

Minutes for Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Technical Advisory Group Meeting
1/9/08

TAG Members Present:

Dan Canfield Chair (IFAS)
Bill Johnson (FWCC)
Larry Battoe (SJRWMD)
Michael Perry (LCWA)
Barbara Best (FLDEP)

Michael Adams (SJRWMD Intergov. Coord.)

Visitors:

Wes Porack (FWCC)

Thomas Best (FLDEP)

Micheal Allen (IFAS)
Kurt Larson (IFAS)

Purpose: Meeting requested by Council so TAG can address issues that the Council may focus on during 2008-2009.

Canfield: I want to focus on fish instead of the other management practices. Need to give guidance as to what to do for the next few years. One issue is stocking of fish, whether to continue or not is what we need to decide. Maybe it should be meshed with a larger program though. Where is the habitat? Most fish come from the back canals. Perhaps there is a chance where we can use artificial structures (brush piles) to attract fish and fisherman to the main lake. We do not want to talk about plants at this time.

B. Best: What does enabling legislation have to do with this?

Canfield:

Canfield: Stocking business? The Council likes it and wants to keep it going because it provides a quick fix. We are stocking Dora this year. But now we have to deal with the habitat business.

Perry: Each lake is different. Are the plants returning to Griffin? Beauclaire plantings, still there?

Canfield: Not enough compared to history for big fishing lakes. Griffin had political support, but people want to know why not other lakes?

B. Best: Is Dora the best candidate?

Johnson: The stocking of large fish do not require plants.

B. Best: This is just a PR project.

Canfield: I have never said it was anything but. Two lakes were considered “bad” Griffin and Dora. We did Griffin, so now we are doing Dora. The issues with Griffin are the fish are in the canals where the habitat is.

Porack: If you have good habitat stocking bass is not necessary. We tried stocking larger fish since they survive better. Not much success in the 90’s. Problems like liver disease due to feed. They do not have good health because of the way they are raised. Trying to solve this problem, but not yet. Stocking is best following drought and fish kills. We would like to stock Griffin at least with hatchery fish.

Best: What are you stocking big or small? What is your definition of success?

Porack: We stock advanced fingerlings to give them better survival. The fish are contributing to the anglers’ creel. They are adding to the creel, just not replacing natural fish.

Canfield: Stocking has always been PR, but can we get fish into the creel of the angler. We have some evidence of this already. They may not last very long, but maybe we also need some more habitat.

Johnson: If they are large enough, they do not need habitat.

Canfield: it is PR so let’s get the public on our side so we can do the more expensive things.

Allen: If more people fish there, then it is successful to increase angler presence.

Dora: Better to do stocking study since it does not have all the canals where the fish can disappear to. We need habitat, where is the habitat? Wood is good. Dora is a nice lake and the shoreline has few people living on it. So wood habitat is a possibility. We need to learn a lot more in order to do more than temporarily fix the lake.

Best: Both large and small fish?

Canfield: I support both at this time.

Allen: Need to get habitat. Plants are not coming back soon, so we need artificial habitat to increase natural recruitment.

Canfield: Attracts large fish too, and easier for anglers to catch.

Allen: This can increase fish biomass.

Canfield: Need many to have an impact on the bass population.

Allen: Sample, add attractors, then see if it works in a scientific way.

Canfield: Old creels showed many more fish than in recent years. If we just increase the creel, then people will agree that fishing has improved and that is a goal.

Best: What do you use for habitat?

Allen: Tree debris.

Porack: Hardwoods.

Allen: Brush protects shoreline to possibly get more plants. Do large program to increase fish production in a section of a lake.

Canfield: Do a ¼ acre area and 3 feet below the surface. Lake fluctuation is a problem, so we need an exception in this case.

Best: I like the idea of large amounts to increase fish production throughout the lake.

Canfield: We are going to have to go this route in order to get some plants back.

Johnson: How many acres of habitat?

Allen: As much as we can do with money. Maybe 25-50 acres and measure LMB before and after.

Best: What's the area of plants covering Lake Dora?

All: 2-10%

Allen : Put gaps between brush.

Porack: On a small lake it is easier to do habitat manipulation?

Allen: Yes, easier to get measurements.

Best: has there been no research to date that states the effectiveness of artificial structures?

Canfield: Bah! Hundred years of this. The Council does not want studies, but we have to do some.

Best: Make it a large project where work and research can both be done.

Canfield: If we got enough brush piles in Apopka it could be a good fishing lake. Can you get the anglers onto the lake? That is what the Council wants to know.

Porack: What is the effect of stocking on the habitat manipulation.

Allen: If we researched it for a few years we could do it especially since we know how many fish were stocked.

Canfield: We just want to know if it works. Research or no, that is all they care about (getting more people to fish there).

