



**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION (WRAC)
RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009, 05:00 PM
District Headquarters - B-1 Auditorium
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
MEETING MINUTES**

Future Agenda Items:

- **Fishing on the STAs**
- **Expanded Hunting on the STAs**
- **Update on STA Management and Phosphorous Reduction Results**
- **Consideration of Rule change to allow more than one hunter to accompany Senior Citizens**

Item 1. Opening Remarks and Introductions - Chair David Lithgow

Chapter 120 Florida Statutes allows changes to a published agenda for good cause. Rick Smith announced Newton Cook would act as chair because David Lithgow could not attend the meeting.

Chair Cook asked those in attendance to introduce themselves.

Item 2. Recreation Issues and Future Meeting Topics - Chair Lithgow and Group

Chad Kennedy, FDEP: Asked if thought had been given to establishing the WRAC Recreation Issues Workshop as a sub-committee (e.g. Lake Okeechobee Committee) with appointed members?

Rick Smith, SFWMD: Have discussed this and if the group desires, we will recommend to the WRAC for consideration.

Chair Cook: Likes the format of even flow, if formalized we might lose this; depending on the issues at the table we get a lot of representation from different groups. This group is very good at coming to consensus.

Tom McWaters: Need to discuss fishing on the STAs.

Chair Cook: It should be discussed

Rick Smith: It is on the list for future discussion.

Danny Brantley, Kissimmee River Valley Sportsman's Association (KRVSA) discussed ongoing concerns, asked several questions and read two letters from stakeholders re: SFWMD Camping rules. Copies of the letters were not provided for the record. Mr. Brantley said if these issues are not satisfied regarding Kissimmee Chain of Lakes he will bring it to the Governing Board in January.

Concerns included:

- Management of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.
- Need agreement on facts regarding Johnson's Island airboat access and use issues (seasonal vs. year-round), and location of a buffer.
- Inadequate representation of sportsmen on the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes dispute resolution group and subsequent vote on the five year management plan.
- Fishing opportunities on the STAs.
- Dog hunting issues.
- Reedy Creek airboat access and endangered species issues; discrimination by SFWMD against airboat access to Reedy Creek.

Other Concerns/Questions Included:

- Hog trapper use of dogs at South Reedy Creek property. As per FWC, dogs are not allowed on that property. Has anything been done about this?
- Need monitoring and enforcement of agency rules when contract hog trappers are out trapping.
- Need contact information for SFWMD person responsible for investigating these issues.
- KRVSA agreement to construct shelters; subsequently contract put out to bid – need better explanation.
- Access to sovereign land with no access gate. Need response from SFWMD land manager (previously contacted) on this.
- Tickets were issued to campers in designated areas for camping over 5 days. Could not find this prohibition on any SFWMD signs.

- Attended the meeting at Camp Mack for the C-37 Canal widening (SFWMD and Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) project. In 1960 a previous widening project was considered an ecological disaster: Adding 3' more depth causes shoaling in other places and the new project cost is estimated at \$7.1 million. Suggest a better alternative: Need a short canal from Lake Cypress to recreate more natural flow. In 2 years it will take for the existing project, could lose \$50 million. Restoration of the C-37 Canal should be as nature intended.

Steve Coughlin, SFWMD: The 5 day limit on camping is written on the sign.

District rule 40E-7 is intended to prevent long-term camping and prevent nuisances (garbage, etc).

Note: Notice was to have been printed on the signs but was inadvertently not printed on some signs. This has been corrected and the notice is now on the signs.

Steve Coughlin suggested that Danny Brantley meet with appropriate SFWMD staff to discuss these issues and go through the itemized list with staff. Steve Coughlin will schedule the meeting.

Chair Cook: These are ongoing issues and it looks like the sportsmen come up on the short end; but I have been aware of the 5 day camping rule for a long time.

Bishop Wright: Need to know if a person has more than one permit, can they stay for longer than five days (e.g. DuPuis Management Area)? The five day rule was created to prevent squatters. Cromwell site has trailers that have been there for more than five days. The rule has to be consistently administered and enforced.

Steve Coughlin: Will follow up on this.

Fred Davis: Have been asked lead a panel discussion at the Everglades Coalition Conference January 9, and will discuss balancing restoration, preservation and recreation. Encouraged participation of all recreation interests. Meeting is January 9, 4:00pm at PGA National Resort.

Chair Cook: Arthur Marshall Foundation is a sponsor. I will be there, need to be registered prior to the meeting.

Susan Kaynor, USACE: Registration is \$190.

Chair Cook commented on the waterfowl hunting season on the STAs: Participation is very high; people have been driving three hours to wait for a "walk in" permit to hunt. We are not meeting our goals. STAs are #1 public waterfowl hunting areas in North America. There is going to be more pressure to open more areas and increase the number of permits.

Rick Smith reiterated that the purposes for which the STA lands were acquired were to meet the phosphorous reduction goals set forth in the Settlement Agreement in the federal water quality lawsuit of 1988. Recreation can be accommodated if consistent with the primary purposes of the STA projects.

