

Friends Of Istokpoga

NewsWire

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Phosphorus Problem in Lake Istokpoga?

By Bill Dwinell

While it may be too early to raise the alarm flag, it isn't too early to raise the caution flag. At the September meeting of the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee (LIMC) Dr. Jennifer Brunty, Natural Resource Specialist, Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District, reported that recent tests of the water in Lake Istokpoga indicated that high levels of phosphorus (300 parts per billion (ppb)) were entering the lake from Arbuckle Creek. Further tests at S-68 indicated that 40 ppb of phosphorus (P) was measured leaving the lake. It doesn't take a scientist to figure out that this means 260 ppb of P is staying in the lake. Please refer to Istokpoga NewsWire article "Can Lake Istokpoga end up like Lake Okeechobee" in the March 2001 edition (also available on our web site) for more information on what this could mean.

Now is not the time to get upset, but it is time to start looking for the reasons for the high amount of phosphorus entering our lake. According to Dr. Paul Parks, Florida Wildlife Federation, "In my view, 300 ppb phosphorus coming into Lake Istokpoga is very serious. If inflows continue at this level, it is only a matter of time until there is a much more serious eutrophication problem in this lake."

What is already being done?

According to Clell Ford, Highlands County Lakes Manager, the county is looking into the problem on several fronts:

- Monthly lake wide monitoring of nutrients (total phosphorus, total nitrogen, chlorophyll, turbidity, color). This monitoring was initiated in order to document the effects of the drawdown and

tussock removal on water quality in Lake Istokpoga and downstream.

- Daily flow condition monitoring at the S-68 structure. This has been combined with the monitoring data for phosphorus to produce a preliminary phosphorus budget for Lake Istokpoga.
- Florida LAKEWATCH has agreed to analyze samples collected from Arbuckle Creek for nutrients. We will begin next week [September 17 - 21] sampling from 3 locations upstream from Istokpoga. This will be done on a monthly basis.
- Larry Sharpe, District Conservationist with the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District,

recommends that an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) priority area be created in the Arbuckle Creek Valley to address possible agricultural nutrient sources in the area. This will allow any agricultural operations in the area of concern

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to receive assistance from the NRCS in terms of nutrient management, best management plans and financial assistance in order to significantly reduce nutrient levels in non-point source drainage to Arbuckle Creek EQIP priority areas are established on a fiscal year basis - the earliest that such an area can be established for Arbuckle Creek is fiscal year 2003, beginning in October 2002. County Natural Resources Department staff, working with other County departments, has already begun collecting supporting information for this EQIP priority area.

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- Other sources for nutrients in the drainage, including any process waste out falls, storm water runoff and other activities will be actively pursued.

Clell Ford also stated "We must, are and will continue to address the serious issues surrounding water quality in Lake Istokpoga. Yes, more phosphorus is entering Istokpoga than is leaving it, the balance evidently being sequestered in growing plants, plant islands and decaying muck. Evidently, investigations into nutrient sources in the past have not resulted in a positive impact to Istokpoga. Such a result in the future will be unacceptable. Long term, sustainable solutions that provide incentives for cooperation, as opposed to quick solutions that assess blame, are the only realistic hope for reducing nutrient loading in order to improve, protect and preserve Florida's 5th largest lake.

We can also thank the lake restoration for helping us with our phosphorus problem. According to Beacham Furse, FWC and Project Manager for the restoration work, there is an estimated 187 tons per tussock-acre, of which 0.1687 % is P, or approximately 0.3154 tons P per tussock-acre. With an estimated 1308 acres of shoreline that amounts to 412.6 tons of P removed from the lake. While some small amount of this may leach back into the lake from the in-lake islands that were created, Dr. Jennifer Brunty stated "We can't really know a leaching rate without doing a whole study next to some islands, but I think that since the interior of the island will be under anaerobic conditions only the top 6 inches or so will be leaching nutrients to the water. Organic matter decomposes poorly under anaerobic conditions - which is why they find these 500 year old canoes under muck and semi-decomposed organic matter."

Where do we go from here?

The amount of phosphorus entering the lake is high enough to be a serious problem. While 300 ppb is high, it is not so high that we can't fix it, and it will not destroy the lake in the immediate future. If we were to take no action, in the years to come our beautiful lake would gradually die.

It will take time to pinpoint the source of the phosphorus. Likely candidates are dairy farms or other agriculture interests along Arbuckle Creek. Water treatment sites are also places to check. This will likely take several months of data.

According to John Morgan "*the District has funds budgeted for FY02 [full year 2002] to conduct an assessment of Lake Istokpoga sources and sinks for phosphorus. The details of this project have not been fully defined as yet, so we have an opportunity to develop the scope to meet multiple needs.*"

We will continue to work closely with the county and SFWMD to isolate the source of this problem and then take action to eliminate the phosphorus pollution..

