

**FINAL**

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

**September 9, 2011**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council was held at 9:00am on September 9, 2011 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida

**Members Present**

Skip Goerner, Chairman  
Don Nicholson  
Lloyd Woosley  
Jon VanderLey (left at 11:25am)

**Members Absent**

Edward Schlein, M.D  
Richard (Rick) Powers P.G., Secretary  
Hugh (Dave) Davis II, Vice Chairman  
Richard Royal

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Skip Goerner called the meeting to order at 9:05am.

**2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Councilman VanderLey gave an invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

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

Chairman Goerner called the roll. Vice Chairman Davis, Councilman Schlein, and Councilman Powers were absent. Councilman Royal previously tendered his resignation.

- Chairman Goerner announced that a quorum was not present, so voting was not permitted. He said the Council at today's meeting would act on consensus for acceptance, and at future meetings when they have a quorum they will approve anything that needed approval. There were no objections.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Goerner called for a consensus on the June 3, 2011 meeting minutes. They were accepted by a unanimous consensus, but will not be considered for approval until a quorum is reached at a future meeting.

**5. PRESENTATIONS / ACTION ITEMS**

- 1) Chairman Goerner called for a presentation by David Walker, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD).
- David Walker, SJRWMD, provided information on the 2012 fiscal year budget for the Ocklawaha River Basin's current and upcoming projects. Mr. Walker informed the Council that SJRWMD's tentative budget for 2011-2012 is \$209 million, which is a reduction from the 2010-2011 budget of \$244 million, and the final budget hearing with the Legislature and the Governors office will be at the end of September. He stated the districts ad valorem has been capped at about \$85 million, and there was a reduction of staff and contract workers (approximately 200 people). He spoke about the reorganization of departments within SJRWMD, which will be taking place next month. Mr. Walker informed the Council on the budget for the Upper Ocklawaha River Basin (UORB) for this coming fiscal year. He mentioned the budget cuts will affect some of the plans, but they are prioritizing. It would consist of: 1) \$815,000 to complete the infrastructure work at Lake Apopka; 2) \$300,000 for the cost of alum, to treat the water that is discharged into Lake Apopka at the North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA); and 3) \$300,000 for shad harvesting. Mr. Walker mentioned they would be working on a plan and arranging funding for a future joint project coming in the next couple of years with SJRWMD and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for the next reconnection phase at the Emerald Marsh Conservation Area (EMCA), in Knight South

(Area 3). He commented that SJRWMD would be bringing the Council some current and background information on the lake level regulation schedules, and the minimum flows and levels (MFLs), sometime in the near future. Mr. Walker mentioned he would send a copy of the 'Master Water Control Manual – Ocklawaha River Basin- Four River Basins Project' to Councilman Woosley.

- Chairman Goerner questioned Mr. Walker, if SJRWMD plans on temporarily stopping the water flow to Lake Griffin, by closing the Apopka and Burrell Lock and Dams between December and May (as was done last year). Mr. Walker explained that with the same La Nina weather forecast being predicted, they would be discussing this issue with the SJRWMD Governing Board at the October 2011 meeting.
- 2) Chairman Goerner called on Nancy Christman, SJRWMD, to speak about the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council's website.
- Ms. Christman, spoke with the Council about the website, and discussed that the purchase order with the University of Florida (UF), who currently maintains it, will not be renewed in October. She explained that beginning on October 1, 2011 the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council's website will be maintained by SJRWMD. She informed the Council that it would be their own independent website and not part of SJRWMD's website. Ms. Christman gave the Council some suggestions on what names are currently available, the Council selected (by a consensus agreement) the '*HarrisChainOfLakesCouncil.COM*' as their new website name.
- 3) Chairman Goerner called on Marcy Policastro, Wildwood Consulting, Inc., for a review and discussion of the 2011 annual report.
- Ms. Policastro, Wildwood Consulting, Inc., discussed with the Council the comments received on the first draft of the annual report. She addressed the schedule, which will be emailed to the council. She mentioned the annual report's format will be the same as last year, it will include activities from November 2010-October 2011, and the meeting materials will be included as appendices. Ms. Policastro informed the Council that there would be one draft report for each of the following meetings; September 9<sup>th</sup>, October 7<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup> meetings, and the Council can incorporate comments and any additional activities that occur at these meetings (except for the November meeting). She explained that any comments after the meetings would need to be emailed to her and to SJRWMD's Project Manager. The first draft's comments are due by September 16, the second drafts comments are due by October 14, and the third (and final) draft would be reviewed and approved at the November 4, 2011 meeting. Ms. Policastro also requested the Council get permission to use the pictures of the tagged bass that Dr. Canfield received from Jason Dotson, FWC, for the annual report cover.
  - Dale Jones, FWC, said he would find out the source of the pictures for the annual report cover, and get permission for the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (HCOLRC) to use it.
  - Chairman Goerner requested from the Recording Secretary the minutes from the next couple of meetings have more detail in them, and be sent out earlier. He stated that because they are working on a consensus rather than a quorum the absent Council Members would need to understand what the Council Members in attendance did.
  - Chairman Goerner informed the Council only email their comments to Marcy Policastro and the SJRWMD's Project Manager, and do not 'send to all'.
  - David Walker, SJRWMD, spoke about the North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA) and reconnection to Lake Apopka. He explained to the Council that the pesticide levels in the NSRA are now safe for fish and wildlife, but not for the human consumption of fish. The idea of reconnecting now to Lake Apopka could be a concern for human health. In addition, the fish would move to the other lakes in the chain. Mr. Walker will provide a paragraph to the Council on the Districts long-term plan for the NSRA.
  - Dan Canfield, UF, will provide for the next draft, an updated paragraph for the annual report, on changes that have occurred, and the status on the proposed Lake Apopka Dredging demonstration.

