

TOO FAR NEWS



Protecting & Conserving Our Water

December 2008 Volume 205

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We did not recover from the drought in the wet season and the dry season is upon us. Water levels are and have been falling again. As I reviewed at the last board meeting, focusing on just the Flying Eagle Dikes is not enough. Even if SWFWMD had installed the culverts at the historic flow elevations it would not be enough water to make a difference.

I focused on working through the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council - Citrus County Task Force demanding that the task force work harder and smarter and demanding that the lakes' systems be improved to get more water even in droughts. There were some signs of hope but today I found out that the task force, having struggled through 7 unproductive monthly meetings this year, has decided that is enough trying for 2008. The Technical Advisory Group of the Task Force has not met at all. The following 22 suggestions (submitted October 1) elicited an offer to look at one of them. Nancy Argenziano worked hard to establish this lakes restoration board and I think she would be sadly disappointed. We will continue working to help the Task Force achieve improvements.

Tsala Apopka Lake System Potential Water Projects and Task Force Approaches

Most are old and previously agreed but never completed. Some are new. They have not all been analyzed in detail. I believe they each may have potential. They fall in four basic categories:

- Clean and clear the lakes
- Fill the lakes
- Clean, clear and restore the marshes
- Improve Task Force approaches

Clean and clear the lakes (for flow, recreation, fish habitat and wildlife):

1. Clear/dredge channels between the lakes as was done under the Route 44 bridge.
2. Clear Moccasin Slough.
3. Remove muck and excess weeds by dredges and other equipment between droughts.
4. Establish plans and permits, in advance, to remove muck and excess weeds during droughts.

Continued on the next page



Have a jolly, holly Christmas. It's the best time of the year.
Oh by golly, have a holly, jolly Christmas this year.

Familiar songs, family and good friends old and new.
That's what makes a wonderful holiday season.

May all your dreams come true!
Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah

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Fill the lakes (for flow, recreation, fish habitat, wildlife and charging the aquifer):

1. Dredge Orange State Canal to increase flow.
2. Reduce sill height of Orange State Canal to increase flow.
3. Increase width of Leslie Heifner structure and channel to approximate sheet flow.
4. Review the Moccasin Slough structure project objectives, compare to after-action report and present function. Determine if the net effect of the structure is positive or if it should be removed in favor of the historical flow.
5. Investigate potential of direct, preferably sheet, flow from the river to the Inverness and Hernando pools.
6. Remove dikes in Flying Eagle, starting with areas where vehicular access is least important and build wet crossings where access is needed. The resulting sheet flow will reduce or eliminate "black-water" fish kills and greatly increase the flow of water from the river into Floral City when the river is high enough.
7. Review and confirm or change the standard program for letting river water into the lakes. For instance, filling Hernando pool first to take advantage of the greater head to get more river water in the same time interval.

Improve/redesign structures to increase throughput when open. Example – Golf Course structure might be revised for full or larger opening.

Clean, clear and restore the marshes:

1. Remove brush, hardwoods and muck from Flying Eagle marshes to restore sheet flow at the lowest historical elevations.

Complete the Shin Ditch Project.

Improve Task Force approaches:

1. Hold at least one meeting per month except during hurricanes.
2. Start each meeting with a statement of the Task Force Mission even if just "Waterways Restoration."
3. Welcome volunteers.
4. Reject negative board members and negative Technical Advisor Group Members. Ask questions like, "If it cannot be done as described, then how can the objective be accomplished?"
5. Demand that TAG and board members be prepared for meetings by knowing subject matter and status of the waterways.
6. Request replacement of local board or TAG members who rarely if ever attend a meeting. Demand agencies provide alternate TAG members when their primary appointee cannot attend.
7. Allow limited public comment for each agenda item and general statements.

Open **all** Board and TAG meetings to "sunshine" (meeting notice, public comment and minutes).

Al Grubman October 1, 2008

Save the Date: February 5, 2009 at 6:30 pm at the Best Western Citrus Hills Lodge
Water sustainability and the future of Florida
Speaker: Cynthia Barnett

Senior writer at Florida Trend magazine and author of Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S. Her book won the Gold medal for best nonfiction in the Florida Book Awards. The presentation will be followed by an Ask the Author Session and a Book Signing. This event is free and open to the public. Books will be available for purchase at \$13.50. Don't miss this informative session focused on our most precious resource—water.

Sponsored by Homosassa River Alliance, Citrus 20/20, Citrus County Council, Kings Bay Association and TOO FAR.

Call the TOO FAR office at 352-726-5004 and leave a message if you have any questions or need additional information. We will call you back. More information in our next newsletter.

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HILITES OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Minutes by Pat Brady and Hilites by Jerri Regan

Thanks to Cindy and June for the coffee room refreshments.

Al called the meeting to order, led the Pledge and Jerry 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. Greg thanked all folks working on the Pig Roast and encouraged all to attend. Raffle tickets are for sale.

Greg read the nominees for office for our December election, 2nd reading. Asked for nominations from the floor. None were heard.

