

TOO FAR NEWS

Protecting & Conserving Our Water

June 2008 Volume 199



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On May 11th, Jim Fowler, local businessman and former Citrus County Commissioner had a guest column in the Chronicle. Jim's column spoke against a desalination plant in Citrus County. I sent the following comments, which were published May 16th, saying why we need a desal plant in or near Citrus County. It would not be to supply water to us but to supply water to our "water short" neighbors. It would provide them with the water they need but at the high cost of desal instead of sucking up our low cost water and Citrus County paying for desal when they have run out our supply.

An open letter to Jim Fowler responding to his 5/11/08 Chronicle Guest Column

Jim,

A desalination plant for Citrus County should never be needed.

A desalination plant in the region would be an advantage to satisfy water needs in the region to avoid the present movement to take Citrus County water again. The giant developments should pay for the expensive desalination plant and the long distance piping instead of taking Citrus County water first.

Using Citrus County tax money, the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority (WRWSA) is paying Pete Hubble and his consulting company to design and plan the taking of water from four places on the Withlacoochee River. The WRWSA is also asking for \$400,000 more of our tax money from "Swiftmud" (SWFWMD). The plan includes taking high water out at Trilby or Croom, short-circuiting the present and historic overflow into the Tsala Apopka Lakes and Marshes.

When fresh water is overflowing Lake Rousseau beyond government requirements and estuary needs, I prefer that it be piped back to the Floral City pool, fill the lakes and flow through the lakes.

Al Grubman

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HILITES OF THE MAY MEETING

Minutes by Pat Brady and Hilites by Jerri Regan

Thanks to Jan Grubman for the goodies and for all her helpers working the coffee room. Call to Order—Al called the meeting to order, led the Pledge and delivered the Invocation. Minutes of previous meetings as well as Board Meeting minutes are available. The Treasurer's report was accepted as read subject to an audit.

Al introduced our speaker Mr. Robert Knight, Director of Water Resources for Citrus County and noted that he has been a tremendous source of information for us. Mr. Knight presented a synopsis of the past legislative session and discussed some issues of legislative interest as well as other items of interest. Part of his job involves pouring over state regulations affecting Citrus County. One bill, for example, supports the founding of artificial reefs and presents a grant opportunity for our county.

Mr. Knight discussed many proposed laws and their effect on our area. Often there are attachments to these bills that don't belong in them. DEP has come up with a ranking method for acquiring properties for acquisition. He predicted most of the lobbying this next year will be to get various areas at the top of this list.

Reauthorization on a 4 year review of water sustainability trust fund – provided co-funding for alternative water resources failed. Funding was cut significantly. Part of this funding went to Swiftmud. If our county needs to build water plants we will have to fund it ourselves completely, but there is a chance to get this trust fund replaced with pressure.

Swiftmud issued "white" papers with summaries of their plans on water reuse, conservation strategy, etc. He was asked to comment on these papers. He let SWFWMD know that using the lakes for water storage is overlooked in the strategy. He also pointed out that it doesn't make sense to let the natural system fill with muck while planning to build new man-made reservoirs.

Al noted several proposals to remove water upstream from us. Do you think we are over reacting to these proposals (draft form)? Richard: Projects have been identified, but no customers, as yet. Not worth panic yet. The ones that would impact us are not financially viable because the flow is unreliable. The area where flow is more reliable is Lake Rousseau or other areas that have more consistent flow.

Richard discussed the way nuclear power plants use fresh and salt water.

Al proposed letting the big water need areas fund the desal plant and buy the expensive water and leave ours alone. Also, he thinks Swiftmud can cut some of the expensive studies that we don't get to vote on but use our money for things that are an affront to the natural system.

Richard complimented TOO FAR on being represented especially by Al at the various meetings and for being so well informed.

Board Reports: Al discussed the book *Mirage* and the potential book signing and speaker engagement that TOO FAR would like to sponsor. We have lined up some assistance from other environmental groups to assist with sponsoring an event. Initial meeting will be the first week in June. Ideas have come up for doing this during Save Our Water to after the election next year. Book says if all the projects that are permitted are built more water will be used on golf courses than is drunk in Florida by 2020.

