

**Lake Istokpoga Management Committee
Meeting Minutes January 25, 2018**

Attendance:

| Members (including affiliations) | Agency Liaison |
|---|---|
| Jim Reed – Lake Resident South | FWC: Eric Johnson, Steve Gornak, Danielle |
| Linda McCarthy – Professional Range Mgmt | Kirkland, Kelle Sullivan, Carly Althoff, Beacham |
| Bill Dwinell – Friends of Istokpoga | Furse, Don Fox, Rick Clark, Geoff Lokuta, Brittany |
| Gary Lamperelli – Alternate, Friends of Istokpoga | Lay, Bill Pouder, Larry Jones, Steve Shattler, Cole |
| Paul Phypers – Istokpoga Marsh Watershed | Harty |
| Public | Board of County Commissioners: Jack Richie |
| Guido Fischer, Trails End Fishing Resort | Highlands County staff: Clell Ford, W. Kyle Green, |
| Dave Bouse, ABC Charters | Chris Mayhew |
| Remo Beaver, Fishing Guide | University of Florida: Kai Lorenzen |
| Don Hatcher, Fishing Guide | U.S Fish and Wildlife Service: Marla Hamilton |
| John Carson, concerned citizen | |

Clell Ford called the meeting to order at 9 am with a quorum of 5 membership groups represented. Commissioner Richie led the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting certification and meeting civility announcement were both presented.

- 1) Introductions were made for all in attendance.
- 2) Meeting Minutes from the March 2017 meeting were not available.
- 3) Action Items:
 - a) FDEP waste water spill data for Highlands County from 2007 to the present were presented. Staff reviewed them for incidents involving discharges that might impact Lake Istokpoga. For 2014, there were incidents in June and July where uncontrolled discharge of raw sewage from the Avon Park Correctional Institution was reported entering Arbuckle Creek. These discharges totaled 161,000 gallons of waste water. There were no other reports of wastewater discharge directly to a tributary to Lake Istokpoga during the ten year period.
 - b) The report for the Istokpoga harmful algal bloom study conducted by Highlands County and FDEP from 2016 to 2017 is being reviewed by FDEP staff. A copy is expected to be available in February.
 - c) Membership – Gary Albin, the Business Community representative, resigned from membership on the committee in the summer of 2017. Staff were asked to advertise this vacancy.
- 4) Committee Membership:
 - a) See above for the Business community.
- 5) University of Florida Lake Istokpoga Habitat Management Plan
 - a) Dr. Kai Lorenzen presented an overview of the effort that the University of Florida, under contract with the FWC, is undertaking to assist with development of a Habitat Management Plan for Lake Istokpoga for FWC. LIMC members and members of the public in attendance asked numerous questions during the presentation. A great deal of interest was expressed in optimizing the positive and minimizing the negative potential impacts to businesses and individuals deriving income from the lake from this plan. Questions related to why the University of Florida was contracted to develop

this plan and possible impacts to property values from this plan were also asked of Dr. Lorenzen. The point was expressed that this plan will not address the long proposed modifications to the Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule. Bill Dwinell did state that he had already met with a member of the UF team, and had found the experience to be very open and friendly. Beacham Furse stated that he would provide the committee with a link to the FWC GovDelivery web site where they can sign up for news releases from FWC; this includes updates on Istokpoga. A copy of Dr. Lorenzen's presentation was available at the meeting and will be sent to those in attendance. A copy will also be posted to the County Natural Resources Department's web site (link at the bottom of this page).

6) Water quality update

- a) Clell asked those in attendance for their sense of the impacts from Hurricane Irma on the overall water quality of Lake Istokpoga. Bill Dwinell shared that there was a big difference in the lake after Hurricane Irma, but that the negative impacts had not really been separated from the impacts of herbicide applications. Jim Reed related that the south west shoreline had absorbed the full force of the wind for 6 or 7 hours and much of the tussock, primrose and bulrush had been severely impacted; the lake has not yet settled back down from the storm. Jim requested a copy of the LVI survey that Highlands County conducted in October 2017. Don Hatcher related that the storm had thinned out a lot of woody and other vegetation. Remo Beaver related that he observed less muck in the lake and that the high flows had likely removed a great deal of that from the system.

