

**FINAL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL  
August 11, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 a.m. on August 11, 2017 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

**Council Members Present**

Robert Johnson, Chairman  
Skip Goerner, Vice-Chairman  
Don Nicholson, Secretary  
Keith Truenow  
Stephanie Bishop  
John Stump  
Sid Grow

**Council Members Absent**

Vacant, Attorney  
Vacant, Physician

**TAG Members Present**

Dennis Renfro (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, FWC)  
Kevin Coyne (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, DEP)  
Rolland Fulton (St. Johns River Water Management District, SJRWMD)

**TAG Members Absent**

Mike Perry (Lake County Water Authority, LCWA)  
Mark Hoyer (University of Florida, UF)

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:00 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 Johnson called the roll.

4. **REMINDER FOR OTHERS TO SIGN IN & FILL OUT SPEAKER CARDS**

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes from June 2, 2017 were approved upon revision.

6. **PRESENTATIONS / ACTION ITEMS**

\* Action items requested by councilmembers are in bold.

**A. Update on aquatic plant management by Nathalie Visscher, FWC**

Natalie Visscher, representative from the FWC Invasive Plant Management Section, provided an update on aquatic plant management in the Harris Chain of Lakes over the past 2 years. FWC is designated by the Florida Legislature as the lead agency for coordinating and funding two statewide programs controlling invasive plants: aquatic plants in public waterways, and upland plants on public conservation lands

Ms. Visscher reported that aquatic plant management plans are evaluated every spring for the new fiscal year starting July 1<sup>st</sup>. These plans include predicting costs of managing invasive plants and how much acreage will need to be treated in any given fiscal year but it is difficult. Ms. Visscher noted factors influencing on where, when and how quickly these types of plants are growing include lake conditions, nutrient levels, drought, excessive rain, and temperature. The available management tools, and other activities occurring with the lake's watershed are also factors.

The current funding priorities in the Harris Chain are floating water hyacinth and water lettuce, and submersed hydrilla management, with \$20 million allocated in Fiscal Year (FY) 16/17, and \$18,297,000 allocated in FY 17/18. Additional funding priorities include new hydrilla infestations, plants blocking access & navigation, open areas in dense hydrilla mats, large-scale hydrilla control, control of other noxious plants, and residential canals.

Ms. Visscher presented detailed information on the types of vegetation treated, acres treated by lake, and the costs of treatment for FY 15/16 and FY 16/17. Ms. Visscher presented maps showing areas treated on Lake Harris, Little Lake Harris, Lake Griffin, Haines Creek, Lake Eustis, Lake Dora, Lake Beauclair, Lake Apopka, and Lake Yale.

Vice-chairman Goerner inquired whether hydrilla was becoming resistant to chemical treatments. Ms. Visscher noted she had not seen any resistance, perhaps because the types of chemical treatments used are rotated on a regular basis. Councilwoman Bishop noted the total of acres treated and costs went down with more treatment. Ms. Visscher reported costs decrease because herbicides purchased in one fiscal year are carried over to the next, so some treatments are previously paid for. Chairman Johnson inquired about the use of the herbicide Sonar. Ms. Visscher noted Sonar is used, but not around native plants.

Vice-chairman Goerner expressed concern about the increasing amount of coverage, noting the whole of Lake Griffin was difficult to access. Ms. Visscher reported there is somewhat of a cyclic nature in growth, with the last year being particularly bad due to the warm winter. Ms. Visscher noted some years the plant growth is way ahead, while in other years it is not.

Ms. Visscher reported Lake Yale had an issue with tussocks last year, making it very difficult for getting boats in the water for treatment purposes. Councilman Grow noted the water level so low it was hard to even move a canoe. Ms. Visscher noted FWC was considering removing the tussocks, but needed more water for machinery to remove them to an upland site.

Ms. Visscher reported that as of July, her section is monitoring the lakes, with a possibility of more treatment on Lake Eustis, where hydrilla is growing back, though not as dense as previously reported.