Norman was appointed as Chairman of Fund Raising and unanimously supported by the board. He has done an excellent job.

Motion to adjourn, passed.

TOO FAR Mission Statement

TOO FAR is a grassroots organization dedicated to the best management and conservation of natural resources for present and future generations through public education and interaction with all entities charged with these responsibilities.

Meeting Notices

TOO FAR Board Meeting
Thursday June 26 at 5 pm
East Citrus Community Center

TOO FAR General Meeting
Thursday June 26 at 7 pm
East Citrus Community Center

Citrus County Task Force
TBD
Lecanto Government Bldg.

SWFWMD Governing Board
June 24 at 9 am

Withlacoochee River Basin Board
June 12 at 9 am Brooksville

Citrus County Commissioners
June 10 & 24
at 1 pm Courthouse

Sumter County Commissioners
June 10 & 17 at 5 pm Gov't. Annex
June 24 at 5 pm
Colony Cottage

Lake Levels as of June 2, 2008

Structure:	Current
Floral City	38.94
Inverness	35.52
Hernando	33.58
Panasoffkee	39.22
Wysong Upstream	39.04
Wysong Downstream	34.50
Leslie Heifner Outside	38.99
Leslie Heifner Inside	38.99

All levels are in ft. above sea level.

Wysong Main Gate raised to 39 ft.
Low Flow Gate at 38.7 ft.
16 cfs total flow

Floral City Pool: Leslie Heifner open
Floral City, Golf Course and Moccasin Slough
are closed

Inverness and Hernando Pools structures are
closed.

Please call Mike Bartlett, SWFWMD at 800-423-
1476 ext. 4515 for more information regarding
lake levels and structures.

Check It Out

The St. Petersburg Times has a Special Report entitled: Vanishing Wetlands. The report has five chapters: 1) When Dry is Wet: Experimenting with mitigation banks; 2) Part 1: They Won't Say No: Regulations fail to protect wetlands; 3) Part 2: Pressure for Permission: Political interference in permitting process; 4) Part 3: Making up for the Damage: Efforts to replace the wetlands often fail; and 5) Part 4: Lawmakers and Swamps: Lobbying and weak laws a bad mix.

The report states that "Florida has more wetlands than any other state but Alaska. They stop floods, clean up pollution, and replenish drinking supplies. Yet despite government promises, they are disappearing."

The authors, two St. Pete Times reporters Craig Pittman and Matthew Waite have explored how Florida's wetlands have continued to vanish despite the policy of "No Net Loss." The report is only a click away:

<http://www.sptimes.com/2006/webspecials06/wetlands/>

New Gulf reef fish gear requirements effective June 1

Taken from a FWC notice

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reminds anglers that new rules went into effect June 1 requiring all people fishing from a vessel in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida for any reef fish species to carry and use circle hooks, dehooking devices and venting tools.

These new rules are intended to help more Gulf reef fish survive if they must be released when they are not legal to harvest. Many reef fish species in the Gulf, especially red snapper and gag grouper, need protection, and anglers can help maintain and rebuild reef fish stocks by properly handling and releasing fish.

The new rules require all persons harvesting any species of reef fish from a vessel in Gulf waters to possess and use non-stainless steel circle hooks when fishing with natural baits. Gulf anglers also must carry and use a dehooking device and a venting tool when needed to release reef fish from a vessel. Reef fish species include all snappers, groupers, sea bass, amberjacks, gray triggerfish, hogfish, red porgy and golden tilefish.

A circle hook is fishing hook made so that the point is turned perpendicular to the shank to form a circular or oval shape. If you're fishing for reef fish from a vessel in Gulf state waters (from shore out to nine nautical miles), you must use a non-offset circle hook. Research has found that circle hooks are more likely to hook fish in the mouth, instead of the esophagus or stomach, which reduces harm to the fish.

