

**Lake Okeechobee**  
**Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force**  
**Meeting Proceedings**

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 at the USACE South Florida Operations Office Clewiston, FL.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Jon Lane  
Chelsea Bohaty  
Josh Bauer  
Tyler Green  
Jessica Fair

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Alyssa Jordan  
Dan Roberts (Phone)  
Brendon Hession  
Steven Gornak  
Beacham Furse

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Robert Campbell  
Darrel Bagiotti  
Kaitlyn Quincy  
Steve Salokar

Other Attendees

Jason Cull, Lee County Hyacinth Control District  
Colin Lewis, Lee County Hyacinth Control District  
Ernesto Lasso de la Vega, Lee County Hyacinth Control District  
James Boggs, Helena  
Linda Defee, AVC  
Keith Mangus, AAM  
Kurtis Ramsey, AAM

**Call to Order**

Jessica Fair called the meeting to order at 10:01AM. Roll call was taken.

The Corps of Engineers shall chair, and actively solicit participation in the Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force. The Task Force members will represent State of Florida agencies (including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the South Florida Water Management District), State Universities, the Corps of Engineers, and other Federal agencies. The Task Force will serve in an advisory capacity, providing multi-disciplinary technical and scientific data from which the Corps' aquatic plant management strategy, methodology, and research planning and operational

efforts will evolve. The focus of the aquatic plant effort will be to benefit the overall ecological health of Lake Okeechobee.

### **Interagency Flight Report**

Brendon Hession from FWC gave the interagency flight report update. He reported that in August 2<sup>nd</sup> the average floating aquatic vegetation was 1814.8 acres on the lake. Most of the acreage was in the Monkey box area. Observation shoal to Clewiston is starting to build up as well. There is areas on the lake with topped out SAV including Moonshine bay with Chara and Tin house cove has hydrilla and eel grass. In July the flight reported 404 acres of floating plants on the lake. Than in August 869.6 acres were reported. This shows that the floating hyacinth and lettuce are doubling in size (almost) monthly.

### **FWC**

Brendon Hession updated the agency on the treatments happening in the lake. 1550 acres of floating vegetation has been treated since the last interagency meeting between both contract companies. A 20-30 acre harvesting project is being developed for the Monkey box area. “We know the transportation costs going to and from the Monkey box area will be pretty high, so the acreage we will be able to harvest will be pretty low.” They will be looking at out of lake disposal and working with the University to determine harvesting efficiency, bi-catch, nutrient removal, etc.

Jason Cull from Lee County Hyacinth Control District mentioned that they recently did a small scale harvesting removal project on one of their lakes and looked at the nutrients that was removed. They will be presenting their findings at the next interagency meeting. Some data they shared included that the harvesting project took 2 days and they collected 50 cubic yards of material (water hyacinth, lettuce) – Once they dried and weighed the material the only acquired 7lbs of nitrogen. The wet weight of the material was 24,000 kilograms and was 90 % water. They used a mini harvester, and completed the project in house.

Dan Roberts gave an update on the snail kit project. The area will be sprayed in the middle of October to early November and then burned during the spring. The phragmites project within Kings Bar will also be sprayed. The phragmites project is 395 acres and the snail kit research project is 394 acres.

Alyssa mentioned that the planting project that was interrupted by hurricane Dorian will begin on Monday (October 7<sup>th</sup>) at one of the tree islands.

### **SFWMD**

Darrel gave an update for the district. The district has been working with FWC on a harvesting project. The project will take place in Lake Kissimmee in the south section near the S65 structure. Floating vegetation including water lettuce and water hyacinth will be harvested. The material will be disposed on two spoil islands on the west side. If funds are available they will harvesting on the east side as well. The amount that will be harvested is ~100 acres of vegetation. This vegetation is mixed in with spatterdock. However the spatterdock should grow back in about 3 weeks. This project is estimated to take about 18 day with three boats. Currently the removal of phosphorous will not be looked into with this project however, Dr. Leary with UF has been contacted to see if they can include this.

Jon Lane wanted to know if the bi catch was being looked at during these harvesting projects. During the lake Toho project a bicatch analysis was not completed however, they did have a lot of bi catch. Lee county hyacinth control also said they has some bi catch including a turtle and amphiumas. Beacham mentioned that bi catch would vary greatly depending on the location and type of vegetation that was being harvested.

### **USACE**

Jessica showed a few pictures from the interagency flight (October 2<sup>nd</sup>). The pictures showed acres of blooming water hyacinth throughout the lake.

Lee County Hyacinth Control District mentioned that they were using drones to get high definition photographs and analyzes acreage of floating plants. The drones also have the capability to spray herbicide in small amounts.

They next interagency meeting will be at the lee county hyacinth control district office so they can do a demonstration on how that are collecting this data. Colin will also be presenting his findings at FAPMS on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Position analysis was discussed by Jon Lane. The currently lake level was 13.53. We are projected to get lower in the next couple months if we do not get a big storm. Alyssa mentioned that September was the driest month on record since 1932. They have been looking at this projection for their lower water level project. If they get to 11-10ft they would be able to do scrape projects as long as they can receive enough funding. Depending on the rains we could get down to 10ft. this year. Burn projects are also in the works if lower lake levels are achieved. A burn team meeting will be either in October or November.

Ian Markovich, will be joining the invasive species management branch and replacing Tyler Green who will be joining the National Guard.

Jessica Fair had a discussion about the interagency flyers that have been released so far. Suggestions on improving the flyer included adding descriptions on the “helpful website” section and adding a small discussion on a relevant scientific paper. In addition to the suggestions, Jessica asked the agencies involved if it would be acceptable to allow the flyers to be included in the Aquatics Magazine and the Okeechobee newspaper. FWC Beacham said that what they provide from their agency is already approved, however the District will need to discuss this with upper management. So this matter will remain until the next agency meeting.

### **Adjournment**

\*\*\*\* The next interagency meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

### **Attachments-**

Projection analysis

Flight reports