

FINAL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
of the
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL
January 9, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:02 a.m. on January 9, 2015, at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

Members Present

Skip Goerner, Chairman
Keith Truenow, Secretary
Sid Grow
Stephanie Bishop

Members Absent

Robert (Bob) Johnson, Vice Chairman
Don Nicholson
Hugh (Dave) Davis II
Dr. Ed Schlein

John Stump, ex officio member

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goerner called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Goerner called for a moment of silence. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

3. COUNCIL ROLL CALL; REMINDER FOR OTHERS TO SIGN IN

Chairman Goerner called the roll. Council members Johnson, Nicholson, Davis and Schlein were absent. A quorum was not present.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Goerner stated that a quorum is not present and moved approval of the October 30, 2014, meeting minutes to the next meeting. Chairman Goerner welcomed Mrs. Stephanie Bishop, PE, as the new Council member for the environmental engineer position. Council member Bishop stated that she works for a consulting firm, is an environmental engineer, a UCF graduate, and resident of Lake County since 1995. Chairman Goerner explained the purpose of the Council. Council member Grow referred Council member Bishop to the Harris Chain of Lakes website and the 2014 Annual Report. The Council members introduced themselves and provided information on their background and experience.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Linda Bystrak asked the Council to consider a project on Trout Lake as a future agenda item. She stated that the project is a mini nutrient reduction facility (NuRF) and funded by a grant from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The mini NuRF will operate 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, for 5 years.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTIONS

A. Jay Brawley, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), provided an update on Lake Apopka and Harris Chain of Lakes water levels and projects. He displayed graphs of water levels in Lake Apopka and noted a spike in December due to six inches of rainfall. Apopka is responding to the rainfall and this suggests that the groundwater is also recovering in the area. Lake Apopka is below minimal desirable elevation and below the regulation schedule. Generally, if water levels go above the regulation schedule then there is a flood control release to lower the levels, and if the level is at or below the regulation schedule then there is a minimum discharge. The gates at Lake Apopka have been closed during the past 2 ½ years due to extremely low water levels. Chairman Goerner asked Mr. Brawley to provide the Council with the new regulation schedule. Graphs of water levels in the Super Pond (i.e., Lakes Eustis, Harris and Dora) and Lake Griffin show they are up to the regulation schedule. SJRWMD opened the gate at Burrell to release 28 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water and the gate at Moss Bluff to allow a minimum flow of 30 cfs. Chairman Goerner asked if SJRWMD planned to drawdown to minimum desirable levels and re-evaluate. Mr. Brawley stated that SJRWMD is not under a drawdown mode and prefers to maintain the regulation schedule. Chairman Goerner stated that the Council recommends maintaining the highest levels possible during the dry period of the year and that fisheries benefit by higher water levels during the spawning season. He believes it is an opportunity to increase the acreage of the spawning habitat and that SJRWMD is not doing what the Council has recommended. Mr. Brawley stated that the elevation difference between the regulation schedule and the maximum desirable is the freeboard for operation of the structures when water levels rise during and after a rain event. Flood control releases protect the people that live around the lake, businesses, and homes. Chairman Goerner reiterated that the Council wants to maintain the highest levels possible as long as possible, does not want water levels drawn down to minimum desirable in the Super Pond or Lake Griffin, and understands that SJRWMD plans to re-evaluate when they get to minimum desirable levels.

Mike Perry, Lake County Water Authority (LCWA), addressed the Council and explained that at a rate of 28 cfs, with no other changes, it would take 7 ½ weeks for the level of the Super Pond to change 1.20 inches. He stated that minimum flow is not bad and it would take a significant amount of time for the lake level to actually decline to minimum desirable. The Council discussed the effect of evapotranspiration.

