

Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Wednesday, 25 April 2012 at the USACE South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, FL.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Jon Morton	Rob Bronson
Jeremy Crossland	Nichoel Church
Jeremy Preston	Rachel Nuetzel

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Jackie Smith
Zach Welch

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Mike Bodle

Additional Attendees

James Boggs (Helena)
Kurt Ramsey (AAM, Inc)
Keith Mangus (AAM, Inc)
Paul Gray (Audubon)
Jeff Allen (Lake Okeechobee Habitat Alliance)
Art Hodges (public)
Steve Schubert (US FWS)

Public Comment Period

Art, Hodges, member of the public, had several questions and comments about water management issues on the Lake Okeechobee. Mr. Hodges requested an explanation of the decision making process to send water to the Caloosahatchee; additionally he mentioned that Harney Pond Canal and Moore Haven Canal were not very navigable at the current lake level and was concerned that the channel markers were not set properly for Moore Haven Canal. He noted that his bass boat and others were running a ground within the marked channel at Harney Pond Canal. Additionally, he requested an understanding of what plants were eligible for treatment by which agency.

AAM Status Report

Kurt Ramsey reported that 1719 acres of target plants were treated since the last interagency meeting on 22 February 2012. The treatments were conducted primarily along the West Wall, Torry/Kreamer Islands, and Taylor Creek to the Kissimmee River.

Aerial Survey Report of Floating Vegetation

Flight on 21 March 2012; Lake Okeechobee average elevation was 12.74 at the time of the flight.

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During the flight participants estimated that an average of 967.50 acres of target plants were present on Lake Okeechobee. The 15 February flight estimated an average of 766.25 acres.

Mr. Bodle acknowledged the USACE and AAM had completed invasive plant control work at the Okeechobee Pier, which would assist SFWMD with conditions of a mitigation permit. The work was seen from the flight.

<i>Area of Lake</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>FWC</i>	<i>SFWMD</i>	<i>AAM</i>	<i>USACE</i>
1. Torrey & Kreamer	31.25	3%	10	25	75	15
2. Ritta	88.75	9%	250	35	50	20
3. East Wall - Coot Bay	18.75	2%	25	25	15	10
4. West Wall - Whidden	420.00	43%	500	395	325	460
5. Fisheating Bay	88.75	9%	200	60	40	55
6. Harney - Indian Prairie	76.25	8%	150	40	75	40
7. Indian P. - Kissimmee	8.75	1%	10	10	10	5
8. King's Bar	11.25	1%	20	15	5	5
9. Kissimmee - Taylor Cr.	168.75	17%	300	175	100	100
10. Taylor Cr. - Chancey	55.00	6%	50	75	50	45
TOTALS	967.50	100%	1515	855	745	755

FWC: Brent Bachelder, SFWMD: Mike Bodle, AAM: Kurt Ramsey, USACE, Jeremy Preston

USACE

The current lake level is 11.77ft. Jeremy Preston explained that there are currently approximately 40 Snail Kite nesting sites on Lake Okeechobee according to the location map that Zach Welch from FWC provided. The majority of nests occur in Harney Pond Canal area and Eagle Bay Island. Currently the USACE plans to continue with approximately 10 crews on the Lake Okeechobee and at current work levels funding remains in good shape.

FWC

Brent Bachelder provided information that FWC would be resuming floating plant treatments around Kings Bar. FWC was currently participating in spoil island plantings in Buckhead Ridge and Tin House Cove and was unable to attend the meeting. Keith Mangus with AAM provided information on upcoming Nymphoides treatments in the FWC's management area. AAM plans to try a new herbicide combination

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recommended by Mike Netherland with USACE ERDC. A combination of hydrothall and diquat will be used in a submersed treatment to improve herbicide contact time with the plant.

SFWMD

SFWMD is conducting annual sweep of Lake Okeechobee for Brazilian pepper and melaleuca along with other invasive plants including rosary pea and balsam apple. Mr. Bodle reported that will be attempting to collect rosary pea seeds from Observation Island to reduce spread of rosary pea in Lake Okeechobee. Mr. Bodle also mentioned the potential need to control *Panicum laxum* in next year's sweep. He described that plants expansion as a reason for concern and sought other members of the group for an opinion. Overall the group agreed that control may be warranted for next year's sweep.

Mr. Bodle also mentioned starting an effort to relocate and spread the Okeechobee gourd from its current limited range. He suggested the interagency group lead this effort and requested assistance in organizing such an event. Overall the interagency group was in agreement that it would be a valuable effort and it was suggested that he sent out some options for dates that would work for this effort and email the group.

Other/Old Business

Jeff Allen, Lake Okeechobee Habitat Alliance, provided information regarding their group's recently approved habitat management plan for the Curry Island area. He also requested that the agencies provide information about what species and issues each agency would be managing within the Curry Island area. Jackie Smith requested that he share their habitat management plan with the rest of the interagency group and Mr. Allen agreed.

*** Next Interagency **Flight** is not scheduled at this time.

***Next Interagency **Meeting** is scheduled for **20 June** 2012, at the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center in Okeechobee, FL. The Okeechobee Service Center relocated; the new address and direction will be provided prior to the meeting.