

**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION (WRAC)
Recreation Issues Workshop Report To WRAC – July 8, 2010
Recreation Issues Workshop, June 21, 2010
SFWMD, Building B-1 Auditorium, 4:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Meeting Report: Mr. David Lithgow, Recreation Issues Chair**

- **Item 1: Open House – Miami Canal Alternatives Map/Chart Review, 4:30 – 5:00 p.m.**
SFWMD and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) staff reviewed project alternatives with workshop participants.
- **Item 2: Introductions and Opening Remarks** - Chair Lithgow explained the purpose/format of the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.
- **Item 3: Recreation Discussion, Updates and Future Meeting Topics –**
 - **Future Presentations:**
 - Sovereign Submerged Lands, including Lakes – Need presentation by Florida Department of Environmental Protection
 - Include:
 - Responsibilities for lake management;
 - Public participation in leasing decisions
 - Developing coordinated lake management plans.
 - **Recreation Issues:**
 - Hog hunting/Signage on Kramer Island (Lake O) – need clarification by Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
 - Status of proposed public access facility at Deer Fence road area (Stormwater Treatment Area 5 - STA 5):
 - SFWMD staff: A public access facility is planned for “Compartment C”; area will be closed for construction up to two years.
 - Partnership/Lease Agreements with Local Government: SFWMD staff: These types of agreements will continue to be pursued on a case-by-case basis to further recreational opportunities.
- **Item 4: Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Project: Water Conservation Areas “Decomartmentalization” – Review Miami Canal Conceptual Alternatives – Discussion of the project and six alternatives Included:**
 - A September 17, 2003 Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park Consensus Report was available as a handout.
 - Do any alternatives leave tree islands and hunting areas?
 - SFWMD: Yes. These alternatives specifically address Miami Canal backfilling alternatives, not the L67 A and C canals. The geological characteristics are different.
 - Performance measures used? SFWMD: Narrowed alternatives from 48 to 6. Will do performance measures and more modeling.

- Cost estimates? SFWMD: Not yet. Will produce during future project work.
 - Concern about eliminating fish spawning areas and fisheries habitat.
 - Concern that filling and plugging the Miami Canal will limit or eliminate access to most fishing boats.
 - FWC Data on fisheries, bottom type/habitat, marsh access and water flow needs to be considered.
 - Impact of canals on fish predation – impact of filling canals on fishery production.
 - Airboats may be only vessels able to access landscape once fill is completed.
 - Channel effects of canal plugs vs. complete back fill; plug lengths/widths, boat by-passes vs. narrow channel down center of plugs. Discussed effectiveness of these options.
 - Economic impact on fishing industry due to loss of access at a time when numbers of fishermen are increasing.
 - Need proof backfilling will restore the Everglades because there will be economic impacts and public access issues.
 - Airboaters oppose backfilling from S-8 to S-339. Support deep holes to sustain alligators and alligator hunting.
 - S-98 to S-339 backfilling helps the tracked vehicle users.
 - Comment that if water cannot be moved south into Everglades National Park because it does not meet the 10 parts per billion (ppb) water quality standard, we should not spend any money on “Decomp”.
 - South Florida Anglers for Everglades Restoration (SAFER) do not support backfilling any canals.
 - Modified alternative proposed by USACE: Backfill from S-151 to C-11. Bass Pro representative would have to take back to stakeholders. Will likely oppose because of access issues.
 - Chair Lithgow: Need to build artificial islands with fill to manage the wetlands.
 - Filling from S-8 to S-339 will provide vehicle access across the Miami Canal.
 - Appears that under all the alternatives, tracked vehicle access will be impacted because northern WCA-3A will be as wet as the southern portion.
- **Item 5: Kissimmee River Updates - Discussion included:**
 - Discussed broad-leaf marsh coverage, benefits to fish and wildlife and impact of Phase IV restoration being done out of sequence.
 - Could fill in more river channel northward to the S-65A structure.
 - SFWMD: Working toward goal of 50% broadleaf coverage. Working to wrap up Reevaluation Report to Congress in order to complete restoration. Restoration cost estimates were based on 1994 dollars. Need additional funding to complete restoration.