Friends of Istokpoga Receive Award

At the Florida Wildlife Federation's 64th Annual Conservation banquet held in Indian Rocks Beach on September 8, Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. was honored as Conservation Organization of the Year for 2001. President Bill Dwinell, and Vice-president Chris Monroe attended to accept the award.

The Federation's annual selection of conservationists is the oldest, and most prestigious conservation awards program in the state. Award winners are selected from nominations made to the Federation's board of directors and are chosen for their dedicated efforts on behalf of Florida's

fish and wildlife and native habitats.

In presenting the award, Manley Fuller, President of Florida Wildlife Federation said "*For the successful conservation and public education efforts to save their beloved lake, the Florida Wildlife Federation is proud to*

name Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. as the Conservation Organization of the Year for 2001."

We are very happy to have been selected to receive this prestigious award.

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 8, 2001, at 7:00 PM.** Our guest speaker will be **Jeff Schardt, DEP.** He will discuss the results of the recent hydrilla treatment, as well as the DEP plans for Lake Istokpoga in 2002.

Be sure to attend our next meeting!

The topics will be hydrilla

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We will also have **Beacham Furse, FWC** and Project Manager for the Lake Restoration Project, talk about the restoration work that was done on the lake and show some slides of the work that was done.

Refreshments will be served prior to the meeting, beginning at 6:45 PM. We hope you will come to this meeting.

Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule

by Bill Dwinell

Many of you may not be aware that Lake Istokpoga's water level is regulated by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and managed by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). I say that because I get phone calls just about every time SFWMD opens the gates at S-68 to release water. While there have been a couple of times when they shouldn't have been releasing it, the majority of the time they are simply following the schedule set by the USACE regulation schedule which is in place for flood control reasons. This schedule was implemented in 1962-3 and was modified in 1991 and has been in effect since then.

I am writing this article to try and explain a little bit about the schedule and what it means. The graph of the regulation schedule I show here is representative of the actual schedule used to manage the lake, but is a simplified version only showing the levels at the first of each month. The actual schedule is only slightly different, and for the purpose of explanation is insignificant.

To begin with, the top line is the maximum depth the lake is allowed to reach at a specific point in time. You will notice that the lake is allowed to reach its **maximum** depth of 39.5 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) only mid-October through April 1. Following the top line from April to June you will notice that the maximum the lake level can be is 38.25 ft. NGVD and in August and September it is allowed to rise slowly until it reaches the 39.5 ft. level in mid-October. The area above the top line is known as Zone A and is managed at this level to prevent flooding.

Now take a look at the center line. This line represents the **minimum** level the lake can be lowered to under **normal conditions**. The water between the top line and the second line (Zone B) is under control of SFWMD and is used as water supply for the Istokpoga/Indian Prairie Basin.

The bottom line is the **minimum** level that water can be withdrawn from the lake by SFWMD under **drought conditions**. They can release the water for water supply purposes between the middle line and the bottom line only when we are in a drought. Once they reach the 37.25 ft. (Zone C) level they are no longer allowed to release water under any conditions without the express approval of

USACE. Once the water level rises above the minimum level they can again release water.

There are two exceptions to this when you might see releases. First is when SFWMD does periodic maintenance on the S-68 structure. They are required to insure the gates in the structure are in working condition monthly. This requires that they open all three of the gates for a short period of time.

Knowing this, it is possible that you may see water releases that are not within the regulation schedule. The second exception is an emergency release for agriculture freeze protection.

You can see a graph of the actual levels superimposed over the regulation schedule on the Internet by going to <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/plots/isthp.gif>. Note that this version also shows the deviation from the normal schedule approved for the recent lake restoration.

Our New Logo

Did you notice our new logo on the cover sheet of this newsletter, or on our web site. If, not take a look now. It is a bass on top of a silhouette of Lake Istokpoga. Great! isn't it! We have Chris Monroe, our Vice-president, to thank for creating it. He not only created the version used on the newsletter, but also several other versions for various uses. For example, the one on our web site is in color. **Thanks Chris!**

Secretary/Treasurer Resigns

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Sadly, we must inform you that Debbie Galloway, our Secretary/Treasure for the past two years, and a Director since the formation of Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. in 1998, has resigned for personal reasons. She will be highly missed as she has been a real asset to our association helping in too many ways to list. We owe Debbie a great big "Thank You" for her dedication and commitment to our association and our lake.

Chris Monroe, Vice-president, is acting Secretary/Treasurer.

Dues increased to cover operational costs

At our October 1, 2001 Board of Directors meeting we look at our operating expenses and based on increased costs we determined that we need to raise our dues. Our goal is to continue to keep our dues as low as possible. We hope these minor increases will not seriously impact anyone.

Our basic Individual Membership is raised to \$7.00 per person. But with this increase we are also offering a new Family Membership for \$12.00. **A family is defined as a couple or single parent and their children under age 18 on January 1 of the membership year, living at home.** Please note that children under the age of 18 who are members under the Family Membership do not have any voting rights.

