. As West Orange County experiences population growth, it is essential to invest in infrastructure that protects our shared water resources while accommodating future development.

I urge your full support for this funding request, as it represents a crucial step toward sustainable environmental stewardship and regional water quality improvements. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership in advocating for critical infrastructure investments in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shane Taylor".

Shane Taylor
Mayor, Town of Oakland



12184 WEST COLONIAL DRIVE
WINTER GARDEN, FL 34787
WOCHAMBER.COM
p: 407.656.1304

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Daniel Webster
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Community Project Funding request

Dear Congressman Webster,

On behalf of the West Orange Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our support for the Community Project Funding request to expand the capacity of the Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Plant. This infrastructure investment aligns with the Chamber's commitment to fostering sustainable economic growth while ensuring the health and well-being of our community.

The Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Plant plays a vital role in maintaining environmental sustainability and public health in our region. As our community experiences continued growth, it is essential that we invest in expanding and modernizing wastewater treatment infrastructure to meet increasing demand, protect natural resources, and support economic development.

By funding the expansion of the Winter Garden Wastewater Treatment Plant, we can ensure that local businesses, residents, and future development projects have access to reliable and efficient wastewater treatment services. This investment will not only enhance system capacity and resilience but also reinforce our commitment to maintaining high environmental standards and supporting the long-term prosperity of our region.

We appreciate your leadership and consideration of this important project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lewis
President & CEO
West Orange Chamber of Commerce

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PAM THOMAS
CHAIR
Pammie's Sammies

KARI VARGAS
CHAIR-ELECT
AdventHealth

CHRIS SAPP
FIRST VICE CHAIR
Revel Realty

ANNA REINHARDT
TREASURER
SBM Certified Public Accountants

BETSY VANDERLEY
IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
The Continuum Collaborative

LYNN WALKER WRIGHT
CHAMBER ATTORNEY
Lynn Walker Wright, P.A.

STEPHEN LEWIS
PRESIDENT & CEO

COMMUNITY TRUSTEES

ADVENTHEALTH • BOYD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION • BRIGHT FUTURE ELECTRIC • CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESSWAY AUTHORITY • CEMEX • CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS
COMPUTER BUSINESS CONSULTANTS • DUKE ENERGY • FISHBACK + DOMINICK • FOUNDATION ACADEMY • FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHIER WEST ORANGE
GREATER ORLANDO AVIATION AUTHORITY • KALOS SERVICES • MARTHA KREJCI COMPANY • MATTHEW'S HOPE • OBSERVER MEDIA GROUP
ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS • ORLANDO HEALTH • R.C. STEVENS CONSTRUCTION • REED NISSAN • SEACOAST BANK • SEAWORLD ORLANDO
TRUIST • TOOLE'S ACE HARDWARE • UNIVERSAL DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES • VALLEY BANK • WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

ADVANCING COMMUNITY. COLLABORATION. LEADERSHIP.