Lake Griffin was also being closely monitored to stay ahead of the plant growth. Lake Griffin was scheduled to be treated again in approximately the next two months.

Councilman Nicholson inquired whether plant sterilization was an option for treatment. Ms. Visscher noted in Florida there are only male plants, so there is no sexual reproduction.

Chairman Johnson discussed a proposal by SJRWMD to add more submerged aquatic vegetation to Lake Apopka. Ms. Visscher was supportive of this proposal if the intent was to plant native species. Vice-chairman Goerner noted much eelgrass was growing mixed with hydrilla. Ms. Visscher noted hydrilla was growing about 100 feet out from shore, with eelgrass being the more predominant species inshore.

Councilman Truenow inquired about the condition of Lake Yale. Ms. Visscher noted 80% of the lake contains a diverse selection of native plants, but more water is needed.

- B.** Annual report schedule, Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support Denis presented. Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support, presented the 2017 annual report development schedule to Council, noting the report would include Council activities from November 2016 through October 2017. Mr. Frazel noted the format would be similar to the 2016 annual report with a focus on non-funded proposed projects. Council requested addition of a letter to Senator Baxley. Mr. Frazel suggested the letter could be included within the report section on lake restoration. The 2017 report would also include all meeting materials as appendices, similar to the 2016 report.

## **COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **A. Agency Updates**

Dennis Renfro, FWC, reported continued restoration of Emerald Marsh Area 3 on schedule for opening by duck season in November. Mr. Renfro noted FWC has partnered with Tavares to use the lakefront for one their research projects on largemouth bass and holding tournament fish over time. next to volleyball court. FWC will also be using a new boat ramp on the west side for installing fish attractors in Lake Dora in October.

Dr. Roland Fulton, SJRWMD, updated Council on sump dredging in Lake Apopka. Dr. Fulton noted SJRWMD has received approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move forward. SJRWMD was currently completing a biological assessment in west shore prior to placing dredge spoil in the west marsh, cells F and G on the west side of the Apopka-Beauclair canal.

Councilman Stump inquired if there were any comparisons to review to show what amount of flocculent material is removed. Dr. Fulton note there may be estimates of volume of dredged material with estimates of sediment.

Councilman Truenow inquired how much money was allocated for dredging alone, without engineering. Dr. Fulton reported the SJRWMD Governing Board approved increasing the contract budget up from \$4.5 to \$7.2 million. Councilman Truenow requested a map of the dredge area with estimates on how much has been vacuum dredged. Councilman Truenow suggested getting this information on a regular basis would be helpful. Council requested **Dr. Fulton to ask project manager to make a presentation at the October Council meeting.**

Councilman Stump inquired about the mass balance of sediments over the long-term. Dr. Fulton noted SJRWMD plans to follow-up to evaluate flocculent returns to areas vacuumed. Vice-chairman Goerner inquired how is water returned from north shore. Dr. Fulton indicated water is not returned currently returned because of low water.

Dr. Fulton reported on the Newton Park boat ramp, in which Taylor Engineering is working on design, with project completion in about another year. Dr. Fulton reported on a final project, lakewide targeted dredging, in which the request for qualifications process is ongoing. The purpose of the project is to identify the most effective areas for targeted dredging. Geotechnical studies will be completed once more specific targeted areas are identified.

Dr. Fulton provided a lake level update, noting Lake Apopka had been above regulation schedule for over a week. There have been no discharges though as Moss Bluff renovations are still underway. Moss Bluff renovations are supposed be completed by the end of August. Unfortunately, Dr. Fulton noted new problems have been identified with the locks so more repairs are needed.

Councilman Grow requested that lake level data be once again provided to Council as it is useful to refer to in the minutes.

Kevin Coyne, FDEP had no updates for the month.

