



Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force



**October 17, 2019
1:30pm**

**Clayton E. Hutcheson Agricultural Services Center (Exhibit Hall A)
559 North Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida 33415**

Meeting Minutes

Water Resources Task Force