

**FINAL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL  
November 4, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:03 a.m. on October 14, 2016 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

**Council Members Present**

Robert Johnson, Chairman  
Skip Goerner, Vice-Chairman  
Don Nicholson, Secretary  
Sid Grow  
Keith Truenow

**Council Members Absent**

Stephanie Bishop  
Vacant, Attorney  
Vacant, Physician  
Vacant, Environmental Science/Regulation

**TAG Members Present**

Rolland Fulton (St Johns River Water Management District, SJRWMD)  
Dennis Renfro (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, FWC)  
Kevin Coyne (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, DEP)

**TAG Members Absent**

Mark Hoyer (University of Florida, UF)  
Mike Perry (Lake County Water Authority, LCWA)

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

**2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Councilman Nicholson gave the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

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

Chairman Johnson called the roll. Council member Bishop was absent.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes from September 9, and October 14, 2016 were approved.

**5. PRESENTATIONS / ACTION ITEMS**

\* Action items requested by council members are in bold.

**A. Review of Final Draft of 2016 Annual Report, Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support**

Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support, presented the final 2016 draft Annual Report. Mr. Frazel discussed the Executive Summary noting bulleted recommendations would be updated with comments provided during the meeting and incorporated in the final copy. Mr. Frazel noted the recommendations in the Executive Summary are presented as a separate sheet attached to the front of the document.

Mr. Frazel reviewed major comments provided by Council on the second draft as follows:

Councilwoman Bishop suggested all recommendations on the cover page and in the Executive Summary be worded using action verbs. Recommendations were adjusted accordingly.

Under **Section 4.1 Lake Water Level Management**, paragraph 2, Dr. Rolland Fulton, SJRWMD. Revised the last sentence as follows: ~~It is estimated MFLs will be available for review in the middle part of 2017.~~ MFLs for the Harris Chain of Lakes are scheduled for adoption in 2019.

Under **Section 4.2 Lake Apopka Restoration**, first paragraph, the following sentence was added. Council and TAG will review report results during the upcoming fiscal year.

Chairman Johnson proposed summarizing Ferthaul reports, but they had not yet been reviewed by TAG.

Mr. Frazel reported revised graphs for Section 4.2 had been received by Dr. Canfield and were incorporated into the document.

Under **Section 4.6 Fishery Research**, Dr. Fulton provided the following revised text at the end of paragraph 3. Dr. Fulton reported that a human consumption advisory assessment has not been done for fish fillets from have not been analyzed for the North Shore because of the limited numbers of sportfish in the NSRA North Shore.

Under **Section 4.7 Water Quality**, Dr. Fulton submitted revised text in paragraph 2 as follows: Total phosphorus ~~and total nitrogen~~ concentrations in Area 3 of the Emeralda Marsh ~~and Lake Griffin~~ shows all areas have been below the reconnection target of 200 ug/l for the last two years.

Finally, water body identifications were updated for **Table 4. Projects budgeted or planned for the Harris Chain of Lakes.**

There were no further revisions.

Chairman Johnson discussed distribution of the Annual Report. Susan Davis, SJRWMD reported each member of the legislative delegation and Harris Council would get a copy of the report. Chairman Johnson also requested copies be sent to each member of Lake County Water Authority and each TAG member. Ms. Davis reported every SJRWMD Governing Board member gets a copy of the Annual Report in their agenda packets. Vice-chairman Goerner discussed the possibility of speaking to the Governing Board.

The final draft of the Annual Report, as revised, was unanimously approved by the Council.

## **6. COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

Dr. Fulton updated Council on lake water levels. Lake Apopka water levels were receding with no rainfall, and was below the regulation schedule. There were no discharges downstream. All other Harris Chain lakes were below regulation as well.

Lake Griffin was about six inches below the regulation schedule with minimum discharges at the Burrell Lock. Discharge may be temporarily shut down for aquatic vegetation management purposes.

Dr. Fulton noted the schedule for minimum flows and levels development passed on to 2017. The delay is to ensure coordination with the central Florida Water Initiative. Dr. Fulton reported model information was included in the public review period. SJRWMD is currently completing responses to peer reviewers and stakeholders, with presentation of the results by early 2017. SJRWMD has placed further modeling on hold as there are demands for modeling other systems with higher priority. A revised public review process is not scheduled at this point.

Dr. Fulton reporting the upcoming retirement of Dr. Mike Coveney slated for the end of November. **Council requested summaries of the report by Mike Coveney on Lake Apopka, and a discussion of the bubbler reports by Dr. Fulton at the January meeting. Council requested TAG to also discuss the bubbler reports in January.** Mr. Dennis Renfro, FWC, requested to be excused from commenting on the Lake Apopka projects as FWC was the funding agency, and he was the project manager

Mr. Renfro reported Orange County Commissioner Nelson had put in place a Magnolia Park expansion project. Mr. Renfro also noted FWC is collaborating with the City of Apopka on a new ecotourism plan for City properties. On Emerald Marsh, Mr. Renfro noted FWC and SJRWMD are removing as many tussocks as possible with available funding, and have planted cypress trees on reduced internal levees. Finally, FWC is currently planning to install fish attractors in Lake Dora or Lake Eustis. Part of the installation will be based on the results of tracking large (over 8 lbs.) bass and documenting their habitat use.

