

FINAL

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

June 6, 2003

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 AM on June 6, 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
Hugh Davis II, Secretary
Keith Farner
Thomas Brooks
Rick Powers

Members Absent

Don Nicholson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goerner called the meeting to order at 9:00 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 Don Nicholson.

4. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Goerner welcomed all Council members and members of the audience. He then briefly discussed the recent Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) meeting. Chairman Goerner also informed the Council that no appropriation of funding had been approved by the Florida State Legislature.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Due to problems with various email addresses, the Meeting Minutes from May 2, 2003 had not been received by all Council members, therefore the discussion of those minutes will be held during the July 2003 meeting.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Aquatic Habitat Initiative / Lake Plan of Action

Chairman Goerner discussed that the LCWA had voted not to approve the Aquatic Habitat Initiative with the language as written. A Resolution (Resolution No. 2003-02) has been approved by the LCWA and copies were provided to the Council as a handout. John Benton of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) explained that the Initiative was not written for the Council, but for the agencies involved. Chairman Goerner objected to some of the language and said that the Council does not agree with some parts of it and does not support it. Mr. Benton explained that the Resolution is a “working document” to which data and other information will be added to in the future. David Walker of the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) explained that the Initiative is a “framework” for the agencies to move forward with, and that they will review it at the Governing Board meeting in July.

Mr. Clark, Mr. Benton and Mr. Walker briefly discussed the implications of drawdown and its effects on water quality. The consensus was that drawdown is not beneficial to water quality in the short term. The lake would see an improvement in aquatic vegetation and fish habitat, and could eventually see improvement in water quality. Mr. Walker believed that drawdown could be a measure of last resort.

Mr. Kaiser discussed various aspects of the renovations to the Canal Street Waste Water Treatment System in Leesburg. He also informed the Council that the former director of the Waste Water Department had resigned last month and the interim supervisor is Ray Sharp. An additional update will be provided at the July Council meeting.

Arrangements for the Presentation by Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker

Dr. Thomas Cook (Councilman) discussed the availability of the Magnolia Room at the Lake-Sumter Community College for Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker’s upcoming presentation. Dr. Cook explained that the room is available on Thursday, July 10th at no charge or Friday, July 11th for a \$150.00 fee to cover security. A motion to discuss the expenditure was passed.

Additional information regarding Dr. Shoemaker was requested by Gene Caputo (SJRWMD), as required by the District for approval of payment. Chairman Goerner explained that Dr. Shoemaker is a physician from Maryland who is involved with *Pfiesteria*, including algae blooms and fish lesions. Chairman had sent Dr. Shoemaker water samples from Lake Griffin for analyses. Dr. Shoemaker’s assessment was that the samples had other problems besides the levels of Phosphorus. Chairman went on to say

that the purpose of the presentation is to provide both the general public and the Council with information relating to the condition of Lake Griffin.

Ann Griffin (speaking as a private citizen) discussed Dr. Shoemaker's work in neurotoxic algae and other pathogens. Ms. Griffin feels that the muck farms around Lake Griffin may contain either toxic algae or pathogens. She went on to say that Dr. Shoemaker also works in neurotoxic diseases.

Dr. Dan Canfield of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) explained that the Council should note that Dr. Shoemaker would promote his own agenda and that his information should not be taken alone, but with that of other experts. Dr. Canfield went on to say that Dr. Joanne Burkholder of North Carolina could provide another point of view on the issues. Chairman Goerner requested that Dr. Canfield contact Dr. Burkholder and invite her to give a presentation. Dr. Canfield agreed to contact her. Mr. Clark endorsed the notion of having Dr. Shoemaker and Dr. Burkholder give presentations providing different points of view.

After additional discussion, the motion to spend \$150 to schedule a Friday, July 11, 2003 meeting in the Magnolia Room was passed.

Dr. Cook expressed his opinion that physicians should be required to report infections caused by neurotoxins, such as those found in algae. He felt that the Council should make a recommendation to the Florida Legislature to consider this issue. The Council agreed and requested that Dr. Cook prepare a draft of the recommendation. Dr. Cook stated that he would.

