

FINAL

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

January 4, 2013

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00am on January 4, 2013 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida

Members Present

Hugh (Dave) Davis II, Chairman
Skip Goerner, Vice Chairman
Richard (Rick) Powers P.G., Secretary
Sid Grow
Robert (Bob) Johnson
Lloyd Woosley

Members Absent

Don Nicholson
Edward Schlein, M.D
Keith Truenow

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 8:59am.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Davis gave an invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

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

Chairman Davis called the roll. Councilman Nicholson, Councilman Schlein, and Councilman Truenow were absent.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- September 7, 2012 meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
- November 2, 2012 meeting minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
- December 7, 2012 tour minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- There were no public comments.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTIONS

- Dennis Renfro, Fisheries Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), gave a presentation on Harris Chain of Lakes Community-Supported Fish Attractor Habitat Enhancement Program. He stated that the fish attractor habitat enhancement program is designed as a two-phased approach. Phase one is the utilization of local, state and federal resources to construct fish attractors and phase two is envisioned as the local residents assuming ownership of the program and performing the organizational, fiscal and construction responsibilities. Mr. Renfro stated that the program goals are to concentrate sport fish for anglers, enhance angler utilization of existing fish populations, build

community participation and support for the Harris Chain of Lakes, and evaluate the economic impact of fish attractor program. He reviewed the fish attractor design and projected fish attractor sites. Mr. Renfro stated that the anticipated fishing and economic benefits to Lake County are to include enhanced fishing opportunities for Lake County residents, increased appreciation and support for lake management and conservation, possibility of increasing visitors to Lake County, and understanding of economic impacts of fish attractors. The proposed 2013 timeline was presented: September – December to designate attractor sites, coordinate volunteers, coordinate brush delivery, coordinate staging areas with Lake County, and outreach. The proposed 2014 timeline was presented: January – April to construct attractors, outreach, and evaluate attractors. Mr. Renfro also reviewed the cost of the Fish Attractor Program estimates for fiscal year 2013-2014.

Responding to questions from the Council Mr. Renfro stated that fisheries sampling includes electro fishing, gill net or any other long term monitoring. He stated that the key to these programs is to tell everyone about these and how to fish the attractors. He continued and stated that the budget estimates include the equipment needs, construction costs, staff and monitoring and outreach to the public would equal a cost of \$184,700 the first year. Mr. Renfro stated that the life span of the lake attractors should be 3 – 5 years. He stated that the goal is to have the community or club refurbish the site after the attractor has been placed. Mr. Renfro stated that the barge would be made available. He stated that it is a prototype that has been done on other lakes and has been very successful. Hardwood is much better than Christmas trees as far as time needed. FWC can use that type of stuff before it gets to a landfill. Plastic trees have been researched, but the cost is significant. Another prototype was of 55 gallon drums cut in half. What is being used is readily available brush that is at no cost.

Dale Jones, FWC, stated that FWC has done fish attractors for 30 – 40 years and have seen them very successful in all kinds of lakes. It is the proto type for trying to build the community into the ownership of the fish attractors and FWC to provide support in these areas of the community.

- Dale Jones, Section Leader, Fisheries Biologist, FWC gave a presentation on Harris Chain of Lakes Largemouth Bass Stocking. He reviewed the Lake Griffin study results and adult bass transfer. Mr. Jones explained the illustrations of electro-fishing catch rates of largemouth bass in Lake Griffin and Lake Dora. He continued and reviewed the acres of vegetation and water levels as well as the electro-fishing catch rates of largemouth bass and water levels in Lake Griffin during 2007 – 2012. Mr. Jones explained that bass in Harris Chain need habitat and made suggestions for meeting the future restoration challenges in the chain. Mr. Jones stated that this information is brought to the Council to help understand stocking and what FWC's data shows about stocking.

Vice Chairman Goerner stated that FWC monitored the electro-fishing by going to lake locations that would hold bass, but FWC did not test the canals or marshes. He feels that those are the areas early on that had the vegetation increases and that is where the fish were. He said the tests had to be skewed. He knows that the Emerald Marsh is loaded with fish and this area was not tested.

Responding to questions from the Council, Mr. Jones stated that the testing was done and that the fish disperse and not all go into the marshes. He continued and stated that the goal is to increase the economic impact and catch rate. Mr. Jones stated that the study is a long term monitoring across the state and the long-term data is the way they can see affects.

