

FINAL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
of the
HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL
November 3, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 a.m. on November 3, 2017 at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Johnson called for a moment silence. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

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

Chairman Johnson called the roll.

Council Members Present

Robert Johnson, Chairman
Skip Goerner, Vice-Chairman
Keith Truenow
Sid Grow
John Stump

Council Members Absent

Don Nicholson, Secretary
Stephanie Bishop
Vacant, Attorney
Vacant, Physician

TAG Members Present

Mike Perry (Lake County Water Authority, LCWA)
Kevin Coyne (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, DEP)
Rolland Fulton (St. Johns River Water Management District, SJRWMD)
Mark Hoyer (University of Florida, UF)
Ryan Hamm for Dennis Renfro (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, FWC)

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

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from September 22, 2017 and October 6, 2017 were approved.

6. PRESENTATIONS / ACTION ITEMS

* Action items requested by councilmembers are in bold.

A. Review of Third Draft of 2017 Annual Report and Approval of Final Draft, Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support

Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support, presented the third 2017 draft Annual Report. Mr. Frazel showed the final color cover page had been prepared by SJRWMD. Mr. Frazel reviewed revised sections of the third draft of the report, including all comments provided by Council on the previous draft. Mr. Frazel noted table numbers had been updated as new tables had been inserted.

Specific comments are as follows:

Table 2. Mr. Frazel noted the October 2017 presentation by Bob Naleway was added.

Section 4.1 Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration

The following sentence was approved and added to the end of paragraph 4 of the section.

“Separate expenditures by FWC on the Harris Chain of Lakes did not begin until 2012 therefore no data prior to 2012 is listed.”

Table 4 was modified to include a row for funding from SJRWMD for 1988-1998. Council approved next at the beginning of paragraph 5 as follows, “Agency estimates of expenditures on Lake Apopka and the Harris Chain of Lakes are: \$236 million by SJRWMD since 1988, \$54 million by LCWA since 1998, and \$10 million by FWC since 2012. This estimate may not include all state and federal expenditures. Council is concerned that the more than \$300 million that has been expended has not resulted in adequate restoration of the targeted areas.”

Section 4.5 Fishery Research

Fishery Research is a new section, including new Appendices 7.3 and 7.4, added at the request of Chairman Johnson. Text and recommendation for this section is as follows, “In January 2017, Florida State Toxicologist Dr. Kendra Goff, DOH, responded via two emails to a request by Chairman Johnson to provide a human health risk assessment on the consumption of game fish from the NSRA (Appendices 7.3 and 7.4). Human consumption advisory assessments have not been done for game fish from the NSRA because of the limited numbers of game fish present in the NSRA. FDOH refused to review the SJRWMD organochlorine data provided for the minnow *Gambusia* as FDOH only collects data from game fish. *Gambusia* is not used for human consumption. FDOH further noted the sample size was too small, and data was provided from whole minnows, whereas FDOH analyzes filleted samples only, not whole fish. SJRWMD uses these data as the current reason not to reconnect the North Shore to Lake Apopka.

Council Recommendation 2017:

- Council recommends the collection of game fish samples (n = 7 or more) from the NSRA to provide fillets for pesticide analysis by FDOH, to develop a human health risk assessment for consumption of those fish in the NSRA.”

Mr. Frazel noted the recommendations in the Executive Summary will also be provided as a separate yellow cover sheet attached to the front of the document. Council unanimously approved the Final Annual Report, as revised.

COUNCIL & AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

A. Agency Updates

John Zediak, civil engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), described his responsibilities with the Corps, in relation to regulation schedules of the Harris Chain of Lakes. His duties include monitoring water levels in Lake Griffin, Moss Bluff, and riverine inflows. He also monitors water levels in relation to forecast rain. Mr. Zediak noted he had communicated with Vice-chairman Goerner who had provided water level charts both before and after hurricane Irma. Mr. Zediak noted he had also reviewed information provided by a Mr. Randal Raney.

Vice-chairman Goerner and Chairman Johnson discussed Lake Apopka water stage graphs and speculated that in August and September, during hurricane season, water levels should be kept lower than regulation schedule.

