

Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Wednesday, 28 May 2014 at the USACE South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, FL

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

David Lattuca
Sharron Tyson
Jeremy Crossland (Phone)
Jon Lane (Phone)
Erica Skolte (Phone)

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Dave Eggeman
Jeff Schardt (Phone)
Brent Bachelder

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Mike Bodle
Gary Ritter

Other Attendees

Paul Gray, Audubon Florida (Phone)
James Boggs, Helena
Lynn Gettys, UF
Raymond Iglesias, Roland Martin's Marina
Phillip Roland, Mayor of Clewiston
Kurt Ramsey, AAM
Keith Mangus, AAM
Jerry Renney, AAM

Public Comment Period

Phillip Roland, the Mayor of Clewiston, questioned the Task Force group on the status of the boat trail maintenance operation on Lake Okeechobee. Mike Bodle from the SFWMD reported to Mayor Roland and the Task Force Group that there was a delay in the boat trail maintenance due to budgetary constraints. The SFWMD was able to resolve the constraints, and the boat trail maintenance will be executed next week, (June 2nd – 6th, 2014). Mike Bodle, along with FWC Law Enforcement, have identified and mapped two priority boat trails that will be treated, in order to increase boater safety. The agreement and intent between SFWMD and FWC LE is not to do whole sale trail creation, but widening of existing priority boat trails and blind spots. Raymond Iglesias had an additional list of trails that could use maintenance to increase boater safety: (1) from Uncle Joes Fish Camp to Cochran's Pass, (2) from the entrance of House Boat cut to Boy Scout Cut, (3) from Clewiston Channel through Coot Bay to the East Wall.

Phillip Roland spoke regarding the need for water storage North of Lake Okeechobee. Gary Ritter from SFWMD demonstrated to Mayor Roland on a map where there are current projects around Lake Okeechobee that are generating areas for water storage.

Applied Aquatic Management, Inc. (AAM) Status Report

Kurt Ramsey reported that 1,275.5 acres of target plants were treated since the last interagency meeting in Lake Okeechobee. AAM also stated a near accomplished effective treatment of *Luziola subintegra* in Lake Okeechobee.

Aerial Survey Report of Floating Vegetation

There was no Interagency Flight conducted in May. The next scheduled flight is 03 June 2014.

United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Dave Lattuca reported that 15 Lake Okeechobee aquatic plant control airboat surveys were conducted since the last interagency meeting. These reports were shared with FWC's invasive species manager(s). Even though there was not an aerial survey conducted in May, a large portion of Lake Okeechobee was surveyed for both pre and post treatment surveys.

Jeremy Crossland informed the group about USACE's Removal of Aquatic Growth (RAG) funding report: USACE is currently working on releasing more funds to FWC. The remainder of USACE's FY14 funding is secure. USACE's full budget will be released in the following weeks, so USACE can continue supporting the agreement with FWC. USACE's FY15 budget is average compared to previous years.

Jon Lane discussed USACE's role during hurricane season in South Florida. USACE wanted the Task Force to be aware that if a hurricane or any emergency should arise in South Florida, that the Task Force may be postponed while additional operations are required from Corps employees.

Dave Lattuca stated that the Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Managers weekly conference call will be postponed until Susanna Toledo from FWC returns from her extended leave. Direct communication between USACE and FWC's invasive species managers will occur as needed.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation (FWC)

Brent Bachelder discussed FWC's temporary staff transitions. During Susanna Toledo's extended leave, both Brent Bachelder and Dave Eggeman will be the FWC's aquatic plant managers for Lake Okeechobee.

FWC conducted a 2,000 acre aerial herbicide treatment in the Northwest marsh area of Lake Okeechobee, during the week of May 5. *Typha sp.* (1000 acres), *Phragmites sp.* (500 acres), and Torpedograss (*Panicum repens*) (500 acres) were the target species. The mixture consisted of 96 oz/acre of glyphosate and 16 oz/acre of imazapyr. The objective of the treatment was to limit monotypic stands, promote diverse native plant communities, and improve fish and wildlife habitat, and navigation. While Brent Bachelder was mapping vegetation for this aerial treatment,

a marsh fire was ignited. 4,500 acres of the Indian Prairie marsh burnt, with most of the vegetation being torpedograss.

FWC has held in reserve 5000 acres of aerial treatment's to be conducted in FY15 work plan schedule, which will consist of mainly torpedograss and Typha and if necessary, floating exotic vegetation.

Zach Welch will no longer be the Snail Kite coordinator for FWC. Sandra Sneckenberger, Fish and Wildlife Services Bureau, will be the point of contact for all Snail Kite related issues on Lake Okeechobee at the present time. Currently there are 55 Snail Kite Nests on Lake Okeechobee.

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Mike Bodle discussed further surveying Lake Okeechobee's suggested boat trails that may need treatments for the upcoming widening/reestablishment aerial application. At the same time, SFWMD will be conducting *Melaluca quinquenervia* and torpedograss aerial treatments in the Western marsh of Lake Okeechobee. There is an established federal noxious weed that has been established in Henry Creek marsh area (*Saccharum spontaneum*) which will be treated by SFWMD. The SFWMD is also completing mechanical harvesting of *Ludwigia grandiflora ssp. hexapetala* in Lake Toho. Harvesting may be an effective tool in controlling hexapetala if the plant should become a problem in Lake Okeechobee.

Open Forum

Lynn Gettys, PhD, Assistant Professor of the Aquatic and Wetland Plant Science University of Florida Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, discussed her continued work on IPM for water hyacinth control. Her research is prepared to be moved into the field for testing. Lynn Gettys requested input from the Task Force group for locations in or around Lake Okeechobee, where her research group can set up a project similar to the presented study. Thoughts can be shared with Lyn Gettys (lgettys@ufl.edu).

*** Next Interagency **Flight** is scheduled for Tuesday, 03 June 2014

***Next Interagency **Meeting** will be is not scheduled.

