

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

August 2, 2013

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:06 a.m. on August 2, 2013 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

Members Present

Robert (Bob) Johnson
Don Nicholson
Keith Truenow
Lloyd Woosley

Members Absent

Hugh (Dave) Davis II, Chairman
Skip Goerner, Vice Chairman
Richard (Rick) Powers, P.G., Secretary
Sid Grow
Edward Schlein, M.D.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councilman Nicholson called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Nicholson gave an invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

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

Councilman Nicholson called the roll. Chairman Davis, Vice Chairman Goerner, Secretary Powers, Councilman Grow and Councilman Schlein were absent.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- There was not a quorum, no action was taken.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- There were no public comments.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTIONS

- Jo Anna Emanuel, Land Resource Planner, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), gave a presentation on marsh management. She described freshwater marsh to include numerous variants; non-tidal, occur in floodplains along rivers, streams, and lakes; sandy organic, or peat soils may be present; vegetation typically occurs in submersed, floating-leaved, emergent, grassy, areas of open water, shrubs and woody plants are highly scattered zones. Ms. Emanuel described the freshwater marsh vegetation to include sand cordgrass, sawgrass, and/or maidencane. She stated that the woody species are sparse but may include buttonbush, wax myrtle, flood tolerant trees and coastalplain willow. Ms. Emanuel reviewed the natural disturbances along with other disturbances and invasive species. The invasive species include hydrilla, water hyacinth, water lettuce, phragmites, alligatorweed, cattail, wax myrtle, saltbush & Peruvian primrose and coastalplain willow. Ms. Emanuel reviewed the Lake Apopka North Shore invasive and exotic

species treatments from 2006 – 2012. She continued and described to the Council the dry maintenance phase I activities (1999 – 2008/10) of groundwater pesticide testing, permitting, maintain mowed vegetation, soil remediation and infrastructure construction. The interim saturation phase II (estimated 5 – 10 year duration) is to include micro-manage water levels, monitoring (biological & pesticides) and promote dense vegetation. The seasonal flooding phase III active management (deep) activities would include woody control and store floodwaters and (shallow) mixed marsh would include maintenance and monitoring (biological). Ms. Emanuel stated that the desired future condition mixed marsh would include emergent marsh of 20 – 70% coverage; open water 10 – 30% coverage and other components 10 – 30% coverage depending on site conditions, which may include areas of wet prairie and mudflats. She continued and stated that district staff will consider initiating control actions when the coverage of shrub or other undesirable woody encroachment exceeds 20% of any individual phase or cell. The management options for willow/shrub control are mechanical treatments, herbicide applications, prescribed fire, water management, combined approach, multiple treatments. She added that continued research and monitoring will help guide management actions. Ms. Emanuel stated that the invasive treatment costs include chopping at \$65 – 150 / acre depending on thickness and size; herbicide \$100 – 220 / acre depending on herbicide; fire \$10 – 50 / acre in burnable area; and hydrologic water depends on availability and whether it is pumped or gravity fed. Upon the many lessons learned the activities that expose soil and/or provide saturated soils January-March provide ideal conditions for the establishment of willow, interruptions in natural disturbance cycles (fire, flooding, etc.) aids in the development of conditions that are favorable for willow invasion. She added that mechanical treatments reduce stature of willow, but increase stem densities through adventitious rooting, flooding and overtopping seedling willow for extended periods has resulted in willow mortality and fire is ineffective in reducing coverage of mature willow.

Responding to questions from the Council, Ms. Emanuel stated that the Carolina willow is a native plant that is being controlled. She stated that fire can be effective at reducing seedling and sampling willow trees, but not the mature willow trees. Ms. Emanuel explained that ecotourism desires to restore marshes to get the higher trophic order species in place, such as birds. She added, the environment is not going to be the same, but the desire is to get it back to the base of what the marsh was. The management plan is a 10-year plan that has the restoration phases mapped out. The management plan will have a proposed budget yearly based on the species that were found the prior year.

Councilman Nicholson stated that cypress trees were in the marsh at the beginning and stated that he did not see cypress trees in the plan to establish the restoration phase. He stated that he would like to see this added to establish the natural pre condition.

Responding to questions from the Council, Dave Walker stated that species would come into the area once the natural habit is in place, but there is not certain species that are targeted.

