

FINAL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
of the
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL
October 2, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:08 a.m. on October 2, 2015 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

Members Present

Skip Goerner, Chairman
Don Nicholson
Sid Grow
Robert Johnson
Stephanie Bishop
Keith Truenow, Secretary

Members Absent

Hugh (Dave) Davis II
Dr. Ed Schlein

John Stump, ex officio member

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goerner called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

Chairman Goerner called the roll. Council members Davis and Schlein were absent. Mark Hoyer and Stephen Tonjes (DOT) of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) were absent.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Discussion and approval of the September 2015 minutes, as revised. Minutes approved.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTION ITEMS

Annual report review—Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support

Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support, presented the 2015 draft Annual Report. Mr. Frazel presented a series of photographs for the Council to consider for the cover of the Annual Report. Chairman Goerner noted the photos would be finalized at the November meeting. Chairman Goerner recommended the Council defer discussion on the Executive Summary portion of the report until the November meeting, as the recommendation in the summary had not yet been discussed.

Chairman Goerner and Councilwoman Bishop identified a series of acronyms that were either missing or needed to be revised. These included Lake Apopka North Shore (LANS) revised to North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA). CHL (Chlorophyll, DO (Dissolved Oxygen), TN (Nitrogen), TP

(Phosphorus), CUP (Consumptive Use Permit), SOPs (Standard Operations Procedures), TMP (Temperature), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Upper Ocklawaha River Basin (UORB). All acronyms were corrected in the document. The draft document also included the 2014 Council recommendations as an example for the 2015 draft recommendations. The 2014 recommendations were subsequently deleted.

Chairman Goerner began in-depth discussions of the report beginning with Section 3.1. Specific changes discussed by the Council are listed below by report section. A number of typographical and grammatical changes recommended by the Council were made throughout the report, but are not individually described in the minutes.

Section 3.1 Lake Level Management

Councilman Johnson suggested that there is a great deal of information and repetition in the report about minimum flows and levels (MFL's) and suggested shortening the section. Council agreed to have Mr. Frazel revise and truncate the presentation made by Mark Hoyer in July 2015. Chairman Goerner requested specific dates of gate closures on Lake Apopka, and dates of authorized discharges (and rates of discharge) to the lake be documented. Flow rates and dates of initiation of discharge from Burrell lock and Moss Bluff were also added. Dr. Rolland Fulton, SJRWMD, added that discharges of 17 cfs from Lake Apopka have been occurring since September 2015. The reason for these discharges is that the lake is approaching the regulation schedule.

The Council discussed the recharge map in the document (Figure 2), changing report text to indicate the map is a recharge/discharge map with groundwater contributing to the volume of the Harris Chain of Lakes. Chairman Goerner requested more specific information regarding the distribution of a water resources values questionnaire be added. The following text was added, "the questionnaire was electronically emailed through SJRWMD's newsletter to 1,172 total questionnaires, including 719 citizens or residents in the SJRWMD database and 453 local government staff and elected officials within Lake, Marion, and Orange counties. SJRWMD also mailed 43 letters to individuals, marinas, and bait shops and posted the questionnaire on its website in two different places." Chairman Goerner also requested the number of responses to the questionnaire be included in the report.

The Council discussed the text regarding a presentation made in September 2015 about historic Lake Apopka water levels. Council revised text and added a figure (3) to note Lake Apopka water levels have remained down in the twenty years since farming ended and speculated the apparent contribution of water from the NSRA to the lake is bigger than reported. Text was also added that Dr. Fulton acknowledged there was no clear explanation for the low levels.

Section 3.2 Lake Apopka Restoration

Councilman Johnson added text to Section 3.2 from the February 2015 minutes as follows, "the Council stated that, by that rationale, it should not be toxic to birds and Exponent did not know what caused the kill because they were not given adequate time. Exponent gave six reasons pesticides did not kill the birds and there were no bird deaths in Audubon's summer bird counts. The Council believes there will be more bird deaths at Lake Apopka in the future due to Newcastle disease, Salmonella, and Botulism, referencing articles from 2002 and 2003 regarding the death of nearly 10,000 pelicans across the United States." Some of this text was duplicated elsewhere in the report and was removed accordingly. In further discussion about the bird mortalities, Chairman Goerner noted differences in bird counts for the area, as reported in the Lake Apopka Surface Water

Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan produced by SJRWMD. Councilman Nicholson and ex-officio member John Stump requested hard copies of the Plan.

