
Friends Of *Istokpoga* Newswire

Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.
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Answers our questions, Lake Levels

Hydrilla Attacked by GFC and DEP

DEP, Highlands County Weed Control, and GFC are expected to complete the Sonar treatment for hydrilla the middle of April. Reports are that 92,000 pounds of Sonar were dropped by helicopter into Lake Istokpoga over a five to six week period beginning in March. This sounds like a lot of Chemicals to be dumping in the lake, but when you do the math it is only about three pounds per acre.

According to Carl Smith, Highlands County Aquatic Weed Control, the Sonar was spread into 46 fifty acre plots, primarily located on the east side of the lake, between Arbuckle Creek and Windy Point.

The original plans called for it to occur over four weeks, but equipment problems accounted for the delay.

Early reports are that the Sonar is already killing off the hydrilla. It may take a month or two to assess the actual effect of the Sonar on the hydrilla. We should have a good feeling for the effectiveness by our next issue.

DEP ANSWERS QUESTIONS??

In answer to several questions submitted to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding work that might be done during the proposed Lake Istokpoga drawdown, we received a four page response from Mr. John Fellows,

Environmental Specialist, Punta Gorda, Florida.

1) Will home owners be able to remove vegetation and muck from their private canals?

A) The appropriate agency (see 5) would have to review any proposed dredging on a case-by-case basis. This activity may or may not require a permit.

2) Will home owners be able to remove vegetation and muck from State or County owned canals?

A) For regulatory review, there is no distinction between "Private" and "State or County" owned canals.

3) In general, will anyone be able to get a permit to deepen their canals?

A) Any application for activities such as dredging which meet the necessary regulatory and proprietary authorization should be able to be approved.

4) Will fish camp owners get permits to deepen canals?

A) See 3A, if they meet the criteria, they should be able to get authorization.

5) Who issues these permits?

A) Normally, SFWMD handles private, non-single family navigation dredging projects. However, because the activities being discussed here are somewhat tied to the lake restoration project, and DEP will be handling the permit request for the work, it may be more appropriate for the Department to handle these projects as well. This is a topic that will require further discussion between DEP and SFWMD.

6) What is the typical cost of these permits, or how is the cost derived?

A) A typical application fee for the regulatory, environmental resource permit is \$500 for projects with less than one acre of work in wetlands or other surface waters (a higher fee is needed for larger areas). Other costs can arise during the permitting process, such as preparing project drawings, surveying depths, and other similar things. An easement application fee is \$200, which can also have similar additional fees.

7) Will we be able to work under the GFC permits?

A) DEP would like to first make it clear that this entire project is currently under discussion, and that GFC has not received any permits yet. The hypothetical permits being discussed, as we [DEP] understand it, are for restoration of natural, littoral area of the lake by removing tussocks and other material, not for channel dredging. Therefore it does not appear that private parties would be able to dredge channels under GFC permits.

8) Why couldn't the GFC permit be expanded to include the canals, so home owners could (possibly) work under this one permit?

A) This is an issue for the GFC, however some of the points which may affect any decision by the GFC on this issue are:

a) the need for other parties working under the permit to become co-permittees,

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b) the associated proprietary authorizations for channels' dredging, and

c) the legal issue of whether the GFC could spend "public" funds on the "private" dredging permit.

March 4th General Meeting

Our general membership meeting was held in Lorida at the Community Center. The turnout wasn't as high as our previous meeting, but was still pretty good with 72 in attendance. The election of directors was held as planned, with Bill Dwinell, Jim Berry, Debbie Galloway, Don Linton and Jim Wilkins returning for their second terms, and Dub Cummins and Chris Monroe joining as new Directors.

Following the election of directors, the membership adopted a set of Association By-laws. Kudos to Bruce Miller for the excellent job he did in drafting the association by-laws. Anyone desiring a copy of the Friends Of Istokpoga By-laws, may write to Friends Of Istokpoga and a copy will be mailed to you.

Bill Dwinell then brought everyone up -to-date on the drawdown plans, noting that the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee's recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners had been approved, in concept. Edgar Stokes, County Commissioner, said "We approve of the concept, but we want to know more before completely approving the plan. We want them [GFC] to come back to us when they have more answers."

Don Linton talked further about the draw down. He expressed concern that the current GFC plan does not address the muck problem at the south end of the lake. He stated "If they are going to draw

down the lake, then they should fix all of it while it is down."

Jim Berry talked about his desire that all the agencies involved with managing Lake Istokpoga should look for alternative solutions to the drawdown. He said he didn't want to see such drastic action. "After all", he stated, "if it took 40 years to get this way, why do we have to fix it all at once."

After these speakers the floor was opened to questions before adjourning the meeting.

