

May 2009

The Istokpoga Newswire

Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.



Istokpoga Aquatic Plant Management

The mission of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), Aquatic Plant Management Section is to control hydrilla to the lowest feasible levels and to promote the expansion of native aquatics within Lake Istokpoga. In the fall of 2008 a hydrilla management treatment was conducted November 18th and 19th. The treatment consisted of a total of 1211 acres of topped out hydrilla, 128 acres North of Henderson's Cove, 60 acres north of Windy Point Boat Ramp, 256 acres in the south near Grassy Island and a 767 acre plot on the Eastern shore near Istokpoga canal. The hydrilla was treated with Aquathol K liquid formulation at 2 ppm. Aquathol K is a contact-type herbicide meaning that it acts fairly quickly to control hydrilla. It is used routinely in Florida public waters to control hydrilla without impacting important submersed native plants like eelgrass. It has recently been used for control of large scale hydrilla treatments within many water bodies throughout the state successfully. Colder weather season treatments are optimal to take advantage of higher oxygen content to buffer plant decomposition. Treatments need to be scheduled during the colder seasons for optimal control. The herbicide was administered by helicopter, contracted to Helicopter Applicators. The treatment was successful in controlling the hydrilla

Presently, no large scale hydrilla treatments are scheduled for Lake Istokpoga.

within the treated areas.

A 250 acre plot was also placed within the 767 acre plot that was treated with Clearcast (Imazamox) at 75 ppb along with Aquathol K at 2 ppm. Clearcast is an EPA-approved systemic herbicide that has exhibited good control of hydrilla and has shown to be effective as a growth inhibitor. The plot was set out to determine if the combination of the two herbicides would

display a better hold time post treatment and extend the duration of treatments as well as create a more effective treatment. The Aquathol K is effective in breaking down the plant

cellular walls quickly to allow the Clearcast to enter the plant tissue more readily. The result expected is better control in quicker time. The plot was located adjacent and South of the plot receiving just Aquathol K at 2 ppm to compare outcomes of herbicide combinations. A map of the treatment plan can be viewed on the Friends of Istokpoga website indicating where the treatment plots were located. The results of the data collected on the plot that received both Clearcast and Aquathol K has not been fully determined at this point. Researchers, along with Dr. Mike Netherland, of the US Army Corps of Engineers stationed at the University of Florida, and Dr. Bill Haller, of University of Florida have been monitoring and observing the treatment plot continuously throughout the treatment. FFWCC IPMS and Highlands County personnel survey and map the extent of control and monitor the lake regularly to assess the level of control.

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Special Point of Interest:

May 14th is our next scheduled FOI meeting in Lorida. The lake levels and Canal Project will be discussed.

FFWCC IPMS has been closely monitoring hydrilla levels in Lake Istokpoga since November. Presently, hydrilla is at a minimal level on the lake. There is less than 100 acres total of topped out hydrilla in various pockets throughout the entire 27,692 acre lake. An estimated 20 to 30 acres is located around the fringe of the southern lobes and there are a few small pockets within the littoral zone around the Northern end of the lake. Presently, no large scale hydrilla treatments are scheduled. The lake will continue to be monitored and surveyed regularly to assess the current conditions of the lake throughout the season.

One of the brighter notes of the season is the expansion of native submersed species. Illinois pondweed (*Potamogeton illinoensis*) a native submersed plant, continues to thrive and is expanding between Big Island and Bumble Bee Island as well as other areas of the lake. Eel grass (*Vallisneria Americana*) is also expanding on the South east corner of Bumble Bee and on the Eastern and Western shorelines of the whole lake. With continued lake managing efforts, the hope is to continue to allow these natives to expand and create habitat for many fish species, including the large mouth bass and create foraging habitat for the endangered Florida Snail Kite that nest within the littoral zones and in the marshes of the islands.

FFWCC IPMS, FFWCC AHRES, Highlands County Parks and Recreation, USFWS, The Soil and Water Conservation District, work in cooperation along with many other agencies and stakeholder groups who are all working to improve the quality, health and vitality of Lake Istokpoga. These parties meet regularly to discuss, modify, and organize lake management goals and strategies for hydrilla management.

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.