The Family Membership will be a savings for many of you. We also hope that those of you, that have been individual members in the past, will take advantage of the new Family Membership for your other family members. *Please don't forget that our membership numbers are important when we deal with problems we face affecting our lake.*

Our Associate Membership is raised to \$25.00.

We believe these new rates, while quite modest, will carry us for several years.

Director Resigns

Jim Berry has resigned as a Director of our association, effective October 1, 2001. Jim has been a director since our formation in 1998. He also served as Vice-president 1998 - 1999. Jim has also chaired the Weed Control Committee throughout this period. Thanks Jim, for your dedication and service.

Directors Needed!!

From the President

Please remember, Lake Istokpoga cannot take care of itself. It needs you!

With two openings for Director, we could sure use some people that are willing to "put their money where their mouth is", so to speak. If you read the feature article on the front page, you can probably

figure out that it is going to take a lot of work to stop the phosphorus from ruining our beautiful lake. Right now there are only five of us doing most, if not all, of the work; The current Directors are Bill Dwinell, Dub Cummins, Don Linton, Chris Monroe and Jim Wilkins. Other than the five of us, there are no others on any committees. While we do get a few friends and spouses help at our meetings, that is all there is. With almost 500 members, that means that all the work is being done by 1% of the members. That means that 99% of our members do not care enough about the lake to help protect it. Seriously, we could use more help.

Many of you signed your membership applications saying you would help the association. Well, I am asking for you to help now!

I need two directors, and several other committee positions filled. Directors help manage the association, and chair one or more of our committees if we can't find other volunteers.

I also need someone who is on the lake a lot to take over the Weed Control Committee. This person would report to the board of directors with monthly reports about weed conditions that need attention, and to work with the Highlands County Aquatic Weed Control people.

We also need help on our membership committee. There are still a lot of people around the lake that are not members. If we had help we could probably increase our membership significantly. **NO EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY!**

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If you are willing to help me and Lake Istokpoga, please give me a call so we can discuss how you might help. Call me at 863-465-6913 or call our voice mail at 941-490-0140 and leave a message.

Please remember, Lake Istokpoga cannot take care of itself. It needs you! I need you!

Missing Some of our issues

If you are a "snowbird", and not receiving all of our newsletters, it could be because the U. S. Post Office will not forward our newsletters. Many of you are aware of this and have set up your mail to go to Florida address during the winter and to your "other" address during the summer. The way this works is that we will send our newsletters and other mail to your Florida address October through April, and to your other address May through September.

If you need this service and are not currently taking advantage of it, all you need do is fill out both addresses when you renew your membership for 2002 and select other.

We will be sending out renewal notices in November to those that are not already paid up for 2002. Your 2001 membership expires on December 31.

If you have missed any of our back issues and would like a copy, you can get them, while supplies last, by sending \$1.00 and specifying exactly which issues you need.

Aerial Herbicide Treatment of Lake Istokpoga Littoral (Marsh) Areas To Begin October 8th

By Beacham Furse

DATES OF TREATMENT: OCTOBER 8 - OCTOBER 12

Areas cleared during the lake Restoration will receive aerial herbicide treatment of dense cattail, pickerelweed, water primrose, and spatterdock are proposed. Areas of dense pickerelweed and water primrose inside the marshes will be treated to prevent monoculture stands and open up areas to wind and wave action. Dense cattail and spatterdock along the outer edge of the marshes will be treated intermittently to open pathways into the marsh for wind and wave action.

Herbicides to be used are glyphosate (EAGRE) at 120 ounces/acre and 2,4-D Liquid (AMINE 4) at 32 ounces/acre.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Division of Freshwater Fisheries has selected a total of 1,280 acres of dense vegetation for herbicide treatment as part of the Lake Istokpoga Fish Management Area (FMA) aquatic habitat enhancement program. Depending on weather conditions, spraying is scheduled to begin on October 8 (Monday), continuing through October 12 (Friday). Maps showing treatment areas will be posted at Istokpoga's public boat ramps and at local fish camps.

Editors Note: This article was received just prior to the treatment and is written as a future event. I am publishing it for information purposes even though the treatment will have been completed before the mailing of this newsletter. It was published on our Web Site on October 6, 2001

Our Associate Members

Our Associate Members are listed on the address page of all of our newsletters. The businesses have given us an annual membership fee to help support the association. Their dues and donations help us keep our regular membership dues down.

We want each of you to consider them first when doing business in their individual specialties. When you do use their services we ask that you let them know that you appreciate their support of Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.

Without the support of these businesses we will undoubtedly have to raise our dues again in the future. If you know business that profit from Lake Istokpoga that are not Associate Members, please suggest to them that their support will not only benefit Lake Istokpoga but will also benefit their business.

Contacting Friends of Istokpoga

You can reach Friends of Istokpoga by calling 941-490-0140, sending e-mail to friendsofistokpoga@hotmail.com, sending e-mail to friends@istokpoga.org, or visiting our web site at www.istokpoga.org