

Friends Of Istokpoga

NewsWire

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Phosphorus and DEP

By Bill Dwinell

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's initials are DEP. One joke says DEP stands for "Don't Expect Protection", and we wonder if that might be true. Recent discussions with DEP indicate they may approve a permit request from two local dairies to increase their herd sizes by 800 cows each (one from 800 to 1600 and the other from 1200 to 2000). More on this later...

Some interesting numbers may help explain why this is a problem and a great concern of many. The target phosphorus (P) levels entering Lake Okeechobee is a concentration of 40 parts per billion (ppb). The guidelines for cattle ranch runoff is 180 or 350 ppb depending on the kind of grass they have. The current guidelines for dairy operations are 1200 ppb. These guidelines are set by DEP.

How do you get the water going into Lake Okeechobee to 40 ppb when you allow individual operations to exceed these numbers by so much?

The real rub comes when you find out that about half the dairies are not meeting the objective of 1200 ppb. One of the dairies with a request to increase their herd size are meeting the 1200 ppb, but they do not currently have the 1200 cows they are permitted to have, and there are no data that indicates they will still be able to meet it when they get to 1200 cows, and surely no data to indicate they can do it with 2000 cows. This dairy has gotten about \$1 million of taxpayer assistance to build better nutrient controls which should improve their ability to remove P, but before the new operation has been tested or proven, they

have asked for more cows. More cows means more poop (pollution) containing P.

Many of us believe they should prove the operation will work before they are allowed to increase their herd size. This would allow them to work out the kinks in their system without making the P problem worse and then having to back-off.

Don Linton and I met with Senator J. D. Alexander to discuss our concerns with these plans. He understood our concerns and followed up on our meeting by setting up a conference call between himself, DEP and me. As a result of this call, DEP committed to set up a public meeting to discuss this issue. We will ensure that public notices of this meeting will be made. By the way, I failed to mention that one of the two dairies is in the Lake Istokpoga watershed contributing to the high P levels we are seeing in Lake Istokpoga.

Our Next General Meeting

Our 2003 Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 20 at the Lorida Community Center in Lorida Florida.

This is a very important meeting for us. We will be electing our Directors for 2003 (*See other articles on our directors later in this newsletter*).

And we will be hearing about 'Algae for the Lake User' by Dr. Jennifer Brunty, Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District, our guest speaker. Dr. Brunty will tell us about algae and what we can do to help the algae situation on Lake Istokpoga.

March 2003 marks our 5th year so we will be serving Birthday Cake to celebrate this special occasion. **We hope you will come out and join us for the celebration!**

Friends of Istokpoga Newswire

Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. Director Needed

We are in need of a Director for Friends of Istokpoga Lake Association, Inc. We are sorry to have to announce that Chris Monroe, our current Vice President, and Treasurer will not be running for another term as Director. We want to thank Chris for his help over the past two years. In addition to the two offices he held this year, he has also been a tremendous help with our website since it was established. We will surely miss having Chris on our Board of Directors.

We hope there is another member that cares enough about protecting Lake

Istokpoga that they will volunteer to help the lake by serving on our Board of Directors (BOD).

Let me tell you a little bit about this job. You start at the same pay as the President, and will receive raises whenever the President does. And, this isn't a full-time job! What we need most is your opinion and a few hours a month to attend our meetings. BOD meetings are held on the first Monday of each month except July and August. Sometimes the meetings are moved to accommodate holidays and other board member conflicts.

How do I volunteer, you ask? Call us at 863-219-0082, our voice mail, and let us know you are considering being a director. We will call you back and be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Reprint of July 2001 Fish Hoarding article

This article is being reprinted at the request of one of our members because it still seems to be a big problem. It was originally printed in our July 2001 edition, Newsletter #14.

By Bill Dwinell

Ever heard that some of the people who come to Lake Istokpoga stock up their coolers and haul them back north for many, many fish fries, or to sell them? Do you think this is a rare occurrence? How many pounds of fish, mainly Crappie and Blue Gill, do you think leave Lake Istokpoga each year?

The number of times I hear about this kind of thing, leads me to believe it is a lot bigger number than any of us want to believe. I always hear it third or fourth person, so I never hear exactly who it is that does this, but I am always assured that it is true. My problem is that instead of telling me, they should be telling Lt.

