

FINAL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
of the
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL**

March 7, 2014

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council was held at 9:01 a.m. on March 7, 2014 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

Members Present

Lloyd Woosley
Robert (Bob) Johnson, Vice Chairman
Skip Goerner, Chairman
Sid Grow
Keith Truenow, Secretary

Members Absent

Don Nicholson
Hugh (Dave) Davis II
Edward Schlein, M. D.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goerner called the meeting to order at 9:01 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 Nicholson, Davis II, and Schlein were absent.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Council did not approve the November 1, 2013 meeting minutes; they are under Council review.

Councilman Grow requested amendment to the February 7, 2014 meeting minutes to remove the mention of his name regarding absenteeism. Councilman Woosley requested rewording of his question to Dr. Canfield (bottom paragraph on page 3 of 6) on the comparison of the recently enacted water quality criteria. The February 7, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as amended by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTIONS

A. TAG member and agency representative reports

Chairman Goerner stated that the Harris Council is a legislatively appointed council created under Florida Statute and law requires the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) member's attendance at the Council meetings.

Mr. Jay Brawley, Initiative Leader, SJRWMD reported on the current projects at Lake Apopka and the Harris Chain of Lakes (HCOL). The SJRWMD is nearing the end of the modeling and analysis phase of the minimum flows and levels (MFL) project; evaluation of proposed MFL targets is not complete. In December, the SJRWMD Governing Board announced a notice of intent to publish rules for Lakes Apopka, Beauclair, Dora, Eustis, Harris, and Griffin. Based on preliminary results, staff made changes to the model, and expect results in a few weeks. The District will prepare a draft report that will be available to the Council and will schedule public workshops for public comment.

The lake level management project uses the same model but with different criteria (regulation schedules rather than MFLs); the SJRWMD will update the Council as soon as the preliminary results are available.

Chairman Goerner stated that the Council has asked for MFLs for more than a year and want detailed MFL updates before they hear about them from public comment or read them in the newspaper. In consideration of public announcement limitations, Councilman Woosley stated that a report from SJRWMD on the results of their preliminary analysis and technical details would be beneficial. He mentioned the Council's request for an updated water budget and great appreciation for any insights given to the Council.

The SJRWMD is working on the site plan for a project with Lake County to develop a park and make the shad-dock ramp on the north side of Lake Apopka accessible to the public. This project is in the conceptual stage.

Secretary Truenow questioned shad harvest and recalled the Council's recommendation to discontinue this in 2009. Mr. Brawley reported a 935,000-pound shad-harvest last year. Chairman Goerner and Secretary Truenow referenced a report by Mike Allen, Ph.D., Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, University of Florida (UF) that shows that shad-harvest is not working and may be detrimental. Mr. Brawley noted that one of the benefits from the shad harvest was the removal of an estimated three metric tons of phosphorus in the fish mass removed from Lake Apopka.

The SJRWMD is updating vegetation mapping from 2010 and experienced weather delays. The SJRWMD will report the results of Lake Apopka's 2013 submersed aquatic vegetation surveys to the Council; the Council requests a separate presentation on the viability of the plantings. Annual nutrient reductions at the marsh flow-way include removal of approximately 5 metric tons of phosphorus, 100 metric tons of nitrogen, and 5,000 metric tons of total suspended solids. Councilman Woosley and Secretary Truenow briefly discussed

monitoring of the flow-way, nutrient loading, TMDLs, and the Nutrient Reduction Facility (NuRF). Councilman Woosley noted that the re-suspension of the bed sediments in Lake Apopka is remobilizing legacy phosphorus. Chairman Goerner mentioned the use of a “natural native” system of saw grass; Councilman Woosley mentioned the use of pilot projects.

SJRWMD is in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for a request for qualifications for restoration ideas and innovative technologies. The Lake Apopka Loop Trail opening in February was a success; greater public interest is beneficial and can translate into greater political support which could then provide additional funding for habitat restoration and stabilizing the sediments for additional plantings.

