

Friends Of Istokpoga

NewsWire

Friends Of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc.
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2002 Directors and Officers

Our last general meeting was held on Thursday, February 21, 2002, at 7:00 PM. This was our Annual Corporate meeting for the election of Directors, where all of our Directors were unanimously reelected, by the members present, to serve for 2002. These Directors are William Cummins, Bill Dwinell, Don Linton, Chris Monroe, Jeanne Porter, Tom Watson, and Jim Wilkins.

At our March 4, 2002 Board of Directors meeting, we held the election of Officers. Bill Dwinell was reelected as President, Chris Monroe was reelected Vice-president, Jeanne Porter was elected as Secretary, and Chris Monroe was elected as Treasurer.

Please see our other article in this newsletter about the resignation of one of our directors.

February Annual Meeting

In addition to our election, we had a very good program at our annual meeting. Jennifer Brunty, Ph.D., Natural Resources Specialist, Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District, provided a slide presentation with up-to-date information about the phosphorus (P) situation in Arbuckle Creek and Lake Istokpoga. Her presentation was very informative and well received by the members and visitors that were present. **Jennifer's conclusions were:**

- Phosphorus levels are higher at the north end of the lake
- Lake Istokpoga is removing nutrients from water as it passes from north to south
- Water Clarity declines and nutrient levels increase following hydrilla treatments
- Removal of tussock may impact the ability of the lake to remove phosphorus
- The effect of phosphorus in the sediment is unknown but soon to be studied.
- Identifying upstream sources of phosphorus inputs to the lake are the focus of future investigations

A summary of the future work is:

- SFWMD must focus on Lake Istokpoga now as part of the Okeechobee TMDL process
- Two funded projects in progress (Complete by next year):

- Evaluate P sources in Istokpoga watershed
- Evaluate P in Istokpoga sediment
- Dry season sampling of Arbuckle Creek
- Wet season sampling of Arbuckle Creek watershed
- Reevaluate land use in Arbuckle Creek watershed
- Continue monthly Lakewatch sampling on Arbuckle Creek
- Continue bimonthly Intensive sampling in Lake Istokpoga
- Continue sampling S-68 out fall water as appropriate

After the presentation she answered questions from the audience.

Also present and answering questions was Paul Ritter from SFWMD. He also updated us on some P plans that the district was working on.

We also received an update on Istokpoga Park and the proposed park at Windy Point from Vicki Pontius, Highlands County Director of Parks and Recreation.

The final speaker was Larry Davis, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Larry provided us an overview of the work being done with the harvesters on Lake Istokpoga.

One other highlight of the meeting was the work done by our one-woman Refreshment Committee. Carole Shumard provide us with refreshments that set a new bar for future meetings. The cookies, coffee, and soft drinks were the best we have ever had. Cookie chomping was seen throughout the meeting, accompanied by many smiles. Be sure to come to our next meeting to see her in action for yourself.

FFWCC Update on Harvester

In a note from Beacham Furse, FFWCC Biologist, he reported the following about the harvester work that is being done on Lake Istokpoga:

We [FFWCC] started work with the harvester on November 9, 2001 and plan to work through March 2002. We are currently using two 70' harvesters (Model #K-800 and #K-801) in Henderson's Cove.

We have budgeted \$300,000 for this fiscal year (ending June 30, 2002).

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Areas worked this year are those areas along the enhanced shoreline which could not be worked during the drawdown of spring 2001 (area was too wet, substrate was too soft to support heavy equipment, etc.). We prioritized those areas which already had in-lake consolidation islands or upland storage sites immediately adjacent to the work area, highest (We didn't want to construct new islands if we could help it). We started on the east side of the lake working a tussock area immediately north of Istokpoga Canal and deposited the material on the island constructed during the drawdown. We worked north, removing several small (<1 acre) tussocks along the east shoreline, depositing the material on islands constructed offshore of Istokpoga Shores (Tussocks which remain along the shoreline are in water too shallow to effectively work). In December, the harvester worked between Arbuckle Creek and Istokpoga Park and in front of Arbuckle Creek. In January, the harvester worked east of Spring Lake and in Lykes' Cove after duck hunting season was over. All material was placed on islands constructed during the drawdown.

As stated above, two harvesters are presently working in Henderson's Cove (The second machine arrived in late January). Material is being deposited on the island west of Henderson's Fish Camp on the end of the island farthest from the fish camp and on the shallow point extending from the north side of Henderson's Cove. We plan to use Mack Construction (the same contractor that worked in the Cove during the drawdown) to remove the material deposited on the north side and place it at one of the upland storage site already established north of the Cove. If we finish work in Henderson's Cove before we run out of funding, we will begin work in front of the north point of the Royce property along the west shoreline (an area we could not finish during the drawdown); however, we would need to construct in-lake consolidation islands during this work.

The goal of the Lake Istokpoga Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Project, of which the harvester program is a part, is enhancement and management of Istokpoga's aquatic habitat for the long-term benefit of fish and wildlife and the people who utilize those resources. The two primary objectives of the harvester program is mechanical removal or consolidation of tussocks, invasive aquatic plants, and associated organic material and management of future tussock formation through control of invasive aquatic plants with aquatic harvesters (and herbicides).

Method of disposal is upland storage, where practicable, and in-lake consolidation as islands.