Best: The public wants to see things being done. Get the press involved and advertise it so many people know that this can attract more fish and increase catch.

Battoe: Why not plant macrophytes?

Canfield: All the shallow water has been planted, but it does not work (take hold and persist). We really need to get lake fluctuation to get the plants back.

Battoe: There could still be small plantings?

Perry: Yes, small scale.

Porack: The best thing to do to make the bass fishing better is to let the hydrilla go.

Canfield: Everyone who has a say says "no."

Best: Can you control it?

Proack: Yes and no. there are ways to control it but it is difficult.

Canfield: If it (hydrilla) gets past 10% we kill it, if it is less, we let it go.

Allen and Porack: Best thing to do is let hydrilla grow.

Battoe: Letting hydrilla go is short-sighted and irresponsible.

Porack: Why?

Battoe: It can take over and cause more problems and is not worth it for one organism (bass).

Canfield: What do we work on now, the big fish or small fish stocking?

Porack: We are committed to get the stocking program going all over the state and Griffin is a good place to start to see how effective we can be. We need to stock more than one year to see a contribution in the angler creel. In KY and Talquin stocking was successful under the right conditions.

Johnson: Stocking so many fish can be expensive. There needs to be many fish to impact the lake.

Canfield: So we need more habitat to change the lake?

Johnson: Yes..

Canfield: The fish go into the canals and not the main lake.

Battoe: Stocking is short term?

Porack: Yes, but if you stock consecutive years you have more fish over a longer amount of time.

Johnson: It is like a put and take fishery, which is successful for trout.

Canfield: We are doing 2 lakes. We can do one with brush piles and one without, but stock both which the Council supports.

Johnson: Need some research to find applicable ideas.

Allen: 50 acres in the lake should make a difference (diagram) in a mosaic.

Canfield: Griffin stocking and habitat in Dora the Council may more likely agree to this plan.

Johnson: What is the timeline?

Allen: To test, the lake is going to have to be sampled at least 1.5 years prior. So around 2010 for the brush pile implementation.

Porack: All fish from FWC hatchery are genetically marked.

Canfield: What do you think mike?

Perry: I would like to work towards a natural solution. Is it a fish concentrator or a viable habitat? I understand the need to do something. I would like to address natural recruitment and change water quality.

Canfield: There is enough clarity to grow plants, but there are other factors influencing plant growth like bottom consistency. Fluctuation can help, but there are canal issues, and I would like to have natural restoration as well.

Johnson: Brush will increase fish production.

Allen: We can measure if the production has increased.

Porack: I don't think natural vs. artificial is an argument, but we need to do something.

Battoe: I think there are hurdles to go over with the state to do some of the management proposals.

Canfield: Why are we doing study if you (Johnson) said brush piles work??? I think the Council wants to see all work done, but we can't do anything about the habitat just yet.

Perry: There is much to be done before we can fluctuate water level.

Canfield: Strictly from PR standpoint, stocking appeases Council, brush piles can work, but is less supported. Will Council support both types of stocking?

Perry: Yes.

Canfield: Is the Council going to support what we want to do?

Battoe: We still want to do scientific work.

Canfield: Agreed.

Perry: Better name than "brush piles" for restoration.

Canfield: We will get brush pile info worked up in proposal. Navigation will not be an issue in this case. One more fish issue, I am not supportive of shad removal, but I think Apopka needs a rough fish removal program to get things going there. It should really be hit for 3 years.

Johnson: I would not use haul seines. I would just use gill-nets.

Canfield: I want to remove everything, not just gizzard shad. When 80% are gone, things begin to happen. Rough fish removal has been changed to gizzard shad removal for some reason. Use Apopka as a target area since we are not worried about sport fish out there right now.

Allen: it will take a large manipulation to change anything in the chain.

Best: Manipulation means?

Allen: 80% removal of fish biomass. The point of the report is that the small fish are not vulnerable to the nets.

Canfield: I am not worried about nutrients, I worried about getting plants back. Rough fish removal can achieve this.

Allen: We know a biomanipulation can work, but literature says about 80%.

Battoe: Maybe we should start at a smaller lake.

Johnson: Has been done and worked.

T. Best: How do you sell mass fish removal to the public?

Canfield: It can only work on a “dead” lake like Apopka.

T. Best: So you want to use this as an example for the public?

Canfield: The bad water from Apopka is killing our lakes according to the press. The rough fish removal should help to clear up the lake (Apopka). I think the other lakes should be done, but I cannot sell it at this point.

Best: If you knock out 80% to get it to work?

Canfield: Yes, you need to get almost all the fish (including game fish) in order to gain the benefits of the removal. So, good and bad fish.

