

FINAL

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

The regular meeting of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council (Council) was held at 9:00 a.m. on November 1, 2019, at the Lake County Board of County Commissioner Chambers, 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Truenow called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

3. COUNCIL ROLL CALL

Chairman Truenow called the roll.

Council Members present

Keith Truenow, Chairman
Stephanie Bishop Vice-Chairman
Wade Boyette
Joe Dunn
Sid Grow

Mike Smith
John Stump

Council Members absent

Skip Goerner
Don Nicholson

Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Members present

Jason Danaher, Lake County Water Authority (LCWA)
Scott Bisping, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

TAG Members absent

St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)
Mark Hoyer, UF
Kevin Coyne, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
Vacant, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
Vacant, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)

Chairman Truenow introduced Mike Smith new Council Member taking over for Bob Johnson. Council Member Smith provided a brief synopsis of his background, noting he is a member of the Groveland City Council.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the September 6, and October 4, 2019 minutes, as revised, was introduced by Council Member Grow, seconded by Council Member Dunn. **THE SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2019 COUNCIL MINUTES WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

5. **FOR INFORMATION**

Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Final Draft of 2019 Annual Report, Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support.

Denis Frazel, Harris Council Administrative Support, presented the final 2019 draft Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Annual Report. Mr. Frazel reviewed all sections of the final draft of the report, including all comments provided by Council on the previous draft. Council Members approved all listed edits to the document. Council Members also reviewed, revised and added recommendations to the Annual Report. Chairman Truenow polled the TAG for additional comments. There were none. Upon the completion of lengthy discussion, the final approved recommendations are as follows:

Lake Apopka Restoration

- Re-appropriation of the authorized \$5 million in annual legislative funding each year for ten years for Lake Apopka restoration projects.

Lake Level Water Management

- Support SJRWMD efforts to increase the maximum desirable elevations in Lake Apopka and emergency storage on the Lake Apopka North Shore.
- Council recommends SJRWMD prioritize and budget funds to initiate modeling of Lake Apopka maximum desirable elevations during FY 2020-2021.
- Encourage SJRWMD to accelerate the Lake Apopka MFL (minimum flows and levels) update

Water Quality

- Support efforts by the Florida State Legislature to pass legislation that provides for inspection and correction of home septic systems that do not function correctly.
- Support Orange & Lake County septic system inventory efforts.
- Encourage replacement of septic systems near lakes and canals with municipal central sewer where feasible.
- Encourage local governments to revise local codes regarding replacement of failing septic systems near lakes and canals.
- Maximize treatment of water exiting Lake Apopka by increasing minimum flows through the LCWA Nutrient Reduction Facility to accommodate more annual treatment.

Aquatic Plant Management

- Request dedicated legislative funding of \$10 million for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for *Hydrilla* management on the Harris Chain of Lakes in response to both public input and the scope of the problem.
- Council supports aggressive treatment of hydrilla. Legislature to provide funding for research into new herbicides for eradication of hydrilla. Hydrilla may become immune to current herbicides.
- Council supports agency efforts to expand native submerged aquatic vegetation.

3. **CONSIDERATION**

Approval and Adoption of the Final Draft of the 2019 Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Annual Report

A motion to approve the Final Draft of the 2019 Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Annual Report, as updated during the meeting, was introduced by Council Member Grow, seconded by Council Member Stump. The motion to approve also included authorization for Chairman Truenow to approve the final document, as revised, for transmittal to the legislature. **THE 2019 HARRIS CHAIN OF LAKES RESTORATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

6. **AGENCY UPDATES**

a. LCWA

Jason Danaher, Ph.D., LCWA, updated Council on Harris Chain water levels noting Lake Apopka just reached regulation level, and reduced flows to minimum flows. October was generally wet with Lake Apopka receiving 4 inches of rainfall. Lakes Eustis, Harris, Dora, and Griffin levels also increased.

Dr. Danaher noted LCWA closed on the purchase of the Lake Denham muck Farm and will be working with FWC to possibly modify and flood the land for a future fishing site.

Dr. Danaher updated Council on the Lake Yale nutrient project. The LCWA board has not yet signed a contract, pending further input from stakeholders. LCWA is going to fund some creel surveys in collaboration with FWC.

b. SJRWMD

Mr. Lovejoy reported the next SJRWMD Board meeting is set for November 12. **Chairman Truenow requested SJRWMD brief Council in February on modeling of lake levels.**

c. FWC

Scott Bisping, FWC, reported FWC held a public meeting on Oct 14 to discuss hydrilla treatment. FWC is currently conducting fall community sampling on Lakes Apopka, Griffin and Harris to assess fish diversity and fish populations. Angler surveys are being run on Lakes Griffin and Harris.

Mr. Bisping noted game cameras were installed on Lake Apopka to monitor angler activity. Lake Apopka bass genetics showed 5 hatchery fish, 3 from the 2016 stocking, and 2 from the 2017 stocking. Survival is still low. In October was a bass tournament with a winning weight of 37+ pounds for five fish.

