

Hydrilla Treatment for 2007

04/20/07

FDEP Bureau of Invasive Plant Management has been closely monitoring hydrilla levels in Lake Istokpoga through the fall of 2006 to present. In February 2007 monitoring of hydrilla levels was conducted by Remetrix, LLC. The hydrilla has expanded to about 1000 acres found in October 2006 to about 5,000 acres of hydrilla on Lake Istokpoga located on the southeastern corner of the lake near the S68 structure.

On March 12, 2007 an interagency meeting was held to develop a hydrilla management plan to control this rapidly spreading exotic species. Attendees included representatives from FDEP, FWC, SFWMD, Highlands County Parks and Recreation, and The Soil and Water Conservation District. Attendees agreed upon a plan to treat approximately 1,000 acres of hydrilla that is at or near the surface with Aquathol K herbicide. Aquathol K has been used throughout Florida for more than 40 years for small and intermediate size hydrilla control. Aquathol K was recently re-registered through USEPA's more stringent evaluation process. The Aquathol K liquid formulation will be used at a rate of 2ppm and will be applied by helicopter, contracted to Helicopter Applicators. The treatment is set to go out on April 30th and 31st of 2007. Aquathol K is a contact-type herbicide meaning that it acts fairly quickly to control hydrilla with which it comes in contact. It is used routinely in Florida public waters to control hydrilla without impacting important submersed native plants like eelgrass. The early season treatment is scheduled to take advantage of higher oxygen content to buffer plant decomposition, and to have hydrilla under control in the vicinity of the S68 outfall structure at the onset of tropical storm season.

A triangular block treatment has been proposed and is shown on the map include. The base of the triangle will span from near Trails End fish camp to the S68 structure and the point of the triangle will head towards Big Island. Hydrilla in this area is at or near the surface and presents the greatest likelihood to cause problems later in the spring and summer if not addressed soon. Hydrilla in areas between Big Island and Bumble Bee Island and the southern end of the lake are not scheduled for control at this time. These areas will be closely monitored to develop any future treatment plans that may be required.

A navigational trail will also be cut towards open water to provide access to boaters between Big Island and Bumble Bee Island. As requested by FWC, a trail will also be cut where hydrilla is present around the littoral zone of Big Island to open the area up to fish and prevent hydrilla from impacting existing native plant communities. These trails will be treated by helicopter and are noted on the attached map.

After the treatment, further monitoring of the site will be conducted by FDEP and Highlands County. Specific way points using GPS will be located on the treatment site and hydrilla will be examined to verify if treatment goals have been met. Monitoring will be conducted the day of, one day after, and weekly following the treatment. FDEP will also pull water samples which will be sent to Dr. Mike Netherland, who works with the US Army Corps of Engineers and is stationed at the University of Florida, to conduct further testing. FDEP and Highlands County personnel will also survey the area and map the extent of control that was achieved.

The untreated hydrilla will be closely monitored throughout the remainder of the year 2007 to evaluate the possible need for further treatments in the fall to keep the hydrilla under manageable conditions. Areas in the north that are currently without hydrilla will be managed by Highlands County Parks and Recreation and FDEP to keep these areas free of hydrilla.

For more information on the management of invasive aquatic plants in Florida please refer to the University of Florida web site at <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu>. Here you will find a library of more than 70,000 articles and information on aquatic plants as well as information on all facets of aquatic plant management in Florida public waters. In addition, University staff and Florida science teachers are collaborating to develop classroom curricula that address invasive plants and their management in state waters.

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