Mr. Brawley explained that the regulation schedule is a guide for flood control releases. Minimum flows are for the health of the system and were followed until 2 ½ years ago due to extreme drought. SJRWMD believes minimum flow, when available, is best for the health of the system. Chairman Goerner asked again if SJRWMD plans to discharge to minimum desirable levels and when they would stop the discharge. Mr. Brawley stated that SJRWMD plans to monitor the system, utilize adaptive management strategies, and maintain minimum flows. In regards to sport fishing, Council member Grow added that it is better to have above minimum levels because game fish spawn in the shallows. Mr. Brawley provided a graph of a recharge map and reported that based on the well data, groundwater is filling up Lake Apopka. Water is coming in and going out, and Lake Apopka has not recovered as well as other lakes.

Mr. Brawley provided the Council with a project update and shared that SJRWMD has three teams under contract for the Apopka Dredging and Water Quality Project. Multiple components include dredging of the mouth of the A-B Canal, sumps to measure sediment transport, and of near-shore areas to improve plant and habitat restoration. The water quality projects include pilot projects

using a ferrate treatment system to treat and return water to the system. SJRWMD reviewed the design of the Harris Bayou Project and a bypass was one of the options for creating a flood control safety valve. However, due to the logistics and cost, the best option is not a bypass through the bayou and other restoration options are being reviewed. SJRWMD is developing a plan to reconnect Area 3 of the Emerald Marsh Conservation Area (EMCA) to Lake Griffin. Kraig McLane, SJRWMD, directed Council members to the Harris Chain of Lakes website for quick access to the regulation schedules that are available in the 2013 Annual Report.

- B.** Andrew Sutherland, SJRWMD, gave a presentation on SJRWMD minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for Upper Ocklawaha River Basin (UORB) lakes recreation and navigation survey. He explained that MFLs are designed to define acceptable levels of the ecosystem change, provide environmental constraints for water supply planning and consumptive use permitting, and serve as a basis for assessment of cumulative impacts. The water resources implementation rule requires consideration of fluctuations in water levels, environmental non-consumptive uses and environmental values. Examples include fish and wildlife habitat, movement of carbon in the system, aesthetics, sediment loads, water quality, recreation in and on the water, and navigation. Water resource value (WRV) definitions are undefined in the statutes or rules but SJRWMD has used working definitions developed in 2003 and 2004 for the past 10 years. Peer reviewers support development of WRV assessments, and through the exhaustive resource assessment SJRWMD is meeting the spirit of the water resources implementation rule. The system is large and complex so there are five separate assessments. SJRWMD staff, rather than contractors, will complete the assessments given their availability and vast knowledge of lakes. Dr. Sonny Hall, SJRWMD, is developing the recreation and navigation assessments. Mr. Sutherland discussed working definitions for recreation in and on the water and navigation. The WRV assessment process includes a web-based questionnaire to assess the needs of the recreational users and the businesses around the lakes. The questionnaire has been available for a couple of months and scheduled to go off line at the end of January. Chairman Goerner believes the public is not aware of the questionnaire and that more advertisement is needed if SJRWMD is going to develop the assessments based on the questionnaire. Kraig McLane reported electronic distribution of the questionnaire in SJRWMD's newsletter that was emailed to 1,172 individuals, including 719 citizens or residents in the SJRWMD database and 453 local government staff and elected officials within Lake, Marion, and Orange counties. SJRWMD also mailed 43 letters to individuals, marinas, and bait shops and posted the questionnaire on its website in two different places. The Council believes that the questionnaire is an important component that should be available for a longer time to notify the public and get comment. Mr. Sutherland explained how the results of the survey will assist SJRWMD, and provided examples of environmental targets for assessing MFLs impacts. Environmental targets will allow SJRWMD to answer questions regarding frequency and protection of recreational uses and navigation by the MFLs. Chairman Goerner stated that his biggest concern is for the information used to develop the MFLs. He thanked Mr. Sutherland for the presentation and believes that the development of the assessments is a good idea and critically important. Chairman Goerner stated that the Bert Harris Act provides protection to property owners against the state making rules and regulations that affect their property value, and that it has to be included in the MFLs. He expressed concerns about the assessment of Lake Apopka and the north shore and that the recharge of the north shore is only a couple of inches a year. Chairman Goerner thanked Mr. Brawley and Mr. Sutherland for the presentations. Mr. McLane provided the Council with copies of the online questionnaire, associated web pages, and letter sent to the marinas and boating facilities. Mr. McLane reminded the Council of the online questionnaire and encouraged

their participation. Chairman Goerner reiterated that the consensus of the Council is that the public has not received adequate notification of the questionnaire.