- Dave Herbster, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), suggested to the Council that before asking for the artificial reef funding they should be specific and find out what the laws and rules allow. Mr. Herbster mentioned that it would be good if they were able to secure the permits first, it might help get the funding approved. He commented that if what they want to do is something contrary to the rules or laws, they could propose in the budget request to the legislature, a waiver to the rules or laws. Mr. Herbster spoke about how he would like to see everyone work together.
  - Dennis Renfro, FWC, will send the Council a paragraph for the annual report on the FWC fish attractor's initiative.
- 4) Chairman Goerner called on Dennis Renfro, FWC, and Dale Jones, FWC, to give a presentation on FWC's Fisheries Management Activities Update September 2011.
- Dennis Renfro, FWC, provided information on the Fisheries Management Activities Update September 2011. The presentation slides are viewable on the website at <http://sfrc.ifas.ufl.edu/harrischaincouncil/Minutes>. The presentation and discussion by the Council and Mr. Renfro included: 1) information on the proposed Fish Attractor Habitat Enhancement Program to include in the Council's legislative annual report; and 2) FWC's fisheries management activities for September 2011. Mr. Renfro informed the Council that the proposed Fish Attractor Habitat Enhancement Program would be a three-year project in cooperation with the University of Florida. The project will help with the Council's desire to improve fishing in the Harris Chain of Lakes (HCOL). He stated it would consist of constructing 32 quarter-acre and 6 two-acre brush fish attractors, 16 concrete block or rubble attractors, and the goal is to increase the sport fishing and catch rates in Lakes Griffin, Eustis, Harris, Dora and Apopka. Mr. Renfro explained how the brush fish attractors would also be used as wave breaks to try to establish water lilies. He explained there is a lot of labor and special equipment needed to complete the project and the cost for the first year would be \$500,000, the second year would be another \$500,000, and the third year will be \$250,000. Mr. Renfro updated the Council on the stocking of the Sunshine Bass from FWC's fisheries. He informed the Council that in 2011, they stocked 393,000 Sunshine Bass in Lake Apopka, and 94,000 were stocked in Lake Harris, with a future stocking plan of 400,000 in Lake Apopka. The Black Crappie 10-inch, and 25 fish per day bag limit rule (the PowerPoint presentation has the incorrect fish per day bag limit rule as 50) for Lake Griffin could be in place by early 2012.
  - The Council agreed FWC's proposed Fish Attractor Habitat Enhancement Program should be in their annual report, but they requested the appropriate language be written-up. They would also like to add in the report what kind of fishery was supported in the past compared to the present, and the goal that is being set now. The FWC will have something written up for the next meeting.
  - Dan Canfield, UF, commented that the cost for FWC's fish attractors would be less after the first year, with the involvement of local communities and volunteers to help build the attractors. He also stated that the key for good habitat in Lake Griffin is to keep the water level high during spawning season. He advises the Council make a statement to the Governing Board of SJRWMD on that matter. In addition, he suggests a recommendation for keeping the water level in Lake Griffin high during spawning season should go in the annual report.
  - Chairman Goerner stated there is a major negative impact for years on the natural (not the stocked) recruitment of fish when lake water levels are low during spawning season, such as less fish and/or smaller fish. He is concerned that SJRWMD will permanently be lowering the water level in Lake Griffin during the spawning season. Chairman Goerner wants the FWC to be more concerned regarding the low water levels during that season.
  - Dale Jones, FWC, informed the Council that you do not want the water level to be too high either, or it could damage the rooted submersed aquatics that are needed for the fish habitat. He discussed that FWC does communicate with SJRWMD, and they have had discussions with them on several matters. Mr. Jones commented that FWC understands SJRWMD needs to act on what environmental conditions are occurring.