Best: It would take more nets and more work to get all the fish, so more expensive?

Johnson: Yes. We could then stock sunshine bass afterwards as well.

Canfield: If we are asked by the Council, we just stick to Apopka?

Perry: Yes, because they would not support it in the other lakes due to the game fish by catch.

Allen: To see it work in Apopka, we will need to use many different sizes of mesh, and other types of gear to get all the gizzard shad in particular. 50% reduction does not help to clear out the water.

Battoe: I think that it can.

Canfield: What we really need to do is to get the public support. The 1st aspect the public wants to see in a lake is aesthetics. We also need access to boaters. This generates great PR, as seen from the harvester work. The issue is canal navigability. There has been multi million dollar dredging work done in Griffin, but it still has not solved the access problem. Report about different dredging techniques.

Break

Canfield: Dredging background discussed. The public wants to dredge to keep water in their canals, during the event of drawdown. The Council wants to dredge. They all support the dredging of all the lakes in the chain. Genesis Fluid System owner is asking about Harris Chain work. It filters the water so it makes the water clear. It makes a dry soil product that is easier to transport out of the lake. It is more expensive, about twice as much. The council wants all the

marches adjacent to the lakes connected back to the lakes. What about a research/demonstration project to see what this does. We have issues where dredging is concerned.

Johnson: There is no justification to dredge the other lakes.

Canfield: This is what the Council wants.

Perry: The problem is, if you do one lake you have to do them all. The problem is the funding to do dredging on all lakes.

B. Best: I don't think the Council will turn down people who want their canals dredged.

Perry: We can generate enough money to do it if there is enough will to do it.

Johnson: There has to be environmental reasons to dredge in order to justify it.

Perry: The Beauclaire thing was as much access as it was environmental issues.

Canfield: Tre there

Perry: I think there is enough justification for dredging.

Battoe: I cannot see the whole of Apopka being dredged.

Canfield: Yes, that is to connect the main lake back to the marshes.

Best: Any dredging that is for the public good, would get support, but small scale cannot be supported.

Perry : Is there a benefit to dredge the material around the shoreline?

Johnson: We can have a discussion on all the problems associated with dredging a whole lake.

Canfield: I think the Council has a want to dredge in the Harris Chain. The objectives need to be clear to dredge. Are there any projects that the Council should be involved with?

Johnson: Treating the Apopka water flowing north.

Perry: A whole lake alum treatment. This can deal with the internal nutrient loading in the lakes. This can limit resuspension of the sediments.

Porack: What are the pros and cons?

Perry: The problem can be with cyanobacteria. If you kill them out of the water column you could release all the toxins into the water column. So, you just do the treatment when there isn't a bloom.

Porack: Is it not temporary?

Perry: Yes, but if you shut off the external loads, then the alum should give you a prolonged benefit, in order to get the plants established.

Johnson: Need a plant management plan to keep hydrilla out.

Battoe: Maybe do a small alum treatment area?

Perry: We tried that and it did not work.

Canfield: Alum works well in the deep lakes. What are we trying to accomplish? Even if P is tied up, the clarity can be low due to sediment suspension.

Perry: Macrophytes came back fast in Griffin when it cleared a few years ago.

Battoe: These lakes have a very high flushing rate. So alum treatment might not work so well. Maybe this would work well during drought conditions.

B. Best: Has this been advised to the Council?

All: Yes.

Battoe: Can use ferric chloride.

Canfield: Ferric chloride and ferric sulfide is about the same cost.

Perry: I would like to provide sufficient light to grow plants over a long period of time.

Canfield: The alum treatment didn't last long in most lake it was used in. If I get plants back in the lake, hydrilla will likely be the first to come in. Fishermen want 30-40% but they don't want to have so many that boat props get full of it either.

Battoe: Maybe the Council should do a better job of educating the public about what is going on.

Canfield: We want to educate the public with posters. If they are more than 5 feet away from the boat ramp, then they don't see them. We should get kiosks out at the boat ramps to give some info about ongoing projects on the lake. Just want the public to see that we are doing things, and give a number of someone to call for questions. My guess is the Council will buy into this, since it will make the public happy.

All: Good idea at minimal cost.

B. Best: Not changing behavior, just want to let public know how their money is being spent.

Perry: We get calls all the time about water levels. They want to know what we did with the water.

Canfield: Put Council number on there, because citizens will talk to other citizens rather than a government agent.

B. Best: Generate posters that are large and colorful that detail all the aspects of the lakes and restoration efforts. We need to provide the info to get to the info they want.

Canfield: We can redirect them to the Atlas or the entity that can inform them of the answers they seek. Most people don't know about the Atlas, but if they want to see it, they will find a way. Anything else?

Talk about a meeting at the end of the month in Winter Haven.