
Friends Of Istokpoga Newswire

Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.

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In This Issue: What has Friends Of Istokpoga been doing?

Happy New Year! Happy New Millennium!

I want to wish each of you a very Happy New Year. As many of us do, we want to start the year off with resolutions to improve ourselves. So this year, the Newswire resolution is to get closer to our members. One of the ways we are doing this is to add a new column to answer Your questions. For details see "Got Questions" column in this issue.

IMPORTANT MEETING!!

We will be holding a very important meeting on January 20, 2000. At this meeting we will have Chris Sweazy, South Florida Water Management District, will present the Kissimmee Basin water supply plan, which will affect Lake Istokpoga for the next 20 years. This plan is the guideline for South Florida Water Management District Board of Governors (BOG). The final plan is scheduled to go to the in March, so this meeting will provide us an opportunity to be heard before the plan is finalized.

I URGE EACH OF YOU TO ATTEND! See the special insert for more information.

What has Friends Of Istokpoga been doing all year? What am I getting for my \$5.00 membership fee?

Each of the topics below cover activities being carried out by the Board Of Directors of Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.

Lake Istokpoga Management Committee

Friends Of Istokpoga has had a seat on the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee since its inception. This committee was put in place by the Highlands County Commissioners in 1998 to insure they were able to gain information and advice regarding matters involving or affecting Lake Istokpoga.

- Recommendation to support draw down plans
- Review and comment on Everglades Restoration project
- Got USACE to commit \$50,000 for review of Lake Istokpoga regulation schedule
- Made a list of Lake Istokpoga concerns for future review
- And the latest accomplishment was to oppose the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FFWC) slot limit proposal as originally written. We didn't oppose the slot as written, but the daily bag limit was a problem. The original proposal allowed a daily bag limit with three fish outside the slot (15" to 24"). This meant three fish over 24" could be taken every day. The Lake Istokpoga Management Committee recommended a change to allow only one fish over 24". It is this time it appears that the FFWC will proceed to their Commissioners with the

changes we recommended and hopefully they will approve and implement the slot limit on July 1, 2000 as originally planned.

Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Planning Advisory Committee

This is a committee put in place by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to build a water supply plan that will provide water through the year 2020, for the Kissimmee Basin, which includes Lake Istokpoga and the Lake Istokpoga drain field, including the Indian Prairie Basin. This committee meets monthly in Kissimmee to look at all aspects of water, including water use, water availability, Water permitting, and expect to have the plan completed by March.

Friends Of Istokpoga's involvement also includes looking out and protecting the interests of Lake Istokpoga. As a result of our involvement and the identifying of issues related to Lake Istokpoga, a subcommittee was formed to address the Lake Istokpoga issues, and to make recommendations to the main committee. These recommendations are due this month.

Kissimmee Project Control Team

This is a committee comprised of senior people of many government agencies and representatives of

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many public organizations. Many issues, such as the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, are discussed and recommendations are carried back to each representatives respective organization. We were accepted on this committee early last year because of a recommendation by Paul Gray, National Audubon Society.

Gulfstream Pipeline Environmental Advisory Committee

Friends Of Istokpoga was selected to represent Lake Istokpoga on this committee to insure no environmental harm comes to our lake. The committee is CO-chaired by Gulfstream and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. One meeting has occurred and several more are planned before final decisions are made regarding the gas pipeline goes through Highlands County. The only concern so far that could effect Lake Istokpoga is where and how they plan to cross under Arbuckle Creek.. Friends Of Istokpoga plans to be there to insure Lake Istokpoga is protected from harm.

Melaleuca Treatment on Lake Istokpoga

Did you know that Friends Of Istokpoga instigated the Melaleuca treatments that were done on Lake Istokpoga? Did you know Melaleuca treatments were done at all?

Well, we have had treatment of all the Melaleuca that we are currently aware of in Lake Istokpoga. How, you may ask, was this done buy Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.? Well, One of your directors took on the task of

fighting City hall, so to speak. Actually it wasn't really a fight at all. Don Linton, your Director, talked with the Highlands County Operations Manager, Vicki Pontius, and informed her of our growing problem with Melaleuca. At that time all of the counties funding for Melaleuca treatment was from Southwest Florida Water Management District, which does not include Lake Istokpoga. Don suggested that the county should contact South Florida Water Management District to see if they would fund treatment for Lake Istokpoga. To make a long story short, Vicki did, SFWMD did, and the county matched their funding and we had our Melaleuca treated.

We still need to keep abreast of the Melaleuca trees in the lake so we can prevent them being a problem on this lake.

One of the problems we face is that there are a number of Melaleuca trees on private property around the lake. County treatment is restricted to trees that fall below the high water line for the lake.

YOU CAN HELP by encouraging your friends and neighbors, that have these trees, to have them removed or killed. YOU CAN ALSO HELP by calling one of the Friends Of Istokpoga directors and informing them of any Melaleuca trees you spot around the lake that is still alive.

Friends Of Istokpoga Recognized By IRS

Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association , Inc., has been recognized as a tax-exempt organization under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an

organization described in section 501 (c) (3) .

What does this all mean? It means your donations are now deductible on your Federal Income taxes. It also means we can apply to the US Post office for Nonprofit mailing rates. And it means we do not have to pay Federal income taxes. It does not mean your membership fees are deductible because you receive the newsletters and other mailings from us.

This is a significant milestone for our organization and we are very proud to meet the requirements of the IRS.

Thanks go to Debbie Galloway for all her help in getting the paperwork completed and to the IRS. THANKS DEBBIE!

Lake Draw Down Plans

Since the Florida Game and Fish Commission (FFWC) first made their proposal for a lake draw down to remove the 2000 acres of tussock, Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. has been involved and worked closely with them.