Speaker: Mike Bartlett, Structure Control Manager, SWFWMD provided an update on lake levels. Mike demonstrated a computer tool that can be used to monitor rainfall and lake levels. He described the different aspects of the program noting that culverts are shown with the level needed to flow water through the culverts. It has only reached the culverts a couple of times over the last year for a few days. Trend is going to continue.

Minimum flow downstream of Wysong is basically the natural flow if the structure wasn't there.

Dam is fully raised since December 2007 and there is a trickle going over the dam. This was done to help the Lake Panasoffkee dredging.

Control the minimum flow with the lock rather than raising or lowering the dam. There has been no significant flow for the last 3 years. Only replenishing by local rainfall instead of coming out of the Green Swamp as it usually does. We are behind about 19 inches for the year. Orange State structure is closed. Leslie Hefner is the better access point because it has been dredged.

Swiftmud is doing a project to close the old Shinn Ditch which was put in by farmers to drain the swamp. Expect this to be done by the end of the year and will slowly help reduce the vegetation that needs to be cleaned out. Expect to get the permit to close Morrison Sink by December. Remote control of all the structures on the Tsala Apopka chain is now in place.

Mike sends the graphs on water levels to Al weekly and he can forward to anyone who would like to see the data. The information Mike showed us is available at the Swiftmud site under data & maps. In response to a recurring question Mike said there are no structures in the Green Swamp to divert water to Tampa. The reservoir is having problems because of poor construction so it is at half capacity.

Al described how we approach Swiftmud & the Restoration Task Force. We have been suggesting various approaches to them to solve our water problems, but now intend to ask them what they plan to do about the issues. Decided this after sending them a list of 22 ideas when they requested ideas from the public (reprinted in this issue's President's Message).

Director reports:

Frank: Conservation of water should be one of our major pushes. Drought isn't over until the aquifer is full. It will take several years of rain to return the aquifer to normal levels. But weather conditions are changing providing less water while demand continues to increase with growth. We must conserve, one way is to cut back on watering yards. Wear your Water Matters bracelet as a reminder. Bahia grass doesn't need lots of water.

Bob: Come to the Pig Roast to help and enjoy a great meal on December 6 at the Floral City Heritage days.

Happy Birthday to June Schmukal.

Bullfrog Drawing - \$42 won by Teddi Resnik

Motion to adjourn, 2nd and passed.

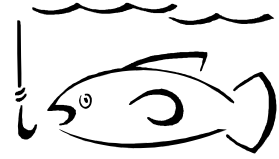


We wish you and your family a Happy and Healthy New Year.
Make 2009 a good year.

Get involved. Help protect and conserve our precious water.
Every great accomplishment starts with a few small steps.

THE CATCHING REPORT

by Jerry Schneider



Hello fellow fishermen. As always I hope these words find you healthy and happy. Before I go any further I would like to extend seasons greetings to all of you . May your Christmas be Merry and your New Year be better than the last.

On the Salt

Reds are still the number one target in our area. Large Reds are being pulled from mullet schools near the barge canal spoil banks to the north and the mouth of the Homosassa river to the south. The falling water temps have made the big Trout more numerous. Nice catches near the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Preserve are being reported. Some fine Grouper are being hooked but they are out in twenty feet of water. Big Mangrove Snapper are being taken from the same area, both on dead bait. The area from the Barge Canal to Waccasassa Bay is still producing some big Flounder. Shrimp is the preferred bait for these delicious fish. The Snook are still here and still hard to coax onto a hook. Another good cold front should run bunches of them into the creeks and rivers making them easier to catch.

Getting Fresh

This is the time of the year for the Bass to fatten up in anticipation of the up coming spawn. About the only thing that would slow the bite is the seasonal cold fronts that march through with irritating regularity. Our hard working president Al Grubman has been doing well on his outings here on Henderson. "My catch rate is much better on cloudy days" says Al. The Schmukals have been fishing the Hernando lakes. "We have been catching our share of Bass but no big ones" says June. The Crappie bite is still RED HOT. That's the word from Mike Steele at Molly McGee's deli/bait shop. His live bait customers are catching big Crappie in all our lakes with Floral City lake as the top spot. That's all for now. Enjoy your holidays.

Jerry's gone fishing

Fish Camp Philosophy "Fishermen are an optimistic class or they would not be fishermen"
Herbert Hoover

Lake Levels as of December 1, 2008

Structure	Current Level	All levels are in ft. above sea level.
Floral City	39.13	Wysong Main Gate raised to 39 ft.
Inverness	36.80	Low Flow Gate at 36.52 ft.
Hernando	34.93	113 cfs total flow
Panasoffkee	40.70	Floral City Pool: Leslie Heifner open
Wysong Upstream	39.23	Floral City and Golf Course closed
Wysong Downstream	35.09	Moccasin Slough closed
Leslie Heifner Outside	39.26	Inverness structures closed
Leslie Heifner Inside	39.25	Hernando structures closed

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**NEXT GENERAL MEETING - THURSDAY - DECEMBER 18, 2008
7 pm at the East Citrus Community Center
Speaker: Don Ellison
Geologist/Engineer
SWFWMD**



You better be good!
He's checking the list.
He knows.
Have you been naughty or nice?