Councilman Truenow suggested more water should have been let out of Lake Apopka before the storm. Chairman Johnson and Vice-chairman Goerner discussed the pumping of water into, or out of the North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA). Dr. Rolland Fulton, SJRWMD, reported no pumping from the NSRA before the storm and none until this past week. Dr. Fulton noted prior to the storm water levels were three inches above regulation schedule. After the hurricane water was flowing from Lake Apopka into the NSRA from a levee breach from the lake side not the NSRA side.

Vice-chairman Goerner speculated the problem was not following the regulatory schedule more closely at Lake Apopka and questioned how can it be operated so the problem will not occur again. Mr. Zediak noted the Four Rivers Manual was published in 1993, and there are still some constraints with the manual that he is aware of, and perhaps a review is warranted.

Mr. John Richmond, SJRWMD, was asked to speak about management of the Harris Chain of Lakes system. Mr. Richmond noted whole system management is a team effort, though he manages all flood control until extreme events. Mr. Richmond reported 30-40 structures are primarily flood control devices, with redundant data collection systems that report 24/7. Day-to-day data is placed in a variety of spreadsheets, in which a dozen or so conditions are monitored, in addition to gage position, wind direction, current National Weather Service (NWS) predictions, etc. Generally, when there are no active storms, Mr. Richmond acts on his own. When there are active storms the SJRWMD Executive Management team participates in system operation decisions.

Prior to Hurricane Irma Lake Apopka was on track for standard flood control operations. On Sept. 5 the first predictions by the NWS had no rainfall prediction therefore operations followed standard protocols. On Sept. 6 and 7 National Hurricane Center projected the storm off the east coast. By Sept. 10, the storm was projected to move up the west coast. From a discharge perspective, on Sept. 2 up to 350 cubic feet per second (cfs) was moving through the Nutrient Reduction Facility (NuRF), 500 cfs was moving through Burrell, the bayou had 50 cfs that went west. By Sept. 5, maximum discharges of 2,450 cfs were moving through Moss Bluff.

Councilman Goerner expressed concern that Hurricane Irma was largest hurricane ever in Atlantic, and to wait until Sept. 9th for large-scale water releases was way too late. Councilman

Goerner asked Lake Commissioner Sullivan, who was in the audience, about Lake County emergency responses,

Commissioner Sullivan noted the Lake County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) monitored NWS predictions and made decisions based on their reports. They met daily when the hurricane was coming and followed Governor Scott's state of emergency notification. Commissioner Sullivan noted Hurricane Irma was an historic event and that the County would develop an after-action report. In Astor approximately 1400 homes were flooded.

Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Zediak if the Corps had discussed this issue. Mr. Zediak reported he had contacted other Corps floodplain managers for more information. Mr. Zediak wanted to ensure he brought together the right people to look at whole basin. Mr. Zediak provided 11 copies of the Four Rivers Manual and excerpts for Council members. Vice-chairman Goerner suggested it should be a priority to make recommendations to make improvements to the system to prevent flooding in the future.

Councilman Truenow questioned whether there were any monetary repercussions by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for water that flooded on the North Shore Restoration Area (NSRA). Dr. Fulton reported the USFWS approved the SJRWMD management plan to maintain shallow marsh area. Dr. Fulton anticipated no fines for allowing water on north shore. The near-term plan is to discharge water from the NSRA into Lake Apopka once downstream levels are stabilized. All discharges will be alum treated.

Vice-chairman Goerner queried Dr. Fulton whether any water quality analyses had been performed. Dr. Fulton reported the SJRWMD water quality lab had been flooded by the storm, so samples were sent to outside agencies. There were no current post-hurricane data as the analyses from the outside agencies had not yet been reported but was expected to be available in the next month or so. Mark Hoyer (UF) reported no LAKEWATCH sampling had been conducted.

Chairman Johnson suggested these issues are why an Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) review was requested by the Council. Vice-chairman Goerner did not understand why there was so much pushback by agencies on an OPPAGA review, and he was going to push harder for the review.

