

## 1st Report - November 25, 2001

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Council is to maximize successful restoration of the Harris Chain of Lakes, by ensuring sensible efforts to restore clean water quality, sound environmental policy, ecological diversity, and economic stability, now and into the future.

Specifically:

- To keep the citizens of Florida first, while performing their fiduciary responsibility, and do so with great urgency
- To recommend lasting and viable solutions to the legislature for appropriations of funds and resources.
  - To recommend projects that will be selected based on the ability to achieve restoration goals, sound science and prudent restoration philosophy
    - To restore the Harris Chain of Lakes water quality to nothing less than pristine is our goal and our mission
    - To develop a program for the improvement of the fish and wildlife habitat and natural systems of the Harris Chain of Lakes
    - To propose methods of contaminated sediment removal and control nutrient loading to our lakes
    - To evaluate and identify areas of human health concerns, resulting from the deterioration of our lakes
    - To recommend and develop projects that substantially improve the economic benefit to the local communities

The public began expressing concern over declining water quality, aquatic vegetation, and fish populations in the Harris Chain lakes as early as the 1950s. Even following many years of declining habitat and fish populations, the estimated annual (1990) value of a single fish species, the black crappie (speckled perch), on Lake Griffin alone, was about three million dollars. By the year 2000, the value of the black crappie fishery had declined to about \$300,000, a 90% decline. Coupled with the loss of the largemouth bass fishery on the Harris Chain of Lakes, local communities continue to lose millions of fishing dollars annually. Declining water quality, fish kills, bird and alligator deaths, and the emergence of toxic algae are also causing additional millions of dollars of losses within the tourist, recreational boating, and real estate industries.

On September 6, 2001 the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council began meeting to discuss issues related to the health of the lakes and the viability of possible restoration projects. Specific discussions were held regarding the viability of the St. Johns River Water Management District's marsh-flow ways at Lake Apopka and Lake Griffin. Other issues discussed included proposed total maximum daily loads (TMDL) projects for improving water quality, sediment removal, improved recreational boating access, stormwater control and restoration of fisheries. A finding of these discussions was that

