

Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Wednesday, 18 January 2012 at the SFWMD Service Center in Okeechobee, FL.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Angie Huebner (phone)	Jeremy Preston
Bill Zattau (phone)	Jessica Spencer (phone)
Jon Morton	Nichoel Church (phone)
Jeremy Crossland	

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Beacham Furse	Don Fox
Bill Caton (phone)	Jackie Smith (phone)
Brent Bachelder	Zach Welch (phone)
Corey Lee	

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

Mike Bodle

Additional Attendees

James Boggs (Helena)	Larry Patterson (Friends of Lake Okeechobee)
John Welch (Public Member)	
Keith Mangus (AAM, Inc)	
Kurt Ramsey (AAM, Inc)	

Public Comment Period

No public comment.

AAM Status Report

Kurt Ramsey reported that 998.5 acres of target plants were treated since the last interagency meeting on 14 December 2011. The treatments were conducted primarily in the Eagle Bat Island, Harney Pond Canal and Fisheating Bay areas.

Aerial Survey Report of Floating Vegetation

Flight on 13 January 2012

During the flight participants estimated that an average of 791.5 acres of target plants were present on Lake Okeechobee. The 30 November flight estimated an average of 1165.25 acres. Jon Morton noted that only 25-30% of target plant coverage is water hyacinth.

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<i>Area of Lake</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>FWC</i>	<i>SFWMD</i>	<i>AAM</i>	<i>USACE</i>
1. Torrey & Kreamer	7.50	1%	10	10	5	5
2. Ritta	43.75	6%	50	35	70	20
3. East Wall - Coot Bay	21.25	3%	30	35	5	15
4. West Wall - Whidden	183.75	23%	250	210	180	95
5. Fisheating Bay	81.25	10%	75	75	75	100
6. Harney - Indian Prairie	203.75	26%	300	165	225	125
7. Indian P. - Kissimmee	16.25	2%	20	35	5	5
8. King's Bar	16.25	2%	20	25	10	10
9. Kissimmee - Taylor Cr.	175.00	22%	200	210	200	90
10. Taylor Cr. - Chancey	42.50	5%	20	75	45	30
TOTALS	791.25	100%	975	875	820	495

FWC: Brent Bachelder, SFWMD: Mike Bodle, AAM: Kurt Ramsey, USACE, Jon Morton

USACE

The current lake level is 13.43 ft. Jeremy Preston mentioned that there were 10 applicators working in the Eagle Bay Island and Harney Pond areas. Jeremy Crossland explained the Corps' RAG program has received full appropriation and operating with 10-12 crews is not a problem with current funding. Jon Morton stated that there is still ARRA funding available for FY13 (state fiscal calendar) for floating plant treatments.