Continuing with agency updates, Mike Perry, LCWA, reviewed post-Irma water movement. NuRF flows were at maximum desirable rate for 2 months. These were unprecedented flows for the system. Current flows had currently dropped to 150 cfs. The NuRF treated 8.5 million gallons of water, in which 5,243 lbs of phosphorus (P) was removed, almost one-third of the entire amount that had been removed during the whole NuRF history. Mr. Perry suggested the amount of P removed may be higher because some of the flocculent moved out of system before it could settle. Mr. Perry reported P concentration coming into the NuRF after the storm were about 600 parts per billion (ppb). Current inflows are at about 200ppb P, with approximately 100ppb going out of the system. LCWA is spending about \$0.58 per gallon for alum with a total cost of \$827,000 for post-storm treatment. In response to a query by Councilman Stump, Mr. Perry reported removed P is land applied.

Mr. Perry reported LCWA spent \$50,000 on contractors to remove trees from the Dora and Beauclair Canals. Mr. Perry noted there were some massive trees that were felled in the Dora Canal.

Councilman Stump discussed an article in the Specifier newspaper regarding an alum alternative to remove P. Apparently the material is half the cost of alum and is some sort of acid drainage byproduct from coal mines. Mr. Perry noted many alternative methodologies tend to go anaerobic and re-release P.

Mr. Mark Hoyer, UF, had no updates for the month.

Dr. Rolland Fulton, SJRWMD, updated Council on several contracts regarding the Harris Chain of Lakes. The SJRWMD Governing Board approved \$1.4 million dollars per year for the harvesting of rough fish from Lake Apopka and Lake George by Raffield Fisheries. The Governing Board also approved a contract with UF for an assessment of submerged aquatic vegetation in Lake Apopka. The award amount is \$242,000 dollars per year, for a three-year period.

Dr. Fulton noted he expected some projects for stormwater tributary monitoring to be approved over the next several months. Dr. Fulton also noted the chopping of the 15 acres floating vegetation mat in Emerald Area 3 had been completed. SJRWMD was now monitoring water quality of the chopped area.

Mr. Kevin Coyne, FDEP, reported he was still working on funding figures and appropriation dollars for Council with the water resource assistance section of FDEP. Mr. Coyne also noted he had provided local government grant information to Council Administrative Support for use in the Annual Report, as needed.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. James Pirino resident in the Clermont Chain of Lakes observed water structures unable to handle hurricane water levels. Mr. Pirino advocated for lowering water levels in advance of storms during hurricane season. Mr. Perry noted the schedule for the Clermont Chain started in 1958. In recent years the target water level has been held toward the higher range. Mr. Perry reported the Clermont Chain structures are designed to hold water into the system, not for flood control, and that in general, there has been more concern low levels.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Chairman Johnson requested an update on personal information posted on the Council website. Susan Davis, SJRWMD, reported only Chairman Johnson's phone number and email address were on the site.

Regarding the Action Item list. Chairman Johnson noted item #61 was still pending for FWC, #42 had been completed, and that item #17 should be listed as ongoing. Ms. Davis reported the SJRWMD finance department is working on providing a comprehensive funding list to complete items #7 and #8

Ms. Davis Susan asked for suggestions for any tours the Council would be interested in. Councilman Stump requested a tour of the NuRF.

Chairman Johnson updated Council on an application for Council membership by a local lawyer. Chairman Johnson also noted the election of officers would take place in January. Councilman Truenow offered to take over as Chairman, and recommended Councilman Stump assume the position of Vice-chairman. The new slate of officers would be considered at the January meeting.

Councilman Grow reported he had been performing LAKEWATCH sampling on Lake Harris west and found hydrilla at the bottom in over 12 feet of water. **Councilman Grow requested Council staff to have Dennis Renfro ask Nathalie Visscher how much hydrilla has been found in deep water at Harris.** Mr. Hoyer noted hydrilla is growing rapidly in Orange Lake.

Councilman Grow asked Ms. Davis to provide information about posting the Council agenda under public notices in the Villages and Leesburg newspapers.

Ms. Davis and Chairman Johnson queried Council about continuing to fund awards to local science fair winners, and to allow for awards for 2 team projects.

9. REQUESTS FOR ACTION

Councilman Grow requested Council staff to have Dennis Renfro ask Nathalie Visscher how much hydrilla has been found in deep water at Harris.

Councilman Grow asked Ms. Davis to provide information about posting the Council agenda under public notices in the Villages and Leesburg newspapers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:36 AM.