Erica Van Horn
Regional Biologist
Invasive Plant Management Section
2001 Homeland-Garfield Rd.
Bartow, FL 33880
863-534-7074
erica.vanhorn@dep.state.fl.us

What's Happening On Istokpoga - May 2009?

South Florida Water Management District has been releasing water at S68 to the permitted water users south of the lake. So consequently Lake Istokpoga is down to 38.3 ft from its winter pool level of 39.5 ft. Lets hope that the summer rains kick in at the beginning of May before the lake level gets to low. The hydrilla on the lake is under control, with a scattering of some top out spots that make for good fishing. Following are some short updates on things that your Board of Directors is working on and other projects that are being preformed by some of the state and local agencies. We will also try to give you some insight into events that have happened in the last few months. If you have any questions about or ideas for this column please Email them to friends@istokpoga.org. We can us your help.

A: Hydrilla Spraying on Istokpoga

The results of the last treatment of hydrilla are deemed as very good by Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) aquatic plant management group. In our February Newsletter we said that the FWC would treat 500 acres in the north end of the lake and some in south end of the lake. At this time the FWC is not going to treat the lake until the fall of 2009. This could change if the hydrilla starts to top out and

covers too large of an area. But for now everything is on hold. In the interim the County spray crews will be out on the lake doing some spot treatment. If you have problems getting out of your canal because of hydrilla call Highlands County at 863-402-6813 and they should be able to help you. For more information read the article in this newsletter by Erica Van Horn Regional Biologist for FWC.

B: Arbuckle Creek monitoring of water quality

This is an ongoing project by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to assess the water quality of the Arbuckle Creek watershed. SFWMD is trying to track down the areas in the watershed that contribute the most phosphorus loading of Arbuckle Creek and subsequently Lake Istokpoga. At our May general membership meeting Gary Ritter, Manager Okeechobee Service Center for SFWMD, will be one of our guest speakers and he may be able to give us a brief run down on this project.

C: Hydrilla Resistance to Herbicides.

During the last treatment of hydrilla this fall the FWC aquatic plant management group with the help of Dr. Bill Haller used a new herbicide (Clearcast) on a few treatment areas. The hope is that the Clearcast along with the Aquathol K will suppress the hydrilla for a longer period of time. At this time the test is not fully complete but the preliminary indication are that the Clearcast is helping to retard the growth of the hydrilla. Clearcast could be a promising tool in the control of hydrilla but we will wait for a full report from Dr Haller before we pass judgment on it.

D: Canal Maintenance & Dredging

Please come to our May 14 general membership meeting at the Lorida Community Center. Mr. Clell Ford, Highlands County Lakes Manager, will be one of our speakers that evening. He is the project manager for the canal dredging project and he has promised to bring us completely up to date on this project. **So be there and be informed.** For more information on this project see our September 2008 newsletter at our web site www.istokpoga.org.

E: Istokpoga Canal Project US Army Corps of Engineers

This is project should be coming to a conclusion in July or August. The contractor is now working on the new S67

structure that's on the Istokpoga canal ¾ of a mile east of the bridge over CR-621. The park and boat ramp part of this project on US-98 are completed and just waiting for either SFWMD or Highlands County to assume responsibility for the facility.

F: Spring Lake Water Control Plan

Why is the Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. concerned about Spring Lake Water Control Plan? Our concern is the quality of the water that is pumped into Arbuckle Creek

from the Spring Lakes Improvement District. Arbuckle Creek is the main tributary that replenishes the water in

Lake Istokpoga and it is also where 90% of the pollutants (phosphorus & nutrients) come from. Spring Lake Improvement District is required by the State of Florida to upgrade their water control plan so they come into compliance with their permit to discharge water into Arbuckle Creek. In the past Spring Lake Improvement District has been a good neighbor to Lake Istokpoga and from all indicators they are working hard to resolve their water issues and comply with the requirements in their water discharge permit. Their success is important to the health of Lake Istokpoga.

G: S-68 Modification Project US Army Corps of Engineers.

This project is just about to wrap up. The new gate is in place and has been tested. At this time there is just a bit of excavation and some dredging on C-41A Canal going on. The Army Corps of Engineers should finalize this project some time in May.