At first we collected as much information about the proposal as possible, even sending a group of Directors and Members to Kissimmee to talk with people and businesses affected by the Kissimmee draw down. Then we made presentations to the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee suggesting alternates to drawing down the lake. We conducted a mail survey of all our members to insure we knew what you really wanted, and then we announced our support by voting in favor of the proposal.

Since then we have stayed in contact with FFWC to insure we were aware of the progress toward the draw down.

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At present the draw down is still planned, as it was amended by the County Commissioners because of the recommendation by the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee .

Currently, FFWC believes the draw down will be 2002-2003 with little, if any, chance of it happening sooner. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers still has to evaluate the project. This won't happen until mid year. Funding is still not completed and an Environmental Impact Analysis still has to be completed. Answers to several other questions are still required, one of which requires a hydrological study of the area to determine if the draw down will effect other area lake levels.

Kept Our Members Informed

One of our primary purposes is to keep our members informed . We have chosen the Newswire as our tool to accomplish this. We publish every other month, with the exception of the summer months, when your all volunteer officers and Directors take their vacations.

To date we have not received a single complaint about the newsletter or the frequency of delivery, so we have assumed that it is satisfactory to our membership.

With this said, we are not convinced that it couldn't be improved. We would like to add member letters to future newsletters. To do this, we need to receive your questions. Please send them to our PO Box . We will answer everyone to the best of our ability and publish as many as we can.

Help for Individual's Problems

In addition to all of the lake wide work we have done, we try to help individuals as best we can, but our help on specific issues like this is limited to pointing them to the right officials or agencies.

We encounter several of this type of problem this past year, many of which were ultimately solved.

We regret that we cannot solve every single problem, but our mission is to work on issues that might effect the entire lake.

If you have a problem, feel free to give us a call or write us a letter and we will try to get you in touch with someone that can help you.

So have you gotten you \$5.00 worth?

I hope the answer is "YES", but then, it isn't often, that you can please everyone. If you think you didn't get your moneys worth, then write a letter to the Newswire Editor and speak your mind. We will try to print them in future editions of the Newswire.

Even if you feel you got your moneys worth, but think we could do more, write to us and let us know.

Now for the punch line:
This work was all done by your Board of Directors.

And if you care about our lake and want to help protect it, WE NEED YOU! CALL BILL DWINELL NOW!!

Now that we informed you what we have been doing, we need to remind you that it is time to renew your membership for 2000.

To continue our work to protect Lake Istokpoga we need your support. We need you to renew your membership. A 2000 Renewal form will be mailed to you later this month.

Please take the time to complete the renewal form and put it in the mail, along with your remittance, as soon as possible. Each reminder notice we have to send is an extra expense we incur that would be better spent on more important things.

Also, please note that you may now deduct any donations you make above your membership dues. Donations in 1999 have help our membership dues to remain at only \$5.00 per member.

If you have neighbors that are not currently members, you can really help by convincing them to join. If you need any New Member Applications, call Debbie Galloway or Bill Dwinell and we will mail you as many as you need.

We are also interested in increasing the number of Associate members. If you frequent a local business and think they should be supportive of Friends Of Istokpoga ask them to be an associate member.

December General Meeting

We had a pretty good meeting at the Lorida Civic Center on Saturday, December 11, 1999. You may wonder why we held our meeting on Saturday and if we plan to hold future ones on Saturday. Well, we held the meeting on Saturday because we have received some requests to have one sometime that wouldn't require driving after dark. We probably will not be able to do this very often because of the difficulty we encountered getting

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representatives from the organizations we needed to answer some of our questions, but we will see.

We had forty members and nine guest attend the meeting and all-in-all it was a pretty good meeting with all the questions raised being answered.

Additionally we gave away a number of door prizes to some lucky attendees. We want to thank our Associate Members who donated items for our meeting; Lorida Feed and Hardware - Work Gloves, The Boat Coral - three containers of Two Cycle Outboard Motor oil, and Advanced Insurance - two \$25 Gift Cards to J.C. Penney's.

Additionally, Friends Of Istokpoga Vice-president, Jim Berry, donated an Airboat ride for two. We also gave away one of our wonderful cookbooks and two \$50 gift certificates to any store in Lakeshore Mall.

Our lucky Winners were Ellen Jablonski, an Friends Of Istokpoga Cookbook, Charles Cummins, work gloves, Terry Scrogham the air boat ride; Myrl Ruggles, Howard Kuhn and Dave Boyer the Outboard Motor Oil; Norman Harsh and Delmar Hasting the \$25 J.C. Penney's gift certificates; Roberta Peterson and Jean Brelsford the \$50 Lakeshore Mall gift certificates.

Congratulations to all our winners and a BIG Thanks to our Associate members that donated the prizes.

Got Questions?

We would love to answer any questions you have regarding Lake Istokpoga . We plan to add a column in this newsletter to answer your questions.

Simply write your question down and mail it to:

**Friends Of Istokpoga
Newswire
Box 155
Lorida, Florida 33857**

We will try to publish all of them, but space is limited, so if we get a lot of them we will publish the ones we feel offer the greatest interest to our other members. Regardless, we will try to answer all of the questions .

Contacting Friends Of Istokpoga

President:

Bill Dwinell 465-6913

Vice-president:

Jim Berry 655-5573

Secretary/Treasurer:

Debbie Galloway 655-3439

Directors:

William "Dub" Cummins 655-3344

Don Linton 465-6882

Chris Monroe 699-2645

Jim Wilkins 655-1127

Send mail to: PO Box 155, Lorida, FL 33857-0155

***We hope we see
you at our meeting
on January 20th at
the Lorida Civic
Center in Lorida.***