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dan Canfield, UF, addressed the Council concerning Harris Chain of Lakes management. Dr. Canfield presented a draft letter to the Council requesting an Office Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) investigation of lake restoration by SJRWMD, FWC, and the LCWA. Dr. Canfield contended the agencies have not restored one lake in the state, and the legislature is currently convening its own science groups, pushing for expensive programs. Dr. Canfield discussed his perspectives on the failures of lake restorations and his perceived lack of quantifiable restoration objectives. Dr. Canfield suggested legislators will not read the Council's Annual Report, but will read an OPPAGA report.

Vice-chairman Goerner noted he was familiar with the letter from Dr. Canfield and had previously read the 1995 OPPAGA report on lake restoration. Vice-chairman Goerner indicated he was in favor of the request for an OPPAGA investigation and called for a vote by Council. Councilwoman Bishop inquired about what other active councils are accomplishing in particular the Citrus/Hernando Council. Dr. Canfield suggested these Councils have lost their effectiveness over time. Councilwoman Bishop discussed Harris Council projects in annual report and that Council is poised to begin reviewing projects not funded, but that Council would support.

Councilman Truenow noted most projects are not brought to Council for review. Councilman Truenow suggested a need to privatize something like water quality credits, like mitigation banks for land use. Privatization might promote competition to get water clean.

After further discussion, Chairman Johnson called for a vote to go ahead with the letter provided by Dr. Canfield, with revisions. There was a motion to review and edit the letter to meet the needs of the Council. Chairman Johnson suggested adjourning the meeting for five minutes so Council could review the OPPAGA request letter. The meeting was recessed for 5 minutes for Council to review. The meeting was re-convened at 10:25am.

Council discussed the contents of the letter, with Councilman Stump and Councilwoman Bishop suggesting revisions to the letter. There was a motion to revise the letter as suggested, submit the letter to Senator Baxley, and include it in the Annual Report. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Chairman Johnson instructed administrative staff to make the necessary edits, and format the letter for submission to Senator Baxley.** Council signed the last page of the letter so Chairman Johnson would have the final formal letter available at the Lake County legislative delegation meeting on August 28.

## **8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

Chairman Johnson reviewed the Action Item list. Councilman Truenow inquired about the status of a presentation by Dr. Shortelle, SJRWMD. **Susan Davis, SJRWMD, reported she would inquire as to Dr. Shortelle's availability for the September meeting.**

Vice-chairman Goerner noted the Council is still looking for a response on Action Item #61. Councilman Truenow noted both Action Items #64 and #8 are similar. Susan Davis noted she is still working on Item #8. Chairman Johnson remarked there are still 4 FWC items still outstanding and asked Ms. Davis contact FWC for a response.

Chairman Johnson discussed a proposal by SJRWMD to engage UF to add more submerged vegetation in Lake Apopka. Chairman Johnson read excerpts from an email exchange among UF staff regarding the proposal. **Chairman Johnson requested administrative staff to copy the email exchange to Council.**

Vice-chairman Goerner inquired about the names of contracted hog hunters on SJRWMD lands. **Susan Davis indicated she would try to locate the names of hog-hunting individuals.**

Councilman Grow commented about lack of public input in Council proceedings, suggesting the need for more public involvement. Councilman Grow suggested advertising Council meetings in the sports sections of Leesburg or The Villages papers starting in January.

## **9. REQUESTS FOR ACTION**

- **Dr. Fulton to ask SJRWMD dredging project manager to make a presentation at the October Council meeting.**
- **Chairman Johnson instructed administrative staff to make the necessary edits, and format the OPPAGA letter for submission to Senator Baxley.**
- **Susan Davis to inquire as to Dr. Shortelle's availability for the September Council meeting.**
- **Chairman Johnson requested administrative staff to copy email exchange on aquatic vegetation restoration to Council.**
- **Susan Davis to locate the names of hog-hunting individuals on SJRWMD lands for Vice-Chairman Goerner.**

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 AM.