Vice-chairman Goerner noted during the discussion of the Annual Report an information request on aquatic vegetation treatment for Lake Griffin was still outstanding, and requested an update from Mr. Renfro. Mr. Renfro discussed aquatic vegetation treatment, noting treatment was limited to periods when weather was calm. Mr. Renfro reported Lake Harris was treated, and Lake Griffin was scheduled for treatment as soon as calm weather was forecast. Mr. Renfro advised he would check with the invasive plant management group to get possible dates for Lake Griffin treatment. Mr. Renfro noted treatment would most likely take place from boats, using spray application of a variety of products rather than granules. **Mr. Renfro requested the aeration reports be resent to Council for review.**

Chairman Johnson queried Mr. Renfro whether a graduate student had been assigned to evaluate vegetation changes of re-planted areas in Lake Apopka. Mr. Renfro reported no research of that nature was currently underway.

Kevin Coyne, FDEP, had no current updates, but was planning to bring project funding updates to the January meeting. Mr. Coyne noted the FDEP Water Restoration Assistance Group was providing quarterly reports that would be available for his use. Mr. Coyne also noted the FDEP Executive Director had been out of the country, but had returned, so the FDEP response to the Harris plan letter would be forthcoming.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

8. **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

Chairman Johnson discussed the Harris Council plan letter, noting a response had been received from SJRWMD, but had not received any other responses. Mr. Renfro reported an individual response was still under development in Tallahassee. Chairman Johnson noted Mike Perry, LCWA, had a board meeting scheduled for November 16 in which comments from the Board would be received.

Chairman Johnson reported he did not know if the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) would submit a response. Dr. Fulton reported SJRWMD did get a brief response from FDOH indicating the agency would be willing to do human health assessments but would rely on SJRWMD or FWC to take samples and have analyses performed. SJRWMD uses Pace Pharma for toxicological testing.

**Chairman Johnson also requested Susan Davis check with FDOH, or clarify their response with Dr. Eric Marzolf.** Chairman Johnson also suggested tentatively discussing reports from the agencies at the February 2017 meeting, and requested Eric Marzolf from SJRWMD to be present, if possible..

**Chairman Johnson requested a list of meeting dates from Susan Davis or Denis Frazel.**

Chairman Johnson also requested the January meeting date be moved to January 13, and the February meeting be scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup>. There were no objections from Council.

Councilman Nicholson discussed genetically modified foods and how they may affect fish and wildlife. Councilman Truenow noted genetic modification occurs naturally while laboratory modification happens more quickly in a clinical setting. Vice Chairman Goerner discussed the pros and cons of genetically modified organisms.

Chairman Johnson commented on a video of Lake Apopka featuring Gian Basili, SJRWMD, and Mr. Renfro, **noting the comments by Dr. Basili in the video inferred that there were no birds on the muck farms when they were being farmed.** In Chairman Johnson's view the video was misleading as Audubon had previously documented birds on the farms during annual bird counts. **Chairman Johnsons stated that the Audubon web site shows the number of birds observed during Christmas bird counts, the number of observers participating, and the time spent when the farms were in operation and after the farms were gone. After the farming was discontinued, there were more observers, more time spent and more birds observed. If the time spent divided by the number of observers were compared to the birds observed were compared when farms were in operation vs. after the farms were out of operation the numbers would be very similar. In other words, the abundance of birds present during the farming operations was approximately equal to that observed after the farming operations had ceased. Dr. Basili's statements were very misleading. The farmers allowed birders on the roads much of the year and for the Christmas bird counts.**

Chairman Johnson also commented on an article from the September 30 issue of the SJRWMD *Water News*, questioning the accuracy of phosphate, pesticide and historical information provided in the article. Chairman Johnson noted phosphate is not a poison as eluded to in the Water News article and is essential for plant growth. Soils underlying the Harris Chain are high in phosphate as discussed at a previous Council meeting. Chairman Johnson remarked that over the years, the farmers reduced the use of phosphate as research showed that due to amounts found naturally in many of the soils in Florida use could be reduced. Phosphate was/is mined in many areas of Florida, including around Lake Apopka.

Chairman Johnson noted the article blames the farmers for the organo-chlorine residues, yet the farmers used legally registered organo-chlorine products according to manufacturer specifications. If there is a disagreement about the safety and the use of these products, the Federal and State governments should be blamed as these agencies approved the use of the products. The article provided little if any mention of raw sewage being pumped into Lake Apopka for many years, ending in the 1980's. In addition, one or more citrus plants pumped raw effluent into the lake for many years. Chairman Johnson suggested the farmers were not the only, and maybe not the main source pf Lake Apopka's poor water quality. Other potential sources include the mass control of water hyacinth, and massive fish kills resulting in a terrible fly infestation. The lake was sprayed with DDT by the County or State to control the flies. Chairman Johnson recommended the SJRWMD Communications Office be more careful about fact-checking articles prior to publication.

Chairman Johnson discussed the agricultural history of the area, referring to a timeline produced by the Oakland Nature Preserve. **Chairman Johnson made a request for Susan to check on the *Water News* article review process.**

Vice-chairman Goerner reported he would be proposing the appointment of John Stump to the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council at the Lake County delegation meeting on December 10.

## **9. REQUESTS FOR ACTION**

- a. Council requested summaries of the report by Mike Coveney on Lake Apopka, and a discussion of the bubbler reports by Dr. Fulton at the January meeting.
- b. Council requested TAG to also discuss the bubbler reports in January.
- c. Mr. Renfro requested the aeration reports be resent to Council for review.
- d. Chairman Johnson also requested Susan Davis check with FDOH, or clarify their response with Dr. Eric Marzolf.
- e. Chairman Johnson requested a list of meeting dates from Susan Davis or Denis Frazel.
- f. Chairman Johnson made a request for Susan to check on the *Water News* article review process.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.