



HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL

The following comments are submitted in response to the draft goals and objective framework of the HCLRL in notifying the SJRWMD of their agenda for an upcoming TAG meeting.

Objective 1 - Control nutrient and sediment inputs

FOLA recognizes the value of alum treatment for nutrient removal if done properly. FOLA objected to the NURF project because of its location (the only portion of the Apopka restoration that had never been tilled, allowing for restoration to a wet prairie habitat) and because it would have been more effective downstream. FOLA also warned of the fact that low water levels in the lake would inhibit the operation of the system that was very expensive to construct and operate.

Objective 2 - Continue to improve aquatic habitat and water quality.

(a) FOLA objects to any proposal to directly connect the marshlands on the north shore to the lake. Soil oxidation occurred while the soil was dried for years and would make the area that was marshland become more lake bottom if flooded. With our goal for restoration centered on the lake for fishing operations and the marsh for bird habitat. Restoration of surrounding upland habitat, marshland and lake bottom will provide a variety of habitats that will better support ecotourism.

(b) FOLA continues to object to any proposal that allows establishment of hydrilla in any portion of the lake. It does not take a scientist to know that once this very aggressive plant gets established in a shallow high nutrient body of water it will be difficult if not impossible to eradicate or control. This issue has been evaluated many times and this conclusion has been agreed upon by many scientists.

Objective 3 - Capitalize on habitat and water quality improvements

(a) FOLA agrees with the goals to promote an active fishery in the lake but there are other ecotourism values that are equally valuable.

(b) FOLA has continued to promote a new boat ramp in the deeper part of the lake, in Oakland. FOLA has found an ideal site with a willing landowner and has completed a preliminary engineering plan with cost estimates.

Citizen advocacy and advisory groups can be very beneficial to local projects and problems but can also be responsible for slowing or eliminating beneficial proposals and for wasting time and money as competition for resources builds. A Restoration Council should be concerned with the whole ecosystem and should base all decisions on the best science available. Lake Apopka is an important part of the Harris Chain ecosystem, in fact, the headwaters. Until this lake is restored it will be difficult to see major changes downstream.

Instead of fostering constant competition, for water, weed control and other restoration necessities, we should be working on constant cooperation to see that the needs of the whole system are met.

Jim Thomas
President
Friends of Lake Apopka