

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

April 4, 2003

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 AM on April 4, 2003 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioners' Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

Members Present

Charles C. Clark
Thomas A. Cook, MD
Skip Goerner, Chairman
Rick Powers
Hugh Davis II, Secretary
Keith Farner
Don Nicholson

Members Absent

Thomas Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation was given by Mr. Robert Kaiser (Ex-Officio), followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Chairman Goerner called roll. All members were present except Mr. Thomas Brooks.

4. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Goerner welcomed all Council members and members of the audience. He mentioned that he did not travel to Tallahassee last month and went on to say that the determination of sources and availability of funding for the coming year may be changing and those determinations are currently in progress.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Goerner discussed the use of the term "ground-truthing" on page 6 of the minutes and determined that the usage was correct. He also pointed out that the littoral planting coverage goal for Lake Griffin should be changed from "100 – 150" acres to "1,000 – 1,500" acres on page 6; and that the creel catch for the current year should be noted as "higher", not "lower" as noted on page 10. Council members had no additional comments or corrections for the March meeting minutes and they were unanimously approved.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chairman Goerner announced that Dr. Daniel Canfield had rescinded his resignation from the Council's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and would continue to serve.

Chairman Goerner initiated discussion of potential funding sources for the upcoming fiscal year. He presented a letter from State Senator Anna Cowin stating that the Council's funding request would not be approved during this legislative session.

Mr. Gene Caputo, St. Johns River Water Management District (District) Intergovernmental Coordinator, briefly discussed the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) funding allocation that is scheduled for District Governing Board discussion and approval next week.

Mr. Charles Clark requested that a listing be provided of the data and assumptions used to develop the poster depicting Lake Griffin potential revegetation areas that was presented by the TAG during the March meeting.

A discussion of the feasibility of setting up a website for the Council followed. Mr. Caputo said that neither the District nor the LCWA was in a position to set up a website for the Council. However, a Council website could be linked to the District or LCWA website. Mr. Rick Powers suggested that the Council may be able to utilize local high school students for website creation.

A request was made to allocate Council funds for refreshments (coffee, sweet rolls, etc.) during the monthly meetings. Mr. Keith Farner questioned the advisability of such an expenditure. Discussion followed, and a motion for refreshment funding was made, seconded, and passed.

7. AGENCY UPDATES

Chairman Goerner then asked for Agency updates. Bill Johnson (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission - FWCC) discussed the progress of the TAG regarding the lake restoration plan document requested by the Council at the March meeting. Mr. Johnson discussed the enhanced water level fluctuations, and said that the Council could utilize the plan adopted by the District, which is ready to proceed as outlined. He mentioned the goal of having 10% to 15% of lakeshore vegetated, and estimates that currently there are approximately 70 acres of littoral zone in Lake Griffin available for planting with little or no site preparation. He also discussed the possible hydrologic reconnection of Lake Griffin with the adjacent farmland targeted for restoration. Mr. Johnson believes that water level fluctuations are a key element in the restoration of the lake.

The alum water quality treatment pilot study at Lake Beauclair was then discussed. There is much current on-going research, and the FWCC is collecting data from these initiatives. However, the collected data will need to be analyzed prior to any decision being made to continue with the Lake Beauclair project. Mr. Clark requested the available data on whole lake alum treatment.

Chairman Goerner requested that the TAG complete the requested restoration plan for the Council's review. He also initiated a brief discussion comparing the benefits and liabilities of dredging versus water level fluctuation, and expressed his desire to begin implementation of some of the proposed restoration projects. Chairman Goerner requested that all Council members be notified of TAG meetings when held for the purpose of developing the restoration plan document, and suggested that a roll call of agency TAG members be conducted during the monthly meetings.

Chairman Goerner then spoke of the public meeting recently held to discuss Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). He said that at the meeting it was stated that alum could not be used in Waters of the State until approved by permit. A discussion as to whether the Lake Griffin flow way was considered Waters of the State, and whether alum is permitted to be applied in the flow ways, followed.

District staff then discussed the District's view that whole lake alum treatments should only be used in lakes with long residence times, which would allow for proper treatment and residual management. Lake Yale is the only lake in the Harris Chain with a residence time deemed suitable for whole lake alum treatment. District staff is in agreement with the information included in the working document being presented by FWCC. The work being done by the District on the fluctuation of Lake Apopka's water level was also discussed. The District is reviewing characteristics of flows discharging from the lake prior to implementing water level fluctuation.

FWCC staff then reviewed recent large mouth bass data for Lake Griffin. The bass catch rate is up from 0 fish per minute to 0.2 fish per minute, which is still lower than 1.0 fish per minute from previous years. It was also noted that non-native (exotic) fish species exist in some of the lakes and may displace the native species. A brief summary of FWCC restoration projects including revegetation of lakes Yale, Eustis, and Beauclair was then given. Approximately 500,000 plants have been planted and a final report on the projects will be presented in a month or two. Chairman Goerner requested that FWCC staff return next month to further discuss the projects.

Bob Kaiser discussed grants for various projects and programs, and provided an update for the City of Leesburg stormwater conveyance system. He provided a written summary of a recent meeting held to discuss the stormwater system. Ms. Ann Griffin expressed concern that detergent-based phosphorus is returning into the lakes. It was pointed out that few, if any detergents now contain appreciable amounts of phosphorus.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairman Goerner then called for any comments from the Council members. He began by discussing budgets and funding available for various projects, and there should be more emphasis on implementing access dredging before the water level fluctuation project moves forward. He also discussed various potential sources of funding for additional engineering studies needed to keep the projects moving forward.

Mr. Clark addressed the elevation of water levels in Lake Griffin that would be required to provide good access for boaters. He also discussed the District water level fluctuation schedule. Mr. Farner expressed his belief that the Council should be proactive, and have plans in place for project implementation when the economy and funding likelihood improves.

District staff said that the long-term restoration goal for the Harris Chain is to have all the lakes work in concert with each other. The District is examining canal dredging, which may be coupled with alum treatment. Also, concerns about the disposal of dredged spoil material, especially the muck, were reviewed. Mr. Johnson then briefly discussed District-owned lands on the east side of Lake Griffin and north and south of Haynes Creek with respect to restoration potential.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Goerner then asked for Public Comment. Ms. Ann Griffin (speaking as a private citizen) stated that the proposed Lake Griffin drawdowns to water level elevations of 54 to 56 feet NGVD had not been approved by the District Governing Board. She went on to caution about the dangers of toxins in the sediments that would be exposed during the fluctuations. She also felt that some of the projects are too extreme and expressed concern that the use of herbicides for vegetation control can cause cancer.

Mr. Clark requested that the labels or other information characterizing the herbicides that may be used in the revegetation projects be provided to the Council. Mr. Johnson stated that LCWA applies the chemicals. Mr. Caputo stated that he will arrange for the appropriate individuals to discuss that information at the May 2 Council meeting.

Mr. Don Nicholson suggested that the Council may want to look into obtaining any information about unusual diseases that may be caused by the toxins Ms. Griffin is concerned about. It was pointed out that this information may not exist.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Goerner called for meeting adjournment. A motion was made, seconded, and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Skip Goerner, Chairman

Hugh Davis II, Secretary