7. Council and Agency Questions and Answers

Mike Perry, LCWA, reported a project to evaluate in-lake and external nutrient loads contributing to Trout Lake and Lake Yale. He presented a graph of rainfall surplus and deficit departure from average over the past 10 years. Significant rainfall deficits in past years had a negative effect on lake levels and average rainfall has not been greater than average until 2014. He explained a calculation of lake level changes versus leaking levees in Lake Apopka. He discussed how Lake Apopka behaves differently than lakes in the HCOL and in the Clermont Chain of Lakes and does not have an explanation for this.

Rolly Fulton, SJRWMD, reported that SJRWMD received a technical merit award from the North American Lake Management Society for restoration activities on Lake Griffin. SJRWMD has gradually raised water levels to protect existing vegetation in Area 3 of the EMCA. SJRWMD began discharging water from Area 3 into Haynes Creek beginning in December. SJRWMD is closely monitoring the phosphorus discharges and Mr. Fulton confirmed no known fish kills. The target for restoration discharge is 1 pound per acre per year. SJRWMD is to lower approximately 500 acres so the target is 500 pounds per year. Currently, estimated discharge is approximately 14 pounds or 3% of the target. The most current concentration value was approximately 100 micrograms per liter, and background level for Lake Griffin is approximately 40-50 micrograms per liter. SJRWMD is keeping track of the total discharge, which is below the total maximum daily load (TMDL) loading target for the lake.

Dennis Renfro, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), provided an update on recent activity. Sampling of block fish attractors for comparison of brush and plastic fish attractors in Lake Griffin will be an ongoing program. Funding was awarded and a double boat ramp and dock are planned for the Montverde site. The City of Montverde is responsible for parking areas, paving, and the retention area. FWC is working with SJRWMD for a boating improvement grant for access in Areas 2 and 3 of the EMCA. Studies show that plastic fish attractors are out performing brush fish attractors in Lake Griffin and FWC will install seven plastic attractors on Lake Harris. The Birdapalooza Festival is February 7, 2015, at Magnolia Park and he is a representative of the Coalition for Lake Apopka Ecotourism. Chairman Goerner asked him to inform bass fishing organizations of the online questionnaire. Mr. Renfro offered to notify members of the Villages Fishing Club. Chairman Goerner asked for information on a news report of SJRWMD's miscalculation of water use. Mr. McLane offered to provide details next month.

Christianne Ferraro, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), reported John Steverson is the Secretary of DEP and Paula Cobb is the Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs. SJRWMD, not DEP, will do environmental resource program permitting for the Trout Lake Project. The numeric nutrient criteria were implemented October 27, 2014, with no change in the impairment status of any of the lakes in the Harris Chain. The Wekiva Hunt Club/Sanlando Utilities is sending accessed reclaimed water to the City of Apopka and a training workshop on water quality is January 14.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

A. Comments

Chairman Goerner reminded the Technical Advisory Group that their attendance is important and copies of the meeting minutes are available. He asked Mr. McLane to provide a copy of the meeting minutes to Council members when they are absent. Secretary Truenow requested more information on the Trout Lake Project.

B. Discussion of Next Scheduled Meeting:

Mr. McLane provided the Council with a presentation request form and a list of past and proposed presentations. Chairman Goerner emphasized that the Council's focus is on the MFL recommendation.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.