Chairman Truenow inquired whether FWC has plans for any native vegetation planting. FWC noted funds pass through to SJRWMD. Mr. Bisping noted natural expansion of vegetation including eelgrass in Lake Dora and expanding vegetation on Lake Griffin.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Linda Moss, private citizen affiliated with the Lake Gem Clean Water Project, discussed problems with muck filling up canals in her neighborhood. Ms. Moss expressed her support for

the Harris Council efforts. Ms. Moss also discussed changes to flows through the Apopka-Beauclair Canal. Chairman Truenow suggested that in addition to raising lake levels, SJRWMD should investigate increasing the minimum flow to the NuRF to provide more continuous treatment, while at the same time possibly minimizing large untreated releases from Lake Apopka. Jason Danaher, LCWA, noted continuous flows would be helpful. He also noted LCWA is studying ways to improve the NuRF moving forward.

Council Member Smith discussed the lock and dam and questioned whether contaminated water is moving though as vessels port through. Chairman Truenow noted most untreated is coming across the spillway and not through the lock and dam during times of large releases.

Chairman Truenow suggested adding some comments to the report regarding increasing the minimum flows. Mr. Danaher noted the LCWA goal is to treat all water leaving the lake. Lisa Kelley noted other projects upstream of the NuRF are also addressing water quality, including the sump dredge project and alum treatment on north shore properties. Chairman Truenow inquired whether SRJWMD could store water on the north shore then release it at 50 cfs so it could all be treated. Ms. Kelley noted close coordination with LCWA with an agreed upon goal of treating all water leaving the lake. Lake County is separately looking at waterfront property maintenance and possible funding sources.

Council Member Bishop suggested the system can work pretty well, with the exception of major storm events. Council decided to add the recommendation “Maximize treatment of water exiting Lake Apopka by increasing minimum flows through the LCWA Nutrient Reduction Facility to accommodate more annual treatment”.

8. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

a. Chairman Truenow

No comments.

b. Vice-Chairwoman Bishop

Vice-Chairwoman Bishop inquired whether Lake County could provide information on dredging or maintenance in private canals. Mr. Danaher reported LCWA could coordinate with Lake County to bring a representative to the February meeting. **Chairman Truenow requested a representative from Lake County be invited to address the Council in February on County waterfront maintenance.**

c. Council Member Boyette

No comments.

d. Council Member Dunn

No comments.

e. Council Member Grow

During the discussion of the final draft of the Annual Report Council Member Grow brought to the attention of Council an article in the Orlando Sentinel regarding septic tanks. In the article it noted that the EPA suggests the average household septic system should be inspected every 3-5 years. **Council Member Grow requested Kevin Coyne update**

Council on the exact wording on the EPA septic system proposal at the February meeting.

Council Member Grow then presented Senate Bill 384, sponsored by Senator Baxley, that repeals the provisions of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Program, effectively eliminating the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council. HB 6025, sponsored by Stare Representative Sabatini, is the companion House bill to SB384.

Chairman Truenow queried Council as to what course of action, if any, should Council take. Council Member Grow noted both Bills are now in committee. Council discussed adding information to the report to address the Bills, but it was determined not enough information was available. Council Member Smith suggested possibly convening a workshop in December to prepare a summary of Council activities. Chairman Truenow suggested inviting Senator Baxley and Representative Sabatini to discuss their reasoning for repealing the Council. Council Member Stump suggested there were minimal costs with the Council as members are all volunteers therefore the repeal was likely political in nature. Council Member Bishop suggested finalizing the Annual Report then re-visiting the repeal issue.

f. Council Member Smith

Council Member Smith again inquired whether Council should re-convene prior to February to discuss the legislative proposal to sunset the Council. Chairman Truenow suggested Council should reach out individually to their respective representatives. **Administrative support was requested to provide Council with tracking information on both the bills and the contact information for the legislative delegation.**

g. Council Member Stump

No comments.

9. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS* REQUESTED DURING MEETING

*New Action Items are highlighted in bold in the text

Chairman Truenow requested SJRWMD brief Council in February on modeling of lake levels.

Chairman Truenow requested a representative from Lake County be invited to address the Council in February on County waterfront maintenance.

Council Member Grow requested Kevin Coyne update Council on the exact wording on the EPA septic system proposal at the February meeting.

Administrative support was requested to provide Council with tracking information on both the bills and the contact information for the legislative delegation.

Council Members will reach out to Senator Baxley, Representative Sabatini and possibly other members of the Lake County legislative delegation to discuss sunseting of the Harris Council.

Chairman Truenow requested SJRWMD provide information regarding collaboration between Lake County and SJRWMD on minimum flows through the NuRF. Council Member Smith

suggested the review be tasked to the TAG as a whole, in particular flow rates. Mr. Danaher was informed of this task as head of the TAG.

10. DISCUSSION OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING.

Council requested a representative from Lake County attend the February meeting to discuss private waterfront property dredging and maintenance.

Chairman Truenow requested feedback from SJRWMD regarding modeling.

Council Member Grow requested Kevin Coyne discuss the EPAs exact actual wording on household septic systems, in addition to TMDLs.

Council Member Grow requested that TAG members be polled for attendance at the February meeting. Chairman Truenow agreed it would be nice to have all TAG members present for the first meeting of the year. Mr. Frazel reported he polls TAG members on their attendance status prior to each meeting. Council Member Grow suggested Mr. Frazel note to TAG that the request for attendance is directly from the Council.

18. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.