A suggestion was made to follow up with the FWCC Commissioners that

attended the STA site visit to provide additional information on the purposes of the STAs.

Rick Smith suggested adding an agenda item to address fishing on the STAs. There is still the water quality issue on the STAs.

John Storm: Would like to see a report on the STAs as to phosphorus removal. We have lost deer and hog hunting on the STAs. Duck hunters are doing great on the STAs but other hunters are not.

Steve Coughlin: We will add to a future agenda, a presentation on the purpose and performance of the STAs.

John Halverson: Need a review of the Mobility Impaired hunting rules: Anyone over 65 should have two adult hunters. We can't hunt by ourselves.

Chair Cook: Thanked the SFWMD for the mobility impaired bird blind at STA 5. Needs remove the floating tussocks in front of the blind so the decoys can be deployed. Also need to refresh the camouflage on the blind.

Jerry Krenz: The project purpose comes first. Spraying submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) to improve hunting is not consistent with the phosphorus removal goals of the project.

Chair Cook: Just asking for removal of the floating tussocks, not the submerged aquatic vegetation.

Item 3. Rolling Meadows Restoration Update - Maura Merkal, Lead Project Manager, Project Coordination Division, Policy and Coordination Dept., Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects, SFWMD

Danny Brantley: The original plan went away, but can see the project is intended to restore the historic flows and looks good. Question about a Consumptive Use Permit for a private landowner in the area. Need to reconnect Lake Rosalie.

SFWMD: We can't bypass the owner with the water reservation so we need to look at it closely. We will undo some of the structures that are failing.

FWC: Are we hydrating 365 days at from 1 to 3 feet?

SFWMD: Most of the time.

Item 4. Kissimmee River Land Management Update - Jeff McLemore, Senior

Environmental Analyst, Land Stewardship Division, Vegetation and Land Management Dept., Operations and Maintenance, SFWMD

Steve Coughlin: Re: Istokpoga Canal Boat Ramp - the USACE has agreed to split the project so that the boat ramp permit can be obtained before the structure is done; expected in January.

Chad Kennedy applauded the SFWMD for using biological control
SFWMD: We intend to replace spraying for Old World Climbing fern (Lygodium) with a biological control agent – a moth; after more research is done on results of an earlier release of moths.

Bishop Wright: Need year round hog hunting on public lands to control the feral hogs. It is more effective than trapping.

Jeff McLemore, SFWMD: Hunting is good but the most effective way is trapping. Hunting year round affects law enforcement. Some hog hunting in KICCO will be replaced with small game hunting.

Q: What are the numbers on trapping vs. hunting?

Jeff McLemore: In general, hunters have been taking 60 – 70 a year. A trapper can trap 280 during the non-season. Trapped hogs are taken to a permitted hunting preserve. Some of the meat is given to soup kitchens.

Item 5. Recreation Planning Update - Jerry Krenz, Senior Planner, Land Stewardship Div., Vegetation and Land Management Dept., Operations and Maintenance, SFWMD

Q: G -444 roller structure, where is it located?

SFWMD: It will be at Sportsman's Crossing. The structure will be south of both pumps.

Rick Smith: Designs reviewed by this group would be recommended to the WRAC and the Governing Board (if necessary). Your comments are needed.

Alligator Hunting Ideas and Changes

Q: STA 1-W opportunity is better than anywhere in the country, need to open the other STAs and increase the number of permits. During construction of STA-3&4 we might have alligator hunting during times of no construction.

SFWMD: There is no construction on STA- 3&4, so need to consider that now. STA- 2 is under construction; when finished there will be another opportunity for alligator hunting. For STA-3&4 the first step is to ask FWC to do a biological study and count numbers; determine sustainable harvest numbers. See no other problems.

FWC: Need enough lead time to do licensing and permitting; good to complete in the spring to be ready for July hunting

Jerry Krenz, SFWMD: Need to present to the Governing Board in April to be ready by May 1.

Steve Coughlin: We need to make recommendations before the March Recreation Meeting.

Q: Need to mow before alligator season to help prevent snake bites and improve access to the canals.

Jerry Krenz: Will check the mowing schedule with SFWMD Operations and Maintenance.

Rick Smith: STA-1E is a USACE project, who is managing?

Jerry Krenz: SFWMD manages it and there is fishing allowed. Wellington has a rule regarding discharge of firearms. Wellington will need to change the rule before we allow alligator hunting.

Chair Cook: There are 5 -20 parking spaces at STA 3&4; only a few have access to water.

FWC: We will space them out so they all have access to the water. Completion of the roller gate?

A: Construction completion set for 2011, and then there is testing, electronics and operations.

Steve Coughlin: C-37 Canal dredging meeting well attended. USACE reviewing to allow 24 hour access.

Danny Brantley requested a list of SFWMD surplus lands.

FWC: End of year review of the STA waterfowl and alligator hunting: Will need more time, may be a better idea to review with staff first and then bring back to this group.

Item 6. Adjourn - 7:40 p.m.