We finished work on Istokpoga Tuesday (April 9). We finished along the shoreline on March 22 and spent the two weeks opening up the pass west of Big Island. Total funding expended for harvesting was \$410,000 (\$310,000 of FWC money and \$100,000 of DEP money).

Our Next General Meeting

Our next General Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 16, 2002 at the Lorida Community Center, Lorida Florida. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM and will be over about 8:30 PM.

Don't miss our May Meeting!

Our guest speaker will be John Morgan, SFWMD, who will discuss several projects planned for Lake Istokpoga

Our guest speaker will be John Morgan, Okeechobee Service Center Director for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). He will speak about the work they are doing on Lake Istokpoga, including the work

planned for C-41A and the S-68 structure, the work planned for the construction of S-67, the structure to be built on Istokpoga Canal, the Arbuckle Creek and Josephine Creek phosphorus sampling projects, and the work being done to revise the Lake Istokpoga Regulation Schedule. Be sure to make plans to attend this important meeting and bring your friends and neighbors.

Remember, come early and get some of those great refreshments that Carole Shumard is sure to provide. We start serving the refreshments about 6:45 PM.

Membership Status

Our membership is down a little. We think that with the drawdown and subsequent cleanup of Lake Istokpoga, a lot of the people enjoying the lake have decided it is doing great and they don't need to be concerned any longer. We believe these folks need to be awakened to the fact that our lake will only remain clean and beautiful if concerned citizens remain active in protecting it. Remember the Phosphorus problem?

We assume each of you receiving this newsletter are concerned about Lake Istokpoga and we thank you for your support. We ask you to talk with your neighbors and encourage them to join us in our quest to protect Lake Istokpoga, by joining our association. Give them your old newsletters when you are done with them, or at least show some of the newsletters to them, if you want to keep yours. If you need membership applications call 863-219-0082 and leave a message and we will get applications to you.

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Remember: Numbers count!

Silver Harbor Ranch Purchase

The state has completed the purchase of 2347 acres of the Silver Harbor Ranch located on the northwest part of the lake. We believe the state paid \$6.5 million for this property and closed on it in January 2002..

Kevin Main, Biological Scientist III, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area, will be managing the property. His responsibilities include managing the property (burns, exotic species removal, etc.) and preparing for and running any hunts on the property.

Wildlife seen on the property include fox squirrels, scrub jays, gopher tortoises, alligators, bald eagles, wild turkeys, dove, quail, feral hogs, bear and a small number of deer. But no surveys as yet to determine wildlife populations.

Another feature of the property is the endangered and protected plants that are growing. They include: Wedge-leaf button snake root (the largest population), Scrub blazing star, Highlands scrub St. John's-wort, Hairy jointweed, Small's jointweed, and Papery whitlow-wort. There are probably others, but we have not done a complete survey of the site.

According to Kevin, "We will continue prescribed burning in much the same way that the Royce's have managed fire on the property for the last 70 years. I hope to start burning within the next couple months out there. The groves will be put out for care taking initially, we will at least have one dove field and probably a limited quota turkey hunt. We eventually will try to restore some of the pastures and groves to a more native state, but that will go slowly. We will also check into restoring some of the hydrology of the area by filling some of the ditches. That will also be a slow and closely watched process. Some of those ditches were installed prior to 1940! I would like to create a couple hiking trails on the site, maybe using some of the old roads".

The public can access the property anyplace they can climb a fence or gate. We will eventually install a couple walk-thrus along Virginia Avenue. There may be some limited vehicle access back to the office eventually, but that has yet to be decided. Kevin would love to hear from people with suggestions on places to install walk-thrus. You can reach Kevin with your suggestions at 863-699-3730 or maink@fwc.state.fl.us .

Director Resigns

It may be unusual to announce the election of our new Board of Directors and the resignation of one of those Directors in the same newsletter, but that is what we are doing.

William "Dub" Cummins has resigned as one of our directors for personal reasons.

We what to thank Dub for his help over the past few years and wish him the best in his future endeavors. He assured us that he will remain a member of our association and that you can see him at our meetings.

Glades Electric Coop Annual Meeting

Did you see Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. at the Glades Electric Coop Annual Meeting? We were there to sell our cookbooks and sign up any one that wanted to become a member. It was a very successful meeting for us. We sold 20 cookbooks, got seven individual members and four family memberships.

By the way, we had a drawing and gave away a crisp new \$100 bill. Anyone stopping by our table received a free ticket. Those joining as Individual members or purchasing a cookbook received an additional five tickets. Those joining us with a Family Membership received an additional ten tickets for the drawing.

With our good sales, we are almost out of cookbooks. We only have a few left, so if you have waited to see how well they sell, the waiting is over. If you still want one, you better call us now or you will miss out. We are not going to get any more printed.

Lake Levels Dropping

If you are still in town, you have probably noticed the water level in Lake Istokpoga is dropping. If so, you are right. Lake Istokpoga's water level is regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The current regulation schedule requires South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to begin lowering the water level about April 1st of each year.

The winter level of the lake is set at 39.5 ft. MSL and the summer level is set at 37.5 feet, but can be as low as 37.0 feet when drought conditions exist. If you want to see what the lake level is or how it compares to the USACE regulation schedule you can check it out on the Internet at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/plots/isthp.gif>. You will notice that SFWMD actually started dropping the water before the first of April. You can ask John Morgan why they did this by attending our next general meeting on May 16. See complete details earlier in this newsletter or on our web site.