

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE SAM M. GIBBONS BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSERVATION AND CREDIT OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 20, 1963

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity of appearing before you today in behalf of the Upper Tampa Bay Watershed project.

For the record, I would like to file the following statement:

UPPER TAMPA BAY WATERSHED, FLORIDA

The Upper Tampa Bay Watershed is a dominantly agricultural area of 65,720 acres almost all of which is located in Hillsborough County. Although the area is located adjacent to Tampa, only 6,010 acres, or about nine per cent of the total area, are devoted to residential, urban, and related uses. The principal economic pursuits are cattle raising and the growing of citrus. Agricultural land values range from \$150 to \$300 per acre for pastureland to \$2,000 or more per acre for citrus land.

Agricultural enterprises in this area are beset with water problems that continuously threaten profitable agricultural production. Flooding is a constant hazard and accounts for an average annual direct damage of \$154,200 of which \$125,000 or about 81 per cent accrues to agricultural land and crops. This is a serious situation. The local people have made every effort to solve the problem. They have installed on-farm ditches and group canals in an attempt to solve it. But the damage continues and local resources have not been adequate to finance, in its entirety, the work that is necessary. As a result, an application for assistance under Public Law 566 was submitted. This application was approved by the Florida State Soil Conservation Board on August 13, 1958. After almost two years, on June 17, 1960, the Soil Conservation Service authorized planning assistance on the basis of recommendations of the State Board.

Only one more step remains before the much needed assistance will become available. That step is approval by this Committee.

The plan for this area as developed by the sponsors with the assistance of the Soil Conservation Service includes about 65 miles of channel improvement and 43 related grade stabilization structures to lead water safely away from the large areas of agricultural land subject to damage and to protect the small area of residential and urban developments in the eastern and southern part of the watershed. Only in this part of the area where these developments now exist will the project provide a level of flood protection that would permit development for other than agricultural purposes. The balance, and by far the greater part, of the project will not provide a level of flood protection that would permit or encourage such development. Of the total area of 24,170 acres benefited, 21,300 acres are devoted to pasture, 1,030 acres to citrus, and 1,840 acres, or less than 8 per cent, to residences, urban developments, and roads.

The average annual benefit resulting from flood protection will amount to \$115,745. In addition, \$97,595 of drainage benefits will accrue making a total primary project benefit of \$213,340. Equating this benefit against the average annual cost of structural measures provides a benefit-cost ratio of 1.33 to 1. I might also point out that an additional \$36,470 of benefits will accrue in the area as a result of secondary effects of the project. These benefits were not used in deriving the above-cited ratio.

The local folks in this area are by no means expecting something for nothing. They are agreeing to contribute \$1,821,000 or slightly more than 50 per cent of the cost of the channel improvements and related structures, most of which will be out-of-pocket costs. In addition, they

will install \$2,713,600 worth of land treatment measures needed to make the project fully effective. Some cost-sharing for these measures may be available from the Agricultural Conservation Program although the amount cannot be assessed with certainty at this time. Obviously, it will not exceed 50 per cent under the most optimistic conditions. For the total project, therefore, local entities are agreeing to bear about 71 per cent of the total project cost which I believe will compare favorably with any project considered by this Committee.

In conclusion, Gentlemen, I wish to say that I know this area and its agricultural potential. I am convinced it will remain agricultural for years to come. The project is favorable from all aspects - benefit-cost ratio - a Federal cost of only \$59 per acre-benefited, and a high local contribution. I urge you to approve this project.