Chairman Goerner reiterated a request for a presentation or update on why Lake Apopka’s water levels appear to disappear more quickly than the water levels in the other lakes in the HCOL. Mr. Brawley noted that some seepage through the sand dike based on varying water levels is normal and there is a process in place to stop excess water flow. Secretary Truenow asked about re-flooding of the areas along the north shore near the dike. Mr. Fulton reported that all of the areas are shallowly flooded to restore wetland habitat but the entire north shore is at a lower water elevation than the lake. Councilman Woosley requested an estimate of average leakage for the north shore. Mr. Brawley stated that SJRWMD has a robust land management plan that includes vegetation management. Chairman Goerner commented on reactive, rather than proactive, actions of the SJRWMD in times past and requested more discussion regarding “native natural” vegetation; a workshop may be scheduled.

Dennis Renfro, Fisheries Resource Coordinator, FWC gave an update on past events and planning. FWC and volunteers have constructed and installed 18 fish attractors on Lake Griffin; buoys mark the fish attractors. Positive reports have been in the local news (Orlando Sentinel, Channel 9, and Lakefront TV). Councilman Woosley questioned the composition and leachability of the plastic fish attractors and suggested contacting the manufacturer. Mr. Renfro served for FWC on a committee with Orange County Commissioner Brummer, UF-Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), Audubon, SJRWMD, City of Apopka, Mosquito Creek Outdoors, and Representative Bryan Nelson, to coordinate the Apopka Wildlife Festival and Birdapalooza. The event provided information to the public on restoration efforts, plants, submerged vegetation, and fish attractors; attendees also took airboat rides. There was low turnout on the day planned for the media. During last month’s Astatula Town Council meeting, Mr. Renfro and Lake County Commissioner Sean Parks presented a plan for parking and boat access to Lake Apopka on the west side; they are working on the plan, permits, and grants for funding. This will address the issue of access. Mr. Renfro believes the improvements to the Apopka Loop Trail to be positive.

Mr. Renfro stated that FWC has committed \$3,319,869 to SJRWMD in a contract for a nutrient removal project on Lake Apopka; DEP is contributing \$560,000. Mr. Brawley, SJRWMD noted that is the contract that he aforementioned as a request for qualifications. Mr. Tom Champeau, Division Director, FWC will provide an update on use of the legislative funding for the nutrient removal project. FWC evaluates the success of plants transferred from nurseries versus other lakes and uses an adaptive management planting strategy rather than blanket planting in all areas. The type of bed sediments appears to play a significant role. Chairman Goerner questioned the

water clarity. Without use of a Secchi disk, Mr. Renfro described it as being “good and green.” FWC met with Representative Nelson, Commissioner Brummer, other groups and the SJRWMD to discuss plans to provide for kayak access in an area behind the pump house during the next year. The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department plan to create small access for small boats, canoes, or kayaks on the west side.

Christianne Ferraro, DEP, Central District reported that DEP does not have water quality monitoring data for the Harris Bayou. The permit issued for the Harris Bayou Project was a Notice General Permit and monitoring is not a requirement. Chairman Goerner emphasized the importance of required water quality monitoring for the Harris Bayou. Ms. Ferraro stated that she would ask SJRWMD for Harris Bayou water quality monitoring data. Details of the Governor’s proposed \$55 million dollar line item budget for Springs Protection next year are not available. Ms. Ferraro stated that presentation of monitoring assessment and restoration priorities for DEP’s 2014 strategic plan is on March 25, 2014; she provided the time and location of the meetings. Ms. Ferraro mentioned that Julie Espy is the Environmental Administrator of the Assessment and Restoration Support Program, DEP. She noted that DEP uses the Lake Vegetation Index (LVI) to assess if the water body is impaired, not in the development of the TMDL. Mr. Woosley noted that the Council, through the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) workgroup, encourages use of sufficient multiple sources of information on determination of impairment. Ms. Ferraro referenced an upcoming funding program that is accepting storm water and other nonpoint-source type projects and the Section 319 program. She reported that DEP issued the ERP permit to FWC for the fish attractors in Lake Griffin and toxic leaching from the plastic attractors was not a concern. A copy of the permit was available for the Council’s review. Councilman Woosley noted that SJRWMD stated in the application for the general permit that they would monitor the water quality and mass nutrient loading; Ms. Ferraro reiterated that SJRWMD does not have to report the results to DEP. She mentioned the Ocklawaha BMAP, nutrient criteria for the Ocklawaha Chain of Lakes, and evaluation every five years. Councilman Woosley complimented Ms. Ferraro on her presentation to the Council. Mr. Renfro, FWC, returned to the podium to report a Secchi depth on Apopka of 20 centimeters.