7. PRESENTATIONS

Preliminary Draft Report of PLRGs – Dr. Rolland Fulton, SJRWMD

Dr. Rolland Fulton (SJRWMD) provided a hand-out; "Interim Pollutant Load Reduction Goal (PLRG) recommendations for the lakes in the Upper Ocklawaha River Basin" and gave a PowerPoint® Presentation. Interim PLRGs were completed in June 2003 and the final PLRGs are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2003. Dr. Fulton also explained that PLRGs have been developed for the Upper Ocklawaha Basin lakes which include lakes Beauclair, Dora, Harris, Eustis, Griffin, Yale, and Weir. It has been determined that the primary nutrient of concern is Phosphorous. He went on to explain that the Emeraldal Muck Farms have contributed P to Lake Griffin. The SJRWMD purchased several of the properties within the Emeraldal Marsh Conservation Area, which were discharging P into the lake. Since their purchase, Lake Griffin has experienced a decrease in P loading from the farms.

Initial efforts to establish Target Values for the PLRGs was to use a combination of modeling of external sources and inferences from other lakes in the area. Setting P loading limits to reach the target levels was achieved by comparing water clarity / transparency to the P content. As provided in Chapter 62-302.530 Florida Administrative Code, a 10%

decrease in transparency indicates a 13% increase in P. Recommendations for the Total Phosphorus (TP) reduction for the individual lakes were provided in the hand-out.

Dr. Fulton went on to say that the TMDL for Phosphorus (P) in Lake Apopka is 55 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) and even if that level were achieved, that additional treatment of the water would be required to achieve the PLRG of 32 $\mu\text{g/L}$ in Lake Beauclair. He also said that it is believed that if the TMDL for P in Lake Apopka were achieved and the Emerald Muck Farms were maintained to the standard of those along Lake Apopka, that the PLRGs for the other lakes could also be achieved.

Chairman Goerner asked if flow way treatment is the only method for P reduction. Dr. Fulton explained that there are other measures being reviewed including the efforts on Lake Apopka. Chairman expressed his concerns that flow way treatment may have adverse effects on Lake Griffin. Mr. Clark requested that operational issues of flow ways be discussed during the next monthly meeting. Chairman Goerner agreed.

Mr. Clark went on to inquire about the sod farm along Lake Beauclair and issues that may affect water quality in that lake. Dr. Fulton believed that 93% of the P in Lake Beauclair comes from Lake Apopka and the other 7% comes from all other sources. Councilman Rick Powers asked if P is the limiting nutrient for the entire Chain of Lakes. Dr. Fulton explained that Nitrogen (N) is also an issue, but there was no PLRG recommendation for N. He went on to say that the process for reducing P from the lakes will also reduce N.

Agency Updates

Chairman Goerner then called for agency updates.

Mike Perry (LCWA) announced that the LCWA had received the FDEP Permit for dredging and is working on the Army Corps of Engineers Permit. He also said that the Water Authority is preparing to request bids for the work.

Mr. Perry then introduced Lance Lumbard (LCWA), who provided a hand-out to the Council. Mr. Lumbard is involved in a study on resuspendable sediments and the feasibility of removing them from Lake Griffin. He explained that resuspendable sediments could play a role in the nutrient levels within the lake. Berryman & Henigar, Inc. provided consulting services on the project and proposed a two-phase program. Objectives of the project were:

- 1.) Identify the volume and location of the resuspendable sediments.
- 2.) Determine the feasibility of dredging the sediments to improve water quality.
- 3.) Predict the potential benefits to the lake from selective dredging.
- 4.) Based on existing estimates of sediment deposition rates, estimate the likely return period from the proposed dredging needed to sustain water quality gains.

Mr. Lumbard went on to explain that with the objectives in mind, the next two steps were to perform a comprehensive literature review, and to consult with experts in the field from

the local area to discuss these issues. He also indicated that the literature review did not produce any specific information on the uppermost layer or resuspendable portion of lake sediments.

A workshop was recently held with various agencies including the SJRWMD, LCWA, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and others. The discussion suggested that there would only be limited improvement in water quality as a result of removing resuspendable sediments from the lake itself. P reduction in the lake would be more attributable to the removal of rough fish and canal dredging efforts. Selective dredging of localized areas of the lake was being considered as a viable option.

Chairman Goerner briefly discussed some of the difficulties in removing only the top few inches of sediments in lakes. Mr. Lumbard explained that dredging is more of a matter of habitat restoration as opposed to water quality improvement.

Mr. Walker then explained that the disposal site for dredged sediments is typically the most cost prohibitive aspect of dredging and that the SJRWMD was preparing a permit application for disposal at “Area 7” (Eustis Muck Farms) at a cost of \$250,000 for the disposal. He also stated that the District was proceeding with Alum Treatment at Area 7, due to existing P concentrations. Previous Alum treatment at Long Farms (muck farms) reduced P from 5,000 µg/L to 100 µg/L. Mr. Walker felt that the Eustis Muck Farms should experience a similar magnitude of reduction. Additionally, the Council has requested that the SJRWMD release \$500,000 in funding to the LCWA to move forward with canal dredging, as previously discussed. Chairman Goerner then requested that a Resolution be provided by the SJRWMD at the July meeting, for the Council to review prior to providing their endorsement of the canal dredging project. Mr. Caputo agreed to work on providing the Resolution. Mr. Walker then provided an update of the Burrell Structure renovation.

Councilman Keith Farner, Mr. Perry and Mr. Walker briefly discussed the redistricting of Polk County by the Florida Legislature from the SJRWMD to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

Chairman Goerner then recognized Dr. Canfield for an award he will be receiving from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for his program, “Fishing for Success.” After accepting the recognition, Dr. Canfield urged that the Council invite Rich Cailteux (FWCC), who has done work in fish restocking programs, to give a presentation to the Council. Dr. Canfield went on to discuss various studies and efforts with both fish restocking and aquatic vegetation plantings. He recommended that the Council pursue the position of making the Harris Chain of Lakes the premier bass fishing lakes in the state. He felt that this position may improve the view of legislators. Dr. Canfield also discussed Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and the [extended] length of time they would take to achieve. He then recommended that the Council invite Shalish Patel, an expert in dredging and a centrifugal method for dewatering dredged sediments, to speak at a Council meeting. Dr. Canfield felt that the Council should emphasize that their dredging project is intended to provide

improved access, not as a water quality project. He also explained that the Florida State Legislature may respond to additional funding requests if they were provided results. He went on to suggest that the Council begin a “demonstration” Canal Dredging Project to produce results for the Legislature.

Mr. Benton then discussed research in stocking programs and their success in the area lakes. A general discussion was held regarding water quality, the ability of fish to survive, habitat for breeding, and predatory species (e.g. catfish). Mr. Benton offered to obtain a preliminary report from Mr. Cailteux provide it to the Council at the July meeting. Also discussed was the benefit of stocking the lakes with “advanced fingerlings” or “year old” bass and the economic benefits it would provide. One point of interest that may be mentioned to the legislators is that the ESPN Fishing Tournament brought in approximately \$12,000,000 in economic benefit to the area, during the year succeeding the tournament.

Mr. Powers departed from the meeting at 11:55 AM.

Dr. Canfield then explained that one of the benefits of a stocking program would be to produce results in as little as 5 years, as opposed to the 80-plus years that it may take in the Lake Okeechobee P Reduction Programs. This was followed by a brief discussion of the potential for the larger bass (over 1 year in age) to become the predatory species in the lakes as opposed to the catfish or other species of fish. Chairman Goerner then requested that Dr. Canfield, Mr. Benton and Mr. Walker produce a report on stocking the lakes, to be provided to the Council at the July meeting, and for discussion at the August meeting. They agreed to the request.

Mr. Walker then provided a brief update on the planting project being conducted in the various lakes in the area and Lake Griffin. He explained that progress was being made and that the work is ongoing.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Clark requested that Dr. Larry Battoe (SJRWMD) discuss his work on P reduction and shad harvest, with the Council during the August meeting. Dr. Battoe agreed.

Mr. Farner then commended Mr. Cook for his suggestion to the Council that they endorse a recommendation to be presented to the Florida State Legislature, with respect to the required reporting by physicians of any infections caused by neurotoxins.

Chairman Goerner then called for any additional comments from the Council members. There were none.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Goerner called for Public Comment.

Ms. Ann Griffin (speaking as a private citizen) discussed three issues:

- 1.) She agreed with Dr. Canfield that unionized ammonia is an issue along with many other chemicals and nutrients. She believed that these should also be included in the TMDLs.
- 2.) She expressed that she would like to see a reduction in the amount of spraying (chemical control) as opposed to harvesting for weed control. She explained that the material of the plants which are sprayed sinks to the bottom of the lake and becomes part of the muck. This only adds to the issue of muck. She requested that the Council support her view for harvesting as a means of weed control.
- 3.) She also expressed her concerns with the redistricting of the SJRWMD to SWFWMD in Polk County. Her major concern is that SJRWMD has lost control of the headwaters for the Harris Chain of Lakes.

Mr. Clark agrees with Ms. Griffin that harvesting is better than spraying. He supports her efforts to secure funding for the purchase of a harvester (approximately \$50,000). Dr. Canfield cautioned that harvesting not only involves the cost of the harvester, but also an operator and other expenses.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Goerner called for meeting adjournment. A motion was made, seconded, and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Skip Goerner, Chairman

Hugh Davis II, Secretary