

Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force Meeting Proceedings

The following individuals attended the Lake Okeechobee Interagency Task Force meeting on Wednesday, 09 November 2011 at the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center in Okeechobee, FL.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Angie Huebner
Bill Zattau
Jeremy Crossland
Nichoel Church

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Brent Bachelder
Don Fox
Jackie Smith

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Sandra Sneckenberger
Steve Schubert

Additional Attendees

James Boggs (Helena)	Jess Manson (Friends of Lake Okeechobee)
Kurt Ramsey (AAM, Inc)	John Welch (Public Member)
Paul Gray (Audubon Society)	

Public Comment Period

John Welch asked if interagency group members took note of complaint calls about applicators treating target plants on Lake Okeechobee. Jeremy Crossland and Nichoel Church, explained the USACE utilizes an excel sheet to track all calls and actions taken. Jess Manson asked how the applicators know where and what to treat and which herbicides to use. Don Fox and Jeremy Crossland responded by explaining the agencies conduct surveys to determine where treatment needs to be conducted. The applicators are also trained to identify the target plants and work together with agency staff to ensure treatments are successful. John Welch asked if hydrilla treatments take place on Lake Okeechobee. Don Fox answered that large scale hydrilla has not been majorly treated on the lake since 1991; however, FWC did treat a small amount of hydrilla in boat trails earlier this year.

AAM Status Report

Kurt Ramsey reported that 230 acres of target plants were treated since the last interagency meeting on 05 October 2011. The treatments were primarily conducted in Fisheating Bay and Eagle Bay Island.

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Aerial Survey Report of Floating Vegetation

Flight on 03 November 2011

During the flight participants estimated that an average of 1478.75 acres of target plants were present on Lake Okeechobee. The average coverage for all zones observed during the 28 September flight was 870 acres.

<i>Area of Lake</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>FWC¹</i>	<i>SFWMD</i>	<i>AAM</i>	<i>FWC²</i>
1. Torrey & Kreamer	38.75	3%	50	50	40	15
2. Ritta	101.25	7%	110	140	55	100
3. East Wall - Coot Bay	73.75	5%	90	90	45	70
4. West Wall - Whidden	161.25	11%	340	175	75	55
5. Fisheating Bay	320.00	22%	200	380	400	300
6. Harney - Indian Prairie	56.25	4%	70	65	60	30
7. Indian P. - Kissimmee	31.25	2%	50	45	10	20
8. King's Bar	43.75	3%	100	35	20	20
9. Kissimmee - Taylor Cr.	575.00	39%	500	700	450	650
10. Taylor Cr. - Chancey	77.50	5%	120	80	80	30
TOTALS	1478.75	100%	1630	1760	1235	1290

FWC¹: Jackie Smith, SFWMD: Mike Bodle, AAM: Kurt Ramsey, FWC²: Corey Lee

USACE

Current water levels of Lake Okeechobee were discussed. The current lake level is 13.77ft. Nichoel Church explained that AAM applicators are currently working in Fisheating Bay and Eagle Bay Island. Jeremy Crossland asked about emails sent after the last flight regarding bulrush decline along the littoral edge. Don Fox explained how he thought the decline of bulrush was due to the stress of drought conditions.

FWC

Brent Bachelder listed the current FWC treatment areas of water lettuce and water hyacinth. He also mentioned that applicators are now treating target aquatic plants in bulrush because most of the bulrush has gone dormant and is turning brown.

SFWMD

Mike Bodle could not be present at the meeting however he sent an email requesting information about the cost of using Flumioxazin (Clipper) vs. Diquat to treat water lettuce. Jeremy Crossland said there is a good chance in the future that applicators will use Flumioxazin to treat large areas of water lettuce because even though it is more

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expensive it will save tremendously on labor costs. The herbicide is still being tested due to pH and water depth issues. John Welch asked how the herbicide will be applied. Kurt Ramsey answered that it is injected below the surface using weighted hoses or a very long spray nozzle.

*** Next Interagency **Flight** is scheduled for **30 November** 2011 at 0830, Pahokee Air Field.

***Next Interagency **Meeting** is scheduled for **14 December** 2011, at the USACE South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, FL.