Mr. Fulton, SJRWMD provided additional information on the Harris Bayou. He confirmed that SJRWMD has monitored water quality and estimated loading to Lake Griffin from the Bayou since the connection in 2008. He reported water quality problems within the Bayou, and that the two alum treatments (during 2008 and 2010) have not been effective in the long-term control of phosphorus. Current phosphorus concentrations in the Bayou are approximately 250 micrograms/liter. Most of the loading occurred in 2008 and 2010. Estimated phosphorus loads range from a low of approximately 4% of the total load to Lake Griffin in 2008 and almost 13% of the total load to Lake Griffin in 2010. There were two test periods in 2010 in which water flowed in from Lake Harris; each test period lasted four to five days and the monitoring was intense. Mr. Fulton noted that the phosphorus level appears to be higher in the initial flow from the Harris Bayou. The Council discussed off-stream storage to divert some of the initial flush or use of water from the Bayou in an existing reclaimed water system that would utilize the nutrient load and the water. Ms. Ferraro confirmed that Leesburg has a public access reuse system and the ability to augment the system with other water as long as the water is filtered and disinfected.

Mike Perry, Lake County Water Authority (LCWA), stated the NuRF project continues to be LCWA’s biggest project and contribution for nutrient management. Given no rain, there has not been any flow through the structure since April 27, 2012. Mr. Perry stated recent work on

Beauclair restoration to ensure navigation between the lakes; he recalled limb, tree, and vegetation removal from the Dora Canal. LCWA continues their work with the Sheriff's Marine Unit and management of navigation aids and speed zone signage; the LCWA works in coordination with the FWC to establish speed zones and create ordinances. Mr. Renfro, FWC, returned to the podium and referred the Council to FWC's website at http://myfwc.com/media/107062/Boat_WaterwayMarkerGuidelines.pdf for a better understanding of uniform regulatory waterway marking in state waters. Mr. Perry commented on LCWA's involvement with storm water retrofits with local governments, bathymetry, mapping, and ongoing measurement of benthic invertebrates. The measurement of benthic invertebrates appears beneficial in determining the health of the lake. He recognized the cooperative effort between the LCWA and FWC in the removal of woody brush from the lakes for use in FWC's fish attractor program and keen interest in the MFLs and potential change to the regulatory schedule. Councilman Woosley stated that the Council asked for SJRWMD's presentation on the technical results (e.g., the groundwater contributions on the water budget) used in the developing the MFLs prior to the announcement of the final MFLs. Mr. Perry stated that the LCWA asked SJRWMD for the same presentation before their presentation to the Council; Mr. Perry wants to work collaboratively with the Council and SJRWMD. He commented on the evaluation of nutrient loading, especially in Lake Yale, and ramp retrofit at Hickory Point to provide floating docks and a "handicap access dock." Mr. Perry mentioned the attraction of seaplanes to the area.

B. Harris Council support from SJRWMD – Kraig McLane, Intergovernmental Coordinator.

Mr. McLane was absent due to a death in the family so his presentation was postponed to next month. Ms. Nancy Christman provided administrative support in his absence.

7. COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

There were no council or agency questions or answers.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

C. Comments

Vice Chairman Johnson made a motion that authorizes Mike Perry, LCWA, to provide financial support up to \$2,500 to Dr. Dan Canfield, UF to participate as a scientific resource to the Council; approved by unanimous vote.

D. Discussion of Next Scheduled Meeting:

Mr. Renfro, FWC confirmed that Mr. Tom Champeau, Division Director, FWC will make a presentation on Lake Apopka legislative funding at the April 4, 2014 meeting.

Councilman Woosley requested a preliminary presentation by SJRWMD on the background science and engineering for the MFLs; he is interested in the insights learned about the hydrology of the system.

The Council requested a presentation by the LCWA on the benthic macro-invertebrate index work.

Secretary Truenow requested a presentation on the review of the Lake Apopka North Shore restoration; a land management review is required a review every five years; SJRWMD is in the early stage of the review.

Chairman Goerner requested discussion and scheduling of an upcoming workshop during the April 4, 2014 meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m