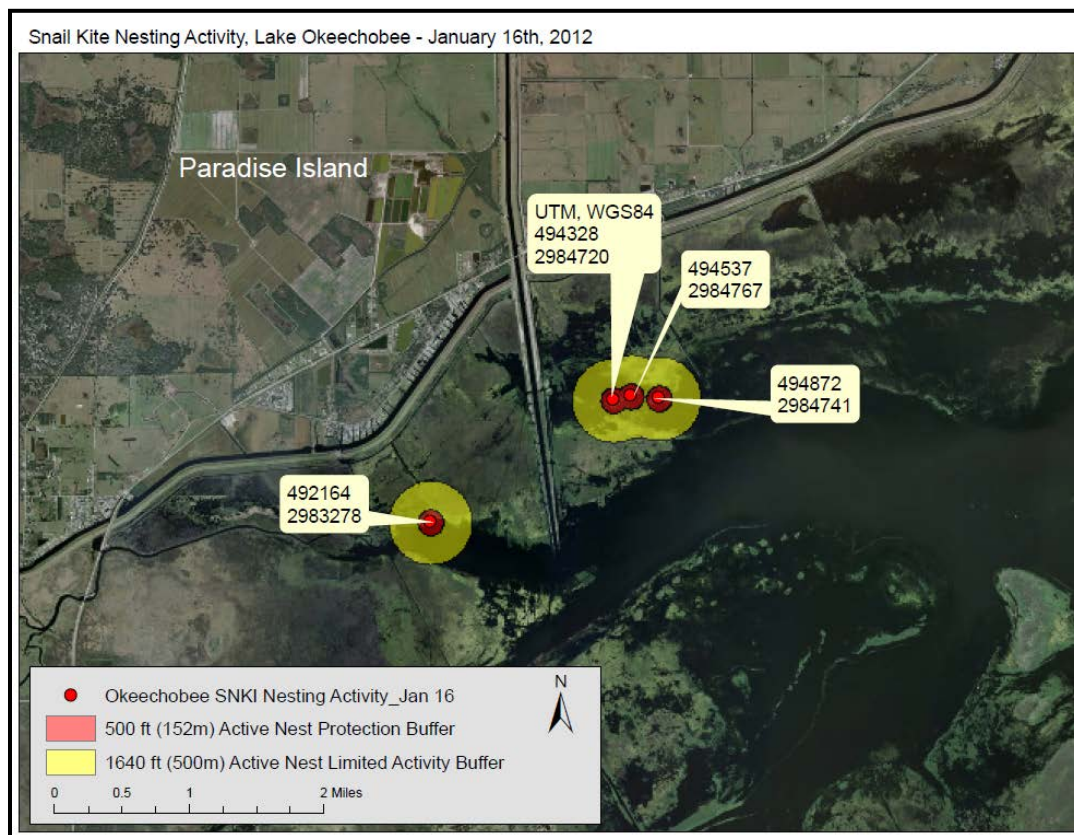
The Friends of Lake Okeechobee group expressed concerns with apparent water releases on the Caloosahatchee River. Don Fox explained that if water releases were occurring, it was more likely associated with SFWMD addressing water supply issues. Mr Fox further explained the current regulation schedule (LORS) and its ability to more adequately meet multi-stakeholder demands. Members of the public asked if agency meetings dealing with water management concerns could be attended by the general public. Mr Fox stated that the minutes and schedule of events are available to the public. Jeremy Preston stated that this information could be linked on the Lake Okeechobee website on the FISP portal.

The upcoming fishing tournament schedule on Lake Okeechobee was discussed by attendees. The months of January-March will have increased tournament activity across Lake Okeechobee. The general consensus amongst the interagency group was to continue target plant treatments but make an effort to avoid areas of high boat traffic and boat density due to safety concerns. Treating behind cattail walls and/or in canals will allow for productive treatment in spite of increased recreational activity.

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FWC

Zach Welch discussed the current Snail Kite monitoring schedule for Lake Okeechobee and South/Central Florida. Currently, 4 areas adjacent to Harney Pond Canal have had observed nesting activity. USGS surveys approximately every three weeks during snail kite nesting season.



Brent Bachelder discussed recently observing *Ceratopteris thalictroides* (water sprite). Mr Bachelder asked the group if this recent find is of any concern. Others in the interagency group stated that they have observed this plant on Lake Okeechobee before, but its presence is sporadic and doesn't appear to pose an ecological threat at this time.

Don Fox stated that FWC floating plant treatments continue in the NW priority marsh and may extend into King's Bar area. Mr Fox also expressed a desire to perform prescribed fire operations in the King's Bar area.

SFWMD

Mike Bodle stated that Melaleuca control work will start in the Clewiston triangle in the upcoming weeks. Mr Bodle stated that he would like to pursue trail treatments of Fluridone for *Luziola subintegra*, per Dr Mike Netherland's suggestion. Mr Bodle inquired of the IA group what application method would likely yield the best results. No consensus was reached on which application method would be best.

***Next Interagency **Flight** is scheduled for **15 February** 2012 at 1330, Pahokee Air Field.

***Next Interagency **Meeting** is scheduled for **22 February** 2012, at USACE South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, FL.