

May 10, 2007

Colonel Paul Grosskruger  
District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Dear Colonel Grosskruger

This Letter is from the Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. (FOI) and is in regard to the request from South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for a temporary deviation from the existing Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule.

We the FOI are opposed to any change in the existing Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule. We feel that the environmental impact to Lake Istokpoga will be long and hard if the lake is allowed to go below the existing 37.0 ft NGVD. The environmental issues are the most concerning to the FOI but we are also concerned about the economic issues that will arise if the deviation is allowed.

#### **Friends of Istokpoga Concerns**

- A.** A major problem is the potential for rapid growth of the existing Hydrilla in the lake if the water deviation is allowed. The Hydrilla on Lake Istokpoga is immune to Sonar, which is the chemical that is normally used to treat Hydrilla when it gets out of control. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) uses a contact herbicide at this time to control the Hydrilla but it is not effective for doing a whole lake treatment. If the out of control Hydrilla scenario comes to pass the lake would have a high depletion of oxygen which would result in large fish kills and an algae bloom. Also large amounts of Hydrilla would virtually make the lake unusable for boating. These problems could potentially make Istokpoga a dead Lake.
- B.** Another problem would be the potential for Hydrilla to clog the S68 structure if we have a hurricane or tropical storm this season. Hydrilla is very susceptible to being torn loose during high winds. With topped out Hydrilla because of the lowered lake level there would be ample amounts of loose Hydrilla to block the gates on the S68 structure. This would result in flooding to all areas near to the lake. This flooding would cause environmental and economical hardships for the whole Istokpoga basin.
- C.** Istokpoga's two Islands, Big and Bumblebee are home to one of the most diversified bird rookeries in the state of Florida. These rookeries are very important to the diminishing places for bird life to prosper in Florida. Endangering these rookeries because of a deviation to the water schedule could harm them by allowing predator's access to the Island by way of a land bridge at

low water. We also do not know what the low water levels will do to the birds feeding habitat

- D.** Istokpoga is one of the best Bass fishing lakes in the State of Florida and conceivably the nation. It is of the common opinion that lowering the lake level because of the deviation will negatively affect the good Bass and other fishing on the lake. It will also force the fish to smaller water holes where they will be vulnerable to predators or die from the hot and oxygen starved water. So even if the lake can recover from the deviation how long will it take for the fishing to recover?
  
- E.** The economic impact to the residents living on and around the lake will be severe if the lake is environmentally damaged because of a deviation. The business on or near will be significantly hurt in terms of lost customers, lost fishing tournaments and such. The whole Istokpoga area will hurt economically because it is a destination for many people for its fishing, birding, boating, or just relaxing and enjoying the beauty of this serene lake.

As you have read FOI have many grave concerns about what the deviation will do to Lake Istokpoga, the lake that we live on, play on and work on. We do understand that everybody suffers during a drought and that we must all work together to solve this difficult situation. If the water that is needed is for drinking use all that you want. We do however take exception to using a deviation to the water schedule to fix a short term problem because this deviation will probably cause a long term environmental and economical problem to Lake Istokpoga and its people.

Sir I thank you for taking the time to read and understand the concerns of the Board and Members of FOI. A little background for you about the FOI. The Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association Inc. is a nonprofit corporation; formed in Aug. 1998, and chartered by the State of Florida we have a membership of over 300 and over 20 Associate Business Members. We formed to insure that Lake Istokpoga remains a pristine and viable lake for now and future generations. Please check our website ([www.istokpoga.org](http://www.istokpoga.org)) for more information on our organization and the Jewel of Highlands County; Lake Istokpoga.

Sincerely

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