- SFWMD: Phase 4B backfilling to be completed December 2009, a year ahead of schedule primarily because we're using same contractor and applying lessons learned in earlier phases.
 - Istokpoga Canal Boat Ramp status update.
 - SFWMD: Pool A cannot be de-channelized due to flood control issues. C-35, C-36 and C-37 will be widened to provide more capacity.
 - Discussed water level drop from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee.
 - Discussed ecological value of area near Government Cut and Paradise Run. SFWMD: Local sponsor (SFWMD) would have to fund 100% of costs. No current funding for land acquisition in this area.
 - River Acres: Airboaters advocated opening C-37 24/7/365 for all boaters.
 - Updates on CSX Railroad Bridge in Pool D, Pool D Oxbow Dredging, S-65C Boat Ramp Replacement and U-Shaped Weir Project.
 - Also updates on Phase 2/3 Backfilling and S-65E Spillway Addition.
 - Questions and discussion about release of water from Lake Kissimmee vs. holding more water.
 - USACE: Need to operate according to the Lake regulation schedule until the schedule is changed based on new projects or until all necessary land is acquired.
- **Item 6: Public Use Project Updates – Discussion Included:**
 - Parking facilities and access to Culpepper Ranch via Jupiter Indiantown Grade.
 - Chair Lithgow and SFWMD: Martin County Commission will decide on access but will work to get small parking area at intersection of Indiantown Grade. FWC (Wes Seitz) working to incorporate Hungryland public access.
 - Fox hounds on Nine Gems (does not allow fox hunting – dogs trail a scent laid out on the ground): SFWMD: Currently allowed. We will work on a bigger parking lot and have included funds in next year's budget.
 - Access to Gulfstream Citrus and connection to Cypress Creek and Jonathan Dickinson State Park – SFWMD: Martin County is working on access from the northwest to Cypress Creek.
 - DuPuis Reserve equestrian camping area being used by non-equestrians. SFWMD: Have a multiple use policy. Need to expand rather than segregate users.
 - Also need to expand miles of equestrian trails using existing firebreaks, etc.
 - SFWMD: Have reached staff and budget limits for maintaining existing trails (45-50 miles). Need to evaluate use of existing trails and determine more efficient use, or provide maps showing existing and proposed use.
 - Appreciate SFWMD designating new dove hunting area in Frog Pond given closure of previous area due to construction.
 - Appreciate SFWMD working with Florida Trail Association on bridges/crossings.

- Improvements to Governor's House vs. building new shelter at DuPuis: SFWMD: will continue to build new shelter because of demand and will make improvements to Governor's House.
- Gardner-Cobb Marsh Airboat Crossings: Discussion about completion date, communication with organized airboaters as to construction schedules, completion dates, etc.
- SFWMD: Staff provides best information available at time. Project schedules involve elements beyond control of Division of Land Stewardship. People can call for updates at any time.
- Discussion about fencing issue on former Southport Ranch property adjacent to Lake Cypress and recent survey of fence placement.
- SFWMD Executive Director Carol Wehle wrote letter to Danny Brantley, President, Kissimmee River Valley Sportsmen's Association, explaining that the survey determined the fence was properly located with a minor deviation.
- Discussed removal of culverts at Catfish Creek. Culverts have not yet been removed.
- SFWMD: Will have project manager provide status.
- Discussed access at Reedy Creek, site visit by members of Polk County Lake Access Advisory Committee and language in minutes regarding environmental sensitivity of area and closing to public access. Questions about whether SFWMD can clear downed cypress to provide airboat access and discussion about how much access was provided by removing SFWMD signs prohibiting access to Reedy Creek Channel (about 150-200 yards).
- SFWMD: will not be doing any clearing or dredging.
- Appreciate work on Shady Oaks facilities and shelters in the area.
- Airboaters provided proposal to FWC for \$1,000 reward leading to arrest and conviction of perpetrator(s) in the earlier dog incident. FWC has not responded.
- Chair: Next meeting: September 20, Broward County, place to be announced.
- Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.