H: Apple Snail Study.

Dr. Philip Darby from the University of West Florida hopes to be back on Lake Istokpoga this season to study apple snails. This study will provide information on the effects of wet prairie habitat restoration and management on trends in apple snail reproduction rates. The apple snail is the sole food source for the Florida

Snail Kite which is a bird on the endangered species list. The rate of reproduction of apple snail has a direct effect on snail density and consequently on the Snail Kite populations. This study will assist managers of Florida lake systems by providing recommendations and data related to improving water and habitat management plans. One thing to note is that Lake Istokpoga is one of the few places that Snail Kites are still nesting. You can help by giving the Snail Kite a wide berth if you come upon one.

I: Osprey Update

Mike McMillian is hard at work on his 21st season of researching Lake Istokpoga Ospreys. According to Mike the Osprey population looks about the same as last year. For the 2008 nesting Mike counted 278 nesting pairs. It is said that Osprey population are a good

indication of the health of a lake and considering that Lake Istokpoga has the largest known concentration of nesting Ospreys in the world. This reflects well on the health of our Lake. We will give you a full update in our fall edition of this newsletter.

J: Arbuckle Creek Marsh

This project is underway and should be finished in the near future. Following is an explanation of where and how this marsh relates to Lake Istokpoga.

The Arbuckle Creek Marsh is a sawgrass marsh that is located next to Arbuckle Creek, on the Avon Park Bombing Range. It is important to Lake Istokpoga because it acts as a big filter for Arbuckle Creek thus helping to keep some of the phosphorous and nutrients from entering the lake. Just for information, it is estimated that about 85% of the phosphorous and nutrients that enter Lake Istokpoga come from Arbuckle Creek. This project is funded by SFWMD and is being managed by Clell Ford (Highland County Lakes Manager).

K: Lygodium Treatment on Big Island

There is a 100 to 200 acre patch of Lygodium on west side of Big Island that FWC and SFWMD will be spraying very soon. Lygodium also known as old world climbing fern or Japanese climbing vine is a very invasive vine in Florida. It is native to Asia and Australia but as usual it does very well in Florida. It climbs into trees and over other native vegetation shading

them out and eventually killing them. The FWC hopes to eradicate this exotic before it gets too strong of a foothold. The FWC has not treated this patch of Lygodium yet because it has lost most of its leaves over the winter. The FWC assures us that they will be treating it once it regains its leaves. This is necessary for the contact herbicide to work properly.

L: Harvesters Working On The Lake

The harvesters are back on the lake at Big Island and also on the western and northern shoreline. They are cleaning up some of the tussock that has started to accumulate and also opening up areas for natural water flow. You may also see a backhoe tractor along the shore line working at places that the harvesters are not able to get to. Along with the harvesters the FWC will also be doing some spray treatment to open up areas around the lake. This is an FWC project that should last to the 28th of May. If you go to the FOI Web site (www.stokpoga.org) there is a map of the harvest locations.

2009 Spring Meeting

This Meeting will be about Lake Levels and Canal Dredging

The Friends of Istokpoga will hold its 2009 Spring General Membership meeting at the Lorida Community Center on Thursday, May the 14, at 7:00 PM. This meeting will have two speakers. They will be speaking about the lake levels and the Residential Canal Dredging Project.

The first speaker for the evening will be Gary Ritter, Manager Okeechobee Service Center from South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). He will be giving a presentation about the lake levels and some insight into what determines when, where and why they are releasing or not releasing water from S68. He will also be able to answer some question about other functions that SFWMD handles on the lake.

The second Speaker of the evening will be Mr. Clell Ford, Highland County Lakes Manager. He is going to give an update on the

You can help protect the Snail Kite by giving their nests a wide berth

Mail completed Application to address at bottom of form with your membership fee or bring it to our meeting.
Remember that numbers count, so please consider all members of your household when joining.

Membership Application Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.

Annual membership fee \$7.00 per person
Annual Family Membership fee \$12.00 per family*
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For additional information call: 863-219-0082 - Voice Mail

Or email us at: friends@istokpoga.org

Please visit our web site: www.istokpoga.org

**Friends of Istokpoga Lake
Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 205
Lorida, Florida 33857

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