Councilman Woosley feels that monitoring should be a tool and not an objective.

Vice Chair Goerner stated that Lake Dora has never been a bass fishing lake and that the slide is based on numbers of largemouth bass fishing on Lake Dora. He stated that Hickory Point is the bass fishing location to be tested.

Mike Perry, LCWA, stated that Hickory Point become the bass fishing location in 2009. Vice Chairman Goerner corrected the date to 2006.

Vice Chair Goerner stated that the whole system should be tested and monitored and not just parts of the Lakes.

Chairman Davis does not understand why the person-hour effort is the same and the catch rates decreased by half according the slides that Mr. Jones is presenting in his presentation.

Mr. Jones stated that the effort drops, because the numbers are lower in that area.

Councilman Grow stated that the numbers are only representing efforts and not catch. One slide is showing man hour efforts and the other slide is showing catch rates.

Mr. Jones stated that bass need habitat and high quality bass fishing lakes have dynamic water levels with great habitat. Lakes fluctuate and are influenced by environmental habitat.

Vice Chair Goerner stated that the presentation does not show that the areas of vegetation in the canals are dynamic and that the bass are concentrated there. He continued and stated that the Council and FWC agree that the more vegetation equals the larger amount of bass.

Councilman Woosley requested from a fisheries management standpoint that FWC come back to the Council with an optimized water level enhancement program for Apopka, Mid Lakes and Griffin – including a conceptual model of all of the substrates. He continued that a fishery could produce a hypothetical optimum 10-year fluctuation strategy for a lake within a chain as a model. Vice Chairman Goerner stated that the only way an accurate enhanced schedule could be established would be after the MFL's are set. He continued and stated that the Council has that report and it was written up in the minutes of the Council.

Walt Godwin, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), stated that two goals are being discussed: minimum flows and levels (MFLs), which are to prevent harm to the habitat; and enhanced fluctuation in the lakes. He stated that they are not one in the same. He continued that the enhanced fluctuations cannot violate a MFL rule. Mr. Godwin also stated that the Council can provide their suggestions to the regulation schedules of the lakes.

- Dan Canfield, University of Florida (UF) stated that when a presentation on lake levels was given the subjects of dredging and an enhanced fluctuation with access levels was taken to SJRWMD. He continued and stated that it will be helpful to have FWC produce a hypothetical optimum 10-year fluctuation strategy for a lake within a chain as a model, but use the information that is already available to the Council and not start from the bottom.

7. COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Dan Canfield, UF updated the Council that at Magnolia Park on Lake Apopka - a dredging process is being tested to determine if material from the bottom of the lake can be removed and be usable with the water being returned to the lake. Lake Apopka was chosen because of two types of materials, which consist of solid and fluid materials. The process will determine if the water can be returned back to the

lake without harming habitat, devise a system to treat the water without adding more problems and design a system where the end products are usable. The testing site is in a 100 feet by 100 feet area. Instead of alum, iron is being used to process the water before returning it to the lake. The questions being asked are: how much material being produced and how much money will it cost.

- Mike Perry, Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) updated the Council that the lake levels are below regulatory and minimum desirable levels. Lake Apopka is at 63.75 feet which is 2.39 feet below regulatory schedule and 1.75 feet below minimum desirable level; Superpond is at 60.43 feet which is 1.78 feet below regulatory schedule and 0.57 feet below minimum desirable level; Griffin is at 56.2 feet which is 2.01 feet below regulatory schedule and 0.8 feet below minimal desirable. He stated that Lake Beauclair dredging project is 85 percent complete and are hopeful that the project will be completed by the late spring or early summer.
- Dennis Renfro, FWC, updated the Council on the fish attractor program and that it is in the preliminary stages of being installed in Lake Apopka.
- Dave Herbster, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) updated the Council that pre-application meetings have been held with FWC and SJRWMD to discuss dredging at Winter Garden and that pre-application meetings have been held with Clean-to-Green to install GeoTubes at Magnolia Park.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

A. Comments

Vice Chairman Goerner stated that the Lake County Legislative Delegation meeting will be held in the afternoon at the Lake-Sumter State College and all Council Members are invited to attend.

B. Discussion of Next Scheduled Meeting: February 1, 2013

Kraig McLane, SJRWMD added, based on the feedback from the Council, that he would have presentations on the February agenda include an update of lake level management and MFLs and land management plan for the Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 am.