A dehooking device is an instrument that allows the hook to be secured and the barb shielded without re-engaging when the hook is removed from a Gulf reef fish. It must be blunt, have rounded edges and be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used for Gulf reef fish.

Dehooking devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Use one that works best for the fish you are releasing. If a fish swallows the hook or the fish is too big to release from a boat, it may be better to cut the line as close as possible to the hook instead of trying to remove it.

Reef fish that come from depths of 50 feet or more may undergo expansion of the gasses in the swim bladder as they are brought to the surface. Signs of this condition are protrusion of the stomach from its mouth, bulging eyes and a bloated belly. Proper use of a venting tool will help the fish survive by allowing it to safely return to the bottom.

A venting tool is a sharpened, hollow instrument, such as a hypodermic syringe with the plunger removed or a 16-gauge needle fixed to a hollow wooden dowel. Larger gauge needles may be harmful to the fish, and a tool, such as a knife or ice-pick, is not allowed to vent Gulf reef fish.

You can deflate a bloated Gulf reef fish by inserting the needle of a venting tool into the body cavity at a 45-degree angle under a scale in an area one to two inches behind the base of the pectoral fin. Insert the needle just deep enough to release the trapped gas and so the fish can be returned to the water with minimal damage.

If the stomach is protruding from the mouth, don't puncture it or try to put it back into the mouth. It will return to its normal position following the release of a properly vented fish.

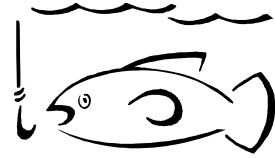
More information about the new Gulf reef fish gear rules, including frequently asked questions about the new rules, fish handling and release tips, and FWC's new catch and release brochure is available online at MyFWC.com/marine

Red Snapper

The recreational harvest season for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico federal waters opened on June 1 and will close on Aug. 5. Gulf federal waters extend beyond nine nautical miles from shore off of Florida. The red snapper sport harvest season opened on April 15 in Gulf state waters and will close on Nov. 1. Florida Gulf waters extend from shore out to nine nautical miles.

THE CATCHING REPORT

by Jerry Schneider



Hello fellow fishermen, as always I hope these words find you healthy and happy. This is a great time of year for fishing. No more cold fronts. The brutal summer heat has not arrived yet and there are plenty of bait pods to keep the fish around.

On the Salt

If you are fishing north of Yankeetown you can put Flounder back on the menu because there are plenty of them being caught. Nice keeper Reds are also being hooked in this area. One of my neighbors boated some very nice Trout and some Spanish Mackerel around the Progress Energy canal. The bite is also strong around St. Martin's Key with numerous Reds, Trout, and Spanish Mackerel landing in the ice chests. A few Grouper are being caught inshore off the deeper rocks. Better Grouper are off shore in thirty feet of water. Some Tripletail and Cobia are being reported but their numbers are not high enough to make them target fish.

Getting' Fresh

Well the dry season started off wet. After a few nice rain events the river rose enough to open the structures on the Orange State and Leslie Heifner canals and put some water in the lakes. It helped a little but we are still extremely low. Our busy president, fishing when he has time, reports fair catches up to four pounds. Greg and June Schmukal caught some very nice keepers while fishing a very low Orange Lake near Gainesville. Mike Steele at Molly McGee's deli and bait shop says his customers are catching good numbers of nice Bass, plenty of Bluegill and some very large Crappie.

**That's all for now. I wish you blue skies and tight lines.
Jerry's gone fishin'**

**Fishcamp Philosophy: Nature will never betray the heart that loved her.
William Wordsworth**

Calling All Snowbirds

Where are you? It is that time of year again. If you are leaving for the summer, please give us a call at 352-726-5004 and leave a message for Jerri that gives your summer address. Or, snail mail or email TOO FAR at toofarinc@earthlink.net and leave your new address.

Have a safe trip, a wonderful summer and get back to us safely in time for the holidays. Happy Trails!

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**NEXT GENERAL MEETING - THURSDAY - JUNE 26, 2008
7 pm at the East Citrus Community Center**

Invited Speaker: TBA