- Dennis Renfro, Fisheries Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), gave an update on Emerald Marsh fisheries. He stated that unmanned access game cameras are at five access points around the marsh to record all boats entering and exiting the marsh. He added, the advantages to FWC included the time in/time out of anglers, estimation of angler effort, low equipment cost, and to monitor economic impact. He reviewed the proposed locations for the access cameras. The supplemental information from the cameras would be angler interviews at access points and advantage gains catch rate information.

- Steve Fitzgibbons, AICP, Intergovernmental Planner, SJRWMD, updated the Council on the annual report preparation and timeline that he is following to produce the annual report by the deadline of the Council. He stated that he would bring the first draft next month for the Council to review and start making changes/edits.

7. COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Dennis Renfro, FWC, reviewed the on-going projects for Lake Apopka restoration that includes planting desirable aquatic plants. He stated that approximately 317,000 bulrushes and 29,000 spatterdock (water lilies) have been planted to date and additional spatterdock planting will occur this fall. The estimated encumbrance to date for the planting is \$230,000. Mr. Renfro stated that 31 fish attractors have been installed this spring and summer and additional 10 fish attractors are scheduled to be installed in the next 60 days. The total encumbrance for the fish attractors to date is \$123,500. He continued and stated that the projects under development include a North Shore habitat creation that will create desirable depth and substrate to support submersed aquatic vegetation along the North Shore. The wave attenuators will use structures that attenuate wave energy to increase plant survival and expansion at the north shore habitat project and largemouth bass stocking that Dr. Mike Allen, University of Florida (UF) will evaluate current information and collect additional data to determine timing for stocking at Lake Apopka. The largemouth bass stocking project will be a detailed project and will be explained at the September Council meeting.
- Mike Perry, Lake County Water Authority (LCWA), updated the Council on lake levels and stated that it has been wet the last month, but the lakes are still below regulatory and minimum desirable levels. Lake Apopka is 1.75 feet below regulatory and 1.5 feet below minimum desirable. The Superpond, Harris, Dora and Eustis are 0.5 feet below regulatory schedule and 2 tenths of a foot above minimum desirable. Lake Griffin is 1.5 feet below regulatory and 0.5 feet below minimum desirable. He stated that there has been no flow through the structures since April 27, 2012 and no water has been treated through the NuRF since that time. Mr. Perry stated that the LCWA still has \$5,000 in the budget for the Council and \$10,000 from legislative appropriations that the Council had from early 2000.

Responding to questions from the Board, Mr. Perry stated that the algae blooms in early 2000 was a study and was below minimum detectable toxins and is fine for recreation use. Mr. Godwin stated that the chlorophyll and phosphorus levels are still low in the Lake.

Mr. Perry stated that Dr. Canfield was the drive behind the harvester. The Council asked if Mr. McLane could seek comment from Dr. Canfield. Mr. McLane stated he could, but Mr. Mike Allen, UF representative that has replaced Dr. Canfield was in the audience and could ask him for an update.

- Dave Walker, SJRWMD, updated the Council that the SJRWMD Governing Board had moved into a lease agreement with Sun Gro Horticultural Processing, Inc. at Emerald Marsh to do some peat removal in area five. He stated that there has been a problem with water quality and alum treatment had been used twice which resulted in lower phosphorus; however the phosphorus is still higher than what it should be and needs to be closer to what Lake Griffin levels. Mr. Walker showed the Council an aerial map of area five and stated that the lease is set for 10 years with a 5-year possible renewal.

Mr. Walker stated that SJRWMD has sent out a request for interested parties for the Lake Apopka North Shore dredging alternative agricultural use project. He stated that the District proposal would facilitate the teaming of dredging and agricultural operators by maintaining a list of potential respondents and the nature of their proposed activity.

Mr. Woosley stated that he would like to propose in the Council's report to increase economic valuable sources in the Lake that does not need legislative appropriations.

- Mike Allen, UF, introduced himself to the Council. He stated that his background has more fish ecology experience, than Dr. Canfield's background of limnology. He continued and assured the Council that he was very familiar with the chain and has worked closely with FWC.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

A. Comments

- The Council stated that the Annual report will be the main focus of the September meeting.

B. Discussion of Next Scheduled Meeting:

- The Council asked that Mr. Allen to make a presentation on his experiences and what studies are being done at UF that relate to the chain. Mr. Allen stated that he would not be available to provide the Council a presentation until October.
- The Council requested to hear about the agricultural alternative projects.
- The Council stated that they hear reports about the variety of birds and bird count, but would like to hear about the economic value of the restoration of ducks and hunting improvements.

9. ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:23 a.m.