Dale Knapp, or another FFWCC Wildlife

Enforcement Officer. The law allows possession of

two day's bag limit per person, which would be 100 pan fish per person. This doesn't just mean in your boat. It states in your possession. That means your boat, your cooler, and your freezer, or any other place one could put them.

In my opinion, if you sit by and watch someone do this, day-after-day, week-after-week, then you are just as harmful to the lake as they are! You are not doing your part to protect this precious resource! **In other words, you are part of the problem.**

You might say that the fish reproduce and that they really aren't hurting anything. You are wrong! The fishing laws that govern how many fish you can take are there to protect the fish, and the lakes from being over-fished. The laws also take into account the breeding and reproduction habits of the fish. If you disagree, then change the law, otherwise, help us protect our lake.

This is a difficult problem because the wildlife officers have to catch the violators "in the act", and they are not likely to see the inside of the culprit's freezers. That is why it is important for you to help curtail this activity. You see the violations and they don't. **Only you can stop it.**

If you see any violations of our wildlife laws, report it by calling 1-800-282-8002. **Do not take action against the perpetrator yourself as it could turn out to be dangerous.** Let the law enforcement folks do their job. You can also call in anonymously and still be eligible for a cash reward. Be sure to provide as much information as possible to assist the wildlife

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officers with their investigation, and you will not have to testify if an arrest is made.

The penalty, upon conviction, for this type of violation is up to a \$500.00 fine, up to 60 days in the county jail or both.

HCLA Meeting

Highlands County Lakes Association will hold their General Membership Meeting on February 6, at 7:00 PM at the Agri-Civic Center Auditorium. All interested persons are invited.

Dr. Mike S. Allen of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, University of Florida, will be their guest speaker. He will speak on the bag and length limits for crappie (specs) and large mouth bass on our area lakes. Dr. Allen has developed population models to explore population dynamics of sport fishes and responses of fish population to harvest restrictions. Following his presentation he will be glad to answer questions.

This program is with the cooperation of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Beacham Furse of that organization will also speak and be available to answer questions.

This is an important meeting for everyone interested in our present lakes and fisheries and protecting them for our future generations.

Election of Officers

Our corporate by-laws require that we hold an election of Directors annually. The terms of our Directors are for one year and end on the last day of February. Our corporate annual meeting is held in February of each year in order to meet this obligation. This year, most of our directors will be running for reelection for another year.

Those running again are: Bill Dwinell, President, Jeanne Porter, Secretary and Chairman of Membership Committee, and Directors Don Linton, Chairman of Legislative Committee, Bert Galloway, Tom Watson, and Jim Wilkins, Chairman of Publicity Committee.

In addition, we will be accepting nominations from the floor at our Annual Meeting on February 20, 2003.

After the elections of directors, the new Board of Directors meet and have an election of officers. This is

where the President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer are elected.

Lake Istokpoga Management Meeting Scheduled

The next meeting of the Lake Istokpoga Management Committee (LIMC) has been scheduled for March 6, 2003 at the Agri-Civic Center in Sebring. The agenda has not been set at this time, but rest assured, the meeting will discuss important issues regarding Lake Istokpoga. This committee is an advisory committee established by Highlands County, and provides information and recommendations to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners. The public is invited.

Update from FFWCC

By Beacham Furse, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

We have no plans to implement a size limit on black crappie ("specs") on Istokpoga or any other lake in Highlands County. Although many anglers have requested/asked about a 10" minimum, the data we have collected from angler creel surveys, angler harvest, and trawl sampling indicates that a minimum size limit would have little, if any, noticeable positive effect on the quality of the fishery. Most anglers already impose a 10" minimum on themselves and we would prefer not to impose a regulation if it is not required to improve the fishery. If any of your members are interested in research which has been conducted on the impacts on size limits on bass and crappie throughout the southern United States, Dr. Mike Allen from the University of Florida is giving a presentation at the Highlands County Lakes Association on February 6.

We currently have \$88,000 for tussock harvesting on Istokpoga. We plan to concentrate that work around the point south of Henderson's Cove and around the north end of Big Island.

We also have revegetation work planned in late May or June for several areas along the shoreline enhanced during the 2001 drawdown. Species to be transplanted include bulrush, maidencane, and knotgrass (60,000 plants total).