7) LIMC Watershed Management Master Plan

- a) A copy of the draft plan was handed out for the committee members and others present to review and comment on. This will be finalized at a later meeting.

8) Project updates

- a) FWC aquatic plant management: Kelle Sullivan gave an update on the status of integrated plant management following Hurricane Irma. The primary plants being treated with herbicides are water hyacinths, water lettuce and burhead sedge. Maintenance of these invasive exotics is the primary goal of the IMP program on Istokpoga. Don Hatcher asked why a contractor was being used to treat these weeds rather than County crews. Kelle responded that the County did not have enough staff assigned to weed control to keep up with the need for treatment of these invasive exotics in the lake.
- b) FWC habitat management: Carly Althoff gave an update on the aquatic habitat restoration and enhancement (AHRES) program. FWC is planning on planting spike rush and Kissimmee grass at several locations in Istokpoga later this winter and spring. Remo Beaver asked about planting eel grass and Carly responded that it was difficult to get eel grass to grow because of grazing from turtles. They have had some success using cages but it has been limited. Remo suggested that Illinois pondweed might be an alternative.
- c) FWC spoil island removal update: Steve Gornak provided an update on the status of this project. He indicated that the project had ranked high this year for funding through the FWC AHRES program, but that funding had been withdrawn from the program to support other FWC activities. He indicated that this will become part of the habitat management plan; having it on the management plan will assist with the funding of this project

- d) Lake Okeechobee Watershed Projects: Linda McCarthy provided an update on the effort to construct water storage reservoirs north of Lake Okeechobee, a goal of the US Army Corp's Lake Okeechobee Project Delivery Team. Completion of a tentative plan suggesting where to site these reservoirs has been delayed by concerns from affected stakeholders immediately adjacent to the proposed location of the largest reservoir. The Seminole Tribe of Florida has concerns about impacts to their activities and their ancestral grounds. Bill Dwinell did state that Libby Pigman of SFWMD will be talking to the Friends of Istokpoga meeting on February 15th about many aspects of the Lake Okeechobee projects.
 - e) Snail Kites on Lake Istokpoga: Marla Hamilton of USFWS joined by phone. She gave an update on the final everglades snail kite nesting numbers for last year; a total of 15 nests were successful during the nesting season which extends from approximately March to July. So far, 20 snail kites have been observed on Lake Istokpoga this year, but nesting activities have not yet begun.
- 9) Items from Committee members
- a) Jim Reed is now on the Friends of Istokpoga Board of Directors. He has resumed issuing his weekly Istokpoga updates in coordination between the Friends of Istokpoga and the FWC. Jim reiterated that Highlands County in general and Lake Istokpoga in particular was in the bullseye for Hurricane Irma and that recovery will take a long time.
- 10) Public comment
- a) Remo Beaver asked if there was any harvesting work planned for the coming year. Carly stated that if some funding becomes available, some areas of primrose willow that were not impacted by Irma will be harvested on Long Island.
- 11) Summary of Actions From Meeting
- a) Advertise Business Community Vacancy - Clell Ford
 - b) Send copy of Dr. Lorenzen's presentation to those on the distribution list - Clell Ford
 - c) Provide a link to the FWC GovDelivery web site – Beacham Furse
 - d) Report on Istokpoga Harmful Algal Bloom sampling results for 2016 and 2017 - FDEP
- 12) Announcements: Meeting schedule for 2018(Resolution 14-15-47, sec. 5, paragraph A)
- 1) Winter: March 22, 2018 (moved due to conflicting events in Highlands County)
 - 2) A public meeting to solicit input on the Istokpoga Habitat Management Plan will be held in March by FWC and the University of Florida – a date will be selected and announced later.
 - 3) Spring: within 7 business days following FWC spring aquatic habitat management public meeting
 - 4) Summer: within 7 business days following FWC summer aquatic habitat management public meeting
 - 5) Fall: December 6, 2018

Note that per Resolution 14-15-47, changes to this prescribed schedule shall be advertised pursuant to County requirements.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:30

Respectfully submitted,
Clell Ford