Following the general meeting, the newly elected Board Of Directors met and elected officers for 1999. Bill Dwinell and Jim Berry were reelected to President and Vice-president, respectively, and Debbie Galloway was elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

To Our Directors: Past and Present

As President of the Association, I want to welcome back the returning Directors, and also welcome our two new Directors, William "Dub" Cummins and Chris Monroe into office. With this Board of Directors, I know we will make a lot of progress toward our association goals.

But, I do not want to forget the other Directors we had during the past year. I want to Personally thank George Cook, Jack Newkirk, Walter Monroe and Debbie Tetor for all they did to help us. It was the entire team of Directors and many individual members that got us to where we are today.

And it is our new Directors and many of our members that will help us move this organization ahead.

Bill Dwinell

PS: I want to point out that all of the directors are volunteers and are not compensated for any of the work they do.

Membership Renewal Time

In Our last issue of the Newswire we asked everyone to renew their membership that had not already done so. We still have a lot of members who have not renewed. I want to thank each of you that did renew because it saved us doing a special mailing to you.

We are now mailing special letters to all of the members that have not renewed. I encourage each of you to talk to your neighbors and ask them to renew now. Our strength is in our membership. The more members we have the stronger we will be.

Message From The Membership Committee

Our membership now sits at 476, assuming everyone renews their membership. Our goal last year was 500. While we didn't attain our goal last year, we should attain it in the next few months, especially if YOU will sign up a neighbor. Each of you still have neighbors who are not members. We could easily top 600 if only 1/3 of you were to sign one up.

So, ask your neighbors to renew, or join. WE NEED YOUR HELP!

THE COOKBOOKS ARE IN!!

In case you weren't at the last General meeting, or at the Lorida Round Up, I want you to be sure and get one of the new cookbooks, "*Special Recipes From The Friends Of Istokpoga*"

This is a great cookbook, and we want to thank everyone that helped put it together, contributed recipes,

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or have been out there helping us sell them.

Our original order was for 200 of the cookbooks, and we are selling them at a breakneck speed. In fact, we are already talking about reordering them. We only have about 60 left, so if you want one, contact any of the association Directors.

Don't forget, we are selling this cookbook as a fund raiser, so we don't have to raise our membership dues.

The cost is only \$7.00. If ordering by mail, please include an additional \$3.00 for shipping and handling.

New Committee Assignments

With Debbie Galloway being elected to Secretary/ Treasurer by the Board of Directors, Debbie has stepped down as chairperson of the Fund Raising Committee. Chris Monroe, one of our newly elected Directors has volunteered to chair this important committee.

Debbie has also asked for help with the Membership Committee. Dub Cummins, our other new Director, has agreed to CO-chair this committee.

If you would be willing to help the association by participating on one of our committees, please call any of the officers or directors for more information.

Summer Operations

This summer will be a little unusual for the Friends Of Istokpoga. The majority of the Directors will be vacationing during June, and July. Our By-laws require a quorum of five to conduct business meetings. Since we will not have the minimum number of Directors to hold Board of Directors meetings, we are rescheduling the

June meeting to late May, canceling the July Meeting and delaying the August meeting.

Additionally, we will not be holding a general membership meeting during the summer.

Contacting Friends Of Istokpoga

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Directors:

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Next General Meeting - December 2, 1999

As noted in the Summer Operations column, we are making some unusual changes to accommodate the heavy vacations schedule of some of our Directors.

Since we don't normally have very high attendance at our general membership meetings in the summer months when many of our members are at their summer residences, the board of directors decided to hold our next general meeting after most of our members have returned. We also didn't want to interfere with anyone's Thanksgiving plans, so we are scheduling the next general meeting for Thursday, December 2, 1999.

We have not decided on the specific program for this meeting yet. We will provide more details in a future issue of this newsletter.

Be sure to mark your calendars.

Dropping Lake Levels

According to Clell Ford, Highlands County Lakes Manager, Re the levels of the lake - the lake was drawn down to 38 ½ feet MSL in mid March to accommodate the hydrilla spraying. Drawing the lake down to 38 ½ feet allows water management to hold water in the lake for the Sonar to work while achieving a desirable level for flood control in June - Essentially, the 38 ½ foot level is the mid-June level. That said, the lake is at least ½ foot lower than that today, likely due to a combination of factors, all related to the drought.

This time of year, all lakes around here loose ½ foot per month solely to evaporation. Water flows into the lake are approximately 10 times below normal for this time of year. I would also imagine, but cannot confirm, that there has been some demand from permitted water users downstream. This is not necessarily what you wanted to read, but it is likely what is going on. Without rain, the lake level will continue to drop, based solely on evaporation. Extremely low flows and increasing demands from permitted withdrawals will continue to put additional pressure on the lake.

You can place your advertisement here and reach over 400 members of the Friends Of Istokpoga for only \$15.00 per issue.

Call 465-6913 for more information