- David Walker, SJRWMD, explained to the Council that when the lake levels are below the regulation schedule, the Apopka and Burrell lock and dams are at the minimum discharge. Last year because of the predicted drought conditions, the flow was reduced at the Apopka and Burrell lock and dams to zero, Moss Bluff's flow was reduced from 30 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 10 cfs, and with some unexpected rainfall the water level in all three of the basins went higher during that period. Mr. Walker stated that is most likely what they will do this year with having the same predicted weather conditions.
- Dale Jones, FWC, spoke to the Council on: 1) the Black Bass Management Plan (BBMP) and the economic impact it will have. He explained to the Council the BBMP's focus is to ensure Florida is recognized as the Bass Capital of the World. He spoke about the \$2.4 billion per year freshwater fishing and the \$1.25 billion per year bass fishing can generate for Florida's economy. He explained that the genetic Florida bass grows large, as compared to the northern genetic bass that stays small. FWC developed a policy to try to minimize the loss of the good genetic Florida bass (*floridanus*), before there is any further removal in the gene pool, and the bass lose the large growth potential that brings in the billion of dollars annually. The FWC has had findings that the northern bass were genetically affecting some of the bass found north and west of the Suwannee River drainage area. Mr. Jones mentioned there is a rule (FWC amended rule 68-5.002) that fish introduced into Florida's waters, in the area's that are south and east of the Suwannee River and its drainage, must be certified as *floridanus*. Among the conditions, permits are required to import any largemouth bass into Florida, or transport them within locations south and east of the Suwannee River. In some cases, permit applicants must confirm their bass fish is *floridanus*, through approved genetic testing procedures, to keep the bass size beneficial, and stock the best fish. The FWC is looking for donor sites that have no fish (as even just one northern fish could contaminate the gene pool), and they can stock that site with the Florida bass. Mr. Jones will get the estimate on how much genetic testing costs and he will email it to Chairman Goerner. He informed the Council the FWC would be doing a ten lake study over the next few years, and then will be stocking fish; 2) The FWC is in the process of mapping the vegetation in the HCOL. This project should be finished in September, and they would like to give a presentation at the October meeting; and 3) Mr. Jones stated they recently formed an internal working group, to make sure all area's of fish and wildlife are represented, not just the fisheries. He briefly discussed the hydrilla management on Lake Apopka. He informed the Council the process is taking place to survey and solicit stakeholder input by the internal working group.

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

- Dan Canfield, UF, spoke with the Council on the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). He explained that for the TAG to have their own meetings they need to have a recording secretary present to record the minutes of their meeting.
  - Nancy Christman, SJRWMD, explained the District could not provide assistance to the TAG for recording the minutes of their meeting. Councilman Woosley suggested to designate certain meetings of the HCOLRC for the TAG to meet and have discussions. Ms. Christman suggested that during the meetings, the TAG members sit together at the front table for every meeting. Chairman Goerner agreed.
- Nancy Christman, SJRWMD, updated the Council on the reorganization of her department at the SJRWMD. She informed them that she has been reassigned to another county, and beginning at the next meeting, Kraig McLane will be the new Project Manager for the HCOLRC.
  - The Council spoke about how she is a pleasure to work with, and they appreciated her good efforts on taking care of all the Councils needs and they wished her the best.
- Dave Walker, SJRWMD, provided his updates to the Council. He stated the July, August and September 2011 updates on the UORB were sent to the Council with the Agenda. He informed them that the water quality in Lake Apopka has been coming down, and currently the Total Phosphorous (TP) was at 72 parts per billion (ppb). The total phosphorous at the Nutrient Reduction Facility (NuRF) varies, but is generally lower than Lake Apopka.

- Walt Godwin, SJRWMD, gave his updates to the Council. He said the lower chain is doing great and the phosphorous levels are low in the lakes. He stated Lake Griffin's TP is in the high 30's to low 40's. He commented that the submersed vegetation in the lakes is doing well, but they are starting to see some problems with hydrilla in Lake Eustis and Lake Harris, which is being dealt with.
  - Councilman Woosley, suggested that SJRWMD report to the press the status of the mid-lakes (Superpond), because it affects tourism, economics, and fishing. He mentioned it is an important message that should be in the news.
  
- Dennis Renfro, FWC, informed the Council that Nathalie Visscher with FWC has a vegetation survey made up of the lakes, and she would like to present it at the next Council meeting. Mr. Renfro requested help from Chairman Goerner, he would like the names of the out of state fish camps, so he can do a survey this month on black crappie. He explained to the Council that, the FWC staff would be going to ten lakes to see what the differences are, and will take that research and then move into the larger public areas. He stated there is no plan for stocking fingerlings in the HCOL yet.
  - Chairman Goerner agreed to the presentation, but stated it needs to be short, as the annual report needs to be worked on for the next couple of meetings. He also requested Mr. Renfro send him a copy of the presentation that he presented today. Chairman Goerner agreed to send Mr. Renfro the list of names of the out of state fish camps.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Charles Clark, member of the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA), commented on FWC's policy for stocking pure *floridanus* bass fish. He stated to achieve 100% genetic certainty it will be very expensive to test all the fish. He explained that there are statistical tables that could be used to achieve 90% certainty, and would be less expensive. Mr. Clark mentioned there would always be a trace of genes left, and it can be lessened, but not fully eradicated.

**8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

**A. Comments**

No Council comments

**B. Discussion of Next Scheduled Meeting: October 7, 2011**

Chairman Goerner discussed with Nancy Christman, SJRWMD, to include on the October agenda: 1) a short presentation by Nathalie Visscher, FWC, on the mapping of the vegetation on the HCOL; and 2) continuation of the review on the draft annual report by the Council.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm