

**FINAL**

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

**October 15, 2004**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 AM on October 15, 2004 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioners' Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

**Members Present**

Thomas A. Cook, MD, Secretary  
Charles C. Clark  
Keith Farner  
Don Nicholson  
Rick Powers, P.G.

**Members Absent**

Hugh (Dave) Davis II, Chairman  
Skip Goerner, Vice Chairman  
W. Thomas Brooks  
Robert Kaiser, P.E.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary Thomas Cook called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

**2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Invocation was given by Councilman Keith Farner, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Councilman Cook called roll. Chairman Hugh Davis, Vice Chairman Skip Goerner, Councilman Thomas Brooks, and Councilman Robert Kaiser were absent.

**4. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Councilman Cook welcomed the Council and members of the audience.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Two minor edits were discussed for the Minutes from the August 6, 2004 meeting. After brief discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved with the suggested edits. There was also a brief discussion on the monthly minutes being available on the Council's website. Patrick Hunter, Recording Secretary to the Council informed the Council that the

website had not been updated with the minutes in several months. Gene Caputo of the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) said that he would talk to Marilyn Bachman about updating the site.

## **6. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### Status of Hydrilla in Surface Waters, Eric Cotsenmoyer – Lake County Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management

Eric Cotsenmoyer, Director of the Lake County Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Section provided the Council with an update of the aquatic plant management activities with respect to hydrilla for the Harris Chain of Lakes. He provided a handout with graphs of plant management activities (chemical spraying) conducted for the various lakes during the past five years. Chemical treatment for hydrilla on Lake Griffin had increased from 68.57 acres in 2003 to 431.48 acres in 2004. Similar increases in treatment areas were also noted for lakes Harris and Eustis. Mr. Cotsenmoyer said that they are having success with suppressing hydrilla growth. He explained that it appears the native species of Southern naiad (*Najas guadalupensis*) had been out competing the hydrilla, which is aiding in controlling the invasive species. Mr. Cotsenmoyer went on to say that in the winter the Southern naiad will die back and then they expect a resurgence of hydrilla in the spring.

Councilman Don Nicholson asked what are the most advantageous depths at which hydrilla grow in Lake Griffin. Mr. Cotsenmoyer explained that it can grow in depths varying from 1 to 20 feet and can out compete native vegetation. He said that if allowed to grow uncontrolled, hydrilla could overtake an entire lake creating a monoculture. He also said that light is not always the limiting factor in the spread of hydrilla, but that nutrients are and it can grow all the way to the surface in water that is 20 feet deep.

Councilman Nicholson asked if hydrilla provides good habitat for fish and what is its method of propagation. Mr. Cotsenmoyer answered by saying that there is much better habitat provided by native species of plants. He also explained that there are four different modes of propagation used by hydrilla including tubers that can lay dormant for 25 to 50 years before they germinate; turions which are buds that fall off the plants, drift away and can remain dormant for 10 to 20 years; fragmentation where portions of the plant can break away and recolonize in another area of the lake; and also through the germination of seeds. Mr. Cotsenmoyer explained that Lake County does not currently have hydrilla which produces seeds.

Councilman Farner asked if grass carp (which had previously been discussed as a method of aquatic invasive plant control) eat indigenous or native species of plants. Mr. Cotsenmoyer said that they do. Councilman Farner also asked if there were any specific needs that Lake County Mosquito and Aquatic Plant Management might have that the Council could assist them with. Mr. Cotsenmoyer said that currently they are in need of personnel to assist them in their efforts. He explained that currently they use subcontractors provided by either the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). He felt that it

would be more effective for them to have additional people who could be better trained and more familiar with the water bodies in Lake County. Mr. Cotsenmoyer went on to explain that they currently have a permanent staff of two which is difficult for them to complete the level of plant management (spraying activities) that they are currently performing. Once they are able to get the spread of the nuisance plants under control, possibly two people could manage the task.

Councilman Nicholson asked about the feasibility of suction dredging to assist in hydrilla control. Councilman Rick Powers explained that the average costs associated with suction dredging is \$8 - \$20 per cubic yard of materials removed and that this cost would be prohibitive as an aquatic plant management tool.

Councilman Charles Clark thanked Mr. Cotsenmoyer for his efforts and the recent efforts of Lake County Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management at the Twin Palms fish camp.

#### Letter of Support to the LCWA – Charles Clark

Mike Perry, Executive Director of the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) explained the data collection of toxic algae saying they have been monitoring cyanobacteria for approximately three years. Recently the Board of Trustees (Board) of the LCWA questioned the justification for spending approximately \$200,000 per year on the data collection. Mr. Perry said that the Board agreed to fully fund the monitoring through the end of 2004 but that they wouldn't provide the same level of funding in 2005. He suggested that perhaps the LCWA could attract partners and the Lake County Health Department (LCHD) has provided "seed money" to initiate the partnering efforts. Mr. Perry said that they will begin talking to other agencies at the end of October.

Councilman Clark discussed the letter of request from the Council to the LCWA to continue funding for the collection of sampling data for [toxic] algae in the lakes. He explained that he provided a draft of the letter to Mr. Caputo who in turn sent it to Chairman Dave Davis. Mr. Caputo believed that Chairman Davis had not yet presented the letter to the Board. A motion made to approve the letter passed with a vote of four and Councilman Powers abstaining from the vote because of involvement of the company he works for with the sampling efforts.

#### Special Legislative Funding Requests – Keith Farner

Councilman Farner inquired as to the deadline for submitting funding requests to the Florida State Legislature. Gene Caputo of the SJRWMD replied that he wasn't certain if the deadline had passed for the 2004 – 2005 fiscal year but he would research a more definitive answer. Councilman Farner had recently learned that the Florida Legislature had appropriated \$20 million for aquatic plant management statewide. He was interested in finding out if any of that funding could be used in Lake County. Councilman Farner suggested that some of that money could be used by Lake County Mosquito and Aquatic Plant Management to increase their staff. Mr. Caputo said that he would research that question and email a response to the Council before the November meeting.

Councilman Powers explained some of the procedures for submitting funding requests saying that if the Council wants to request funding for a specific project, that the request must go through the Lake County Delegation and that can be done at any time prior to the vote. Mr. Perry added that the Legislature is more apt to consider funding requested through State agencies as opposed to those of smaller organizations. He also confirmed that Councilman Powers was correct in his explanation that funding requests can be submitted at virtually any time.

Councilman Clark offered his support of the Lake Beauclair Nutrient Reduction Facility (NuRF) project saying that the Council should also support the project. He felt that the project to reduce the sediments and nutrients in Lake Beauclair where the Apopka-Beauclair Canal enters the lake is also a worthwhile project.

Councilman Farner suggested that the Council request funding for Lake County Mosquito & Aquatic Plant Management Section to hire additional staff. Mr. Perry explained that could be accomplished by requesting the funding through a State agency like the SJRWMD and that would need to be done by December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Clark asked what the Council could do to assist in gaining more funding for the worthwhile projects. Mr. Caputo explained that it may be too late to accomplish that the 2004 - 2005 fiscal year however, he would include this as a discussion item for the November Council meeting.

#### Preliminary Draft of the Council's Legislative Report – Patrick Hunter

There was extensive discussion of the Draft Annual Report to the Florida State Legislature prepared by Patrick Hunter, Recording Secretary to the Council. Mr. Hunter and the Council were able to agree on a variety of comments, edits and suggestions provided by the Council for the report. After a brief discussion on the costs of printing the report, it was decided to produce the report in hard copy without the appendices and to include a CD with the report that contained the appendices. The Council also agreed not to approve the report with the noted changes until the November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting to give the opportunity for the Council members who were absent to review the report with the suggested edits. The attending Council members felt that further review of the report by Council members who had not yet commented on the report should be limited to the items that were discussed at this meeting. They also requested that the changes discussed and made to the report be italicized so that other Council members may readily identify the edits that were open for comment.

#### Scientific/medical data to co-author an article on exposure to toxins – Dr. Tom Cook

Secretary Cook (a physician) explained that a presentation could be made at the quarterly meeting of the Lake County Medical Society (LCMS) which is a dinner meeting, at a cost of \$2,000. He further suggested that the cost could be split with the LCWA paying half of the cost and the Council paying the other half. Secretary Cook felt this would be a good way to introduce this information to them and said that Mr. Perry had agreed to talk at the meeting.

Councilman Powers made a motion that the Council cosponsor the LCMS quarterly meeting with the LCWA. The motion was seconded. Councilman Nicholson expressed his concern as to how the public would view this expenditure of taxpayer funds. Mr. Perry explained the rationale for the costs saying that the issues to be presented at the meeting are to increase the awareness of the local physicians of the potential health risks associated with toxic algae exposure.

A vote to approve the motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Cook also suggested that a series of four articles be written and published in the quarterly LCMS bulletins and that the articles could be written by himself, the LCWA and Andrew Reich of the Florida Department of Health (FDOH). He further suggested that the articles should be concise, short and informative. Secretary Cook summarized the three objectives of their efforts as (1) to educate local doctors to recognize the symptoms of exposure to toxic algae; (2) inform the public of the possible risks of exposure; and (3) to encourage the public to report suspected cases of exposure to medical professionals.

Mr. Caputo related the case of his daughter living on a canal in West Palm Beach. She has been suffering with symptoms similar to toxic algae exposure as explained by Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker in a presentation given to the Council in July 2003, for approximately two or three years. He said that about three years ago they started noticing a very musty smell coming from the canal and since that time she had suffered from those symptoms. Mr. Caputo provided her a copy of the video from Dr. Shoemaker's presentation and his daughter has not been able to have any of her doctors view the tape. Mr. Caputo personally hopes that the Council is successful in getting this issue out to the medical professionals and general public.

Secretary Cook then presented the Council with copies of the article he had written on the matter and asked that they take a few minutes to review it. Secretary Cook calls for a brief recess to review the article at 10:30 AM.

The meeting reconvenes at 10:40 AM. After a review of the article written by Councilman Clark, Secretary Cook suggested that it should have a title and offered "ASR: Aware, Suspicious and Report." Another suggestion was to include the post mortem report of the young man who died in Wisconsin from toxic algae exposure after swimming in a golf course pond. Councilman Powers suggested that a statement saying the article was prepared by the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council in cooperation with the FDOH be included. He also felt that the article and future articles be reviewed by Mr. Reich and the LCWA in order to provide their comments and endorsements.

Secretary Cook asked Mr. Perry what the best manner was to proceed with publishing the article. Mr. Perry explained that the LCWA Board would not be able to review the article until the November meeting.

Council's Annual Budget for the FY – 04/05

Mr. Caputo said that a copy of the annual budget was provided to the Council in the monthly information packet sent out for the meeting. After a brief discussion on the budget the Council agreed to not make decisions on it until Councilman Tom Brooks is present.

**7. PRESENTATIONS**

No formal presentations were scheduled to be given during the October 2004 Council meeting.

Agency Updates

Bill Johnson (FWCC) provided an update of recent fish population counts conducted in lakes Beauclair and Dora through the use of block nets. He explained that this information will be used to conduct gizzard shad harvests in those lakes. Mr. Johnson started out by saying there are approximately 550 pounds of fish per acre within 150 feet of shore or the littoral zone. In eight samples collected in Lake Dora the average fish counts per acre were 71 pounds of blue tilapia, 265 pounds of bluegill and 52 pounds of red-eared sunfish. In the eight samples collected in Lake Eustis the average fish count per acre was 33 pounds of crappie, 210 pounds of bluegill, 75 pounds of largemouth bass, and 178 pounds of red-eared sunfish. Overall, Mr. Johnson felt that the number of fish identified in the lakes were good.

Mr. Perry (LCWA) gave a brief update of the bid process for the Lake Griffin Access Canal Dredging project. He said that the bids that have been received from contractors will be reviewed by the end of October. If there is a favorable bid that is acceptable to the LCWA, they will contract with that company to conduct the dredging. If all the bids exceed the amount of funds allocated for the project, then the LCWA will decide to either reduce the number of canals to be dredged, try to identify other sources of funding to meet the bid, or possibly readvertise the contract and start the bid process again. He said that those decisions should be made by the end of October.

Barbara Bess of the FDEP gave a brief update on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program saying the Ocklawaha Basin Working Group has met regularly since the summer and are making progress. In a recent meeting there were discussions by local governments as to who was going to pay for the improvements necessary to meet the TMDLs put forth by the State and also if there would be any "credit" given to those entities that have already made improvements to improve the quality of stormwater runoff. Currently the FDEP does not have answers to these issues, but they are continuing to meet with the local governments to discuss the matter further. Ms. Bess also said that the next meeting of the Working Group will be on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM. Additionally, they will have meetings with elected officials at the end of January 2005 and the beginning of February.

## **8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

### Discussion of November 12, 2004 Meeting

Mr. Caputo provided a summary of scheduled agenda items for the November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting including:

- A discussion of a letter supporting Legislative Funding requests;
- A discussion of the edited version of the Council's Annual Report to the Florida Legislature;
- Continuation of the Budget Report; and
- A final discussion of the Technical Advisory Group and Sunshine Laws.

### General Discussion / Comments

Mr. Caputo also discussed the resolution to commend County staff for their efforts to support the Council saying that the resolution was presented to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in late August. He explained that the resolution did not specifically address that the commendations should be presented to the individual staff members, therefore they weren't and it was simply recorded in the BOCC meeting minutes. Mr. Caputo went on to say that with the Council's approval, he will speak to the BOCC to ensure that the commendations are provided to the appropriate County staff members. He also reminded the Council that everything is in place for Dr. JoAnn Burkholder's presentation on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at Lake County Community College and December 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Council's meeting.

There were no additional comments made by the Council.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were made.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Secretary Cook called for meeting adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Dr. Thomas Cook, Secretary

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Councilman Charles Clark