The Council discussed the July 2015 report by Dennis Renfro about a Lake Apopka restoration video, choosing to add the following text, “the Council noted it showed a diked lake rather than a reconnected marsh, and created a false narrative on the NSRA. The video does not show a reconnected marsh that is essential to the restoration of Lake Apopka.”

In discussion about the September 2015 report by Heath Rauschenberger on the 1998-1999 Lake Apopka bird mortality incident, Chairman Goerner recommended text be added noting “Dr. Rauschenberger acknowledged he was not present during the event and many of the slides and information in his presentation were provided by SJRWMD.” Also that “Dr. Rauschenberger noted there was a disconnect between the USFWS Jacksonville office and Washington, DC.

Councilman Johnson recommended the Council note in the report that the Exponent report found disease in a number of birds analyzed. All birds should have been analyzed for disease. USFWS prohibited the EPA, Audubon and others from analyzing dead birds and prohibited the EPA from taking live pelicans for additional studies to establish a controlled chlorinated hydrocarbon background. Councilman Johnson presented an information sheet on Audubon bird counts starting in the 1990s through 2013 that gave counts from annual Christmas counts. Councilman Johnson also presented a paper from the United States Geological Survey in Nebraska showing the death of pelicans over the years of approximately 35,000 dead pelicans attributed to disease. Councilman Nicholson suggested inserting background information on the consulting firm Exponent. David Whiting, DEP offered his perspective on several elements of the bird mortality event.

The Council completed review of Section 3.2 with a recommendation that “the Council supports the long-term goal of reconnecting the marshlands within the NSRA to Lake Apopka. The council recommends development of a near-term goal (within five years) of identifying and reconnecting those portions of the north shore that exhibit the least concern for pesticide residuals, and provide the most desirable habitat value, while creating minimum impact to Lake Apopka. In addition, the Council recommends restoration activities include the increased use of sawgrass, other drought tolerant plants, and a low evapotranspiration planting regime.

Based on presentations to Council on the bird mortality event, Council requests documentation from USFWS on their plan of action should another bird kill occur.”

Section 3.3 Dredging Projects

Chairman Goerner clarified comments made by Dr. Fulton in July 2015 on Lake Beauclair dredging, adding that “this is maintenance dredging at the mouth of the Apopka-Beauclair canal as well as some dredging of sumps within the lake. Dredging has since been delayed until permitting is completed and may not begin until winter 2015.”

The Council agreed on a recommendation for Section 3.23 that, “...supports and recommends a demonstration test piggybacking from an existing dredge line from the lake to run dredge water through a parabolic rundown screen system as part of Lake Apopka dredging projects to determine if this equipment can provide rapid dewatering of sediment.” Further, the Council requested results in 2016 from the pilot study.

3.4.1 Sport Fish Stocking

The Council had no comments on the Sport Fish Stocking text. The Council agreed on a recommendation for Section 3.4.1., stating “the Council recommends the continuation of the wild adult bass stocking program for the Harris Chain of Lakes, including Lake Apopka when appropriate. The Council will review the stocking program in 2016.”

3.4.2 Fish Attractor Program

The Council had no comments on the Fish Attractor Program text. The Council agreed on a recommendation for Section 3.4.2., stating “the Council supports the installation of additional artificial structures in the Harris Chain. The Council recommends FWC continue the study comparing catch rates from artificial structures to catch rates from natural areas and provide an update in 2016.”

Section 3.4.3 Fishery Access

The Council had no comments on the Fishery Access text, and Chairman elected to end the meeting amid discussions of the Council recommendation for Section 3.4.3 regarding a timetable for reconnection of the North Shore Restoration Area.

7. COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

No comments

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

A. Councilman Nicholson requested an expert on Newcastle Disease and Avian Flu, perhaps from the University of Florida, be scheduled as a speaker.

Councilman Grow complimented Mr. Frazel on his preparation of the draft Annual Report.

B. The Next Scheduled Meeting is November 6, 2015

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.