

# **Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings**

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Tuesday, 17 September 2013 at the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center in Okeechobee, FL.

## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**

Jon Morton  
Jeremy Crossland  
David Lattuca  
Nicole Liette

## **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)**

Brent Bachelder  
Susanna Toledo  
Zach Welch  
Ed Harris  
Alyssa Jordan  
Dave Eggeman  
Jeff Schardt (phone)

## **South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)**

Mike Bodle

## **Other Attendees**

Paul Grey, Audubon Florida  
James Boggs, Helena (phone)  
Lynn Gettys, UF (phone)  
Bob Mar, Resident of Taylor Creek Isle

Kurt Ramsey, AAM  
Keith Mangus, AAM

## **Public Comment Period**

Bob Mar, Resident of Taylor Creek Isle, commented: He has been coming to Okeechobee since 1961 and has seen many different ways invasive plants have been managed in the past, from treating with pellets, to the developer installing gates on the canals. He understands the problems with invasive plants and wanted to share, that he thought, the interagency group was doing a good job. He also expressed that the canal near his residence has not had significant amounts of invasive plants since 1991 but recently became full of invasive plants.

## **AAM Status Report**

Kurt Ramsey reported that 1,759.5 acres of target plants were treated since the last interagency meeting. The treatments were conducted primarily in the Eagle Bay Island and Harney Pond areas. The 1,759.5 acres consist of boat work (this does not include the aerial treatment conducted in September). AAM is currently treating on the West Wall for USACE has completed approximately 30 acres as of Friday 13 September 2013.

## **Aerial Survey Report of Floating Vegetation**

Aerial survey of Lake Okeechobee occurred on 13 September 2013 participants observed an average of 123.3 acres on Torrey & Kreamer, 40 acres on Ritta, 55 acres on East Wall-Coot Bay, 216.67 acres on West Wall, 66.67 acres on Fisheating Bay, 85 acres on Harney- Indian Prairie, 46.67 acres on Indian Prairie-Kissimmee, 70 acres on King's Bar, 45 acres on Kissimmee-Taylor Creek, 105 acres on Taylor-Chancy for a total of 853.33 acres of target plants (these acreages do not include plants treated during the aerial treatment in September 2013). A Summary of Estimates sheet was passed out during the meeting (attach aerial flight report to minutes before sending them out).

## **USACE**

Current lake level is 15.50 as of 16 September 2013.

Removal of Aquatic Growth (RAG) is USACE's source of federal funding. USACE will be able to fund the treatment of floating plants through September. Continued operations in October through December will be dependent on allocation of end of year funds. The USACE should know by Monday 23 September on the availability of funds. Funding in October will be dependent on Congress passing a budget. USACE may not receive additional funding until the December time period for contractual work on Lake Okeechobee. This could result in minimal treatment activities paid for by USACE.

## **FWC**

FWC conducted an aerial treatment by helicopter September 3rd, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Six-hundred acres were treated. Approximately 225 acres were treated on Chancy Bay, 100 of those acres were treated with Clipper and Gallon. The remaining acres were treated from Indian Prairie to Monkey Box including Bird Island utilizing 2-4-D and Diquat. Inspections and observations last conducted during the interagency flight on September 13 were too early for conclusive results. Passengers noted 2,4D activity was still present and may need a couple more days to FWC continues to treat invasive aquatic plants, four AAM boat crews in the priority area and a few extra crews (3 to 4) are doing post-aerial treatment.

During the monitoring of the aerial treatment, large amounts of target plants were observed floating into the lake, the source is likely from private canals and tribal canals flowing into SFWMD canals. Opening lines of communication and cost sharing ideas with local land owners were discussed.

FWC is excited about possibilities of a bio-control agent and is investigating locations with small amounts of low priority hyacinth area for insect release. Lake Hicpochee, Torry and Kreamer were mentioned as possibilities.

One active Snail Kite Nest (nest 117) remains on Lake Okeechobee. Most buffers have been lifted. One hundred and thirteen nests were attempted on Lake Okeechobee during the nesting season and initial data shows a higher nest success rate than previous years. (this is the unofficial number

## **SFWMD**

Due to budgeting constraints, SFWMD is not conducting treatment in the canals. Treatments will begin again mid-October. SFWMD has treated 200 acres of cattails via helicopter in Bay Bottoms to continue to open up recreational areas and reduce cattail expansion. Beginning in mid-October Luziola subintera treatments will be conducted. SFWMD will assess the canals to determine the treatment needs.

## **Open Forum**

FWC asked for clarification on the Corps budget and when funding was expected, in order to assess the best course of action, to manage invasive plants during the Corps budget shortfalls.

The UAV was flown over Eagle Bays Island, approximately 800 acres were processed. The goal will be to have images that are shareable without downloading a large amount of data.

The question of treating Luziola during treatment of other targeted aquatic plants was presented to AAM. AAM would have to send separate crews to treat Luziola.

\*\*\* Next Interagency **Flight** is not currently scheduled.

\*\*\*Next Interagency **Meeting** will be scheduled for late October; a specific date will be announced. The location will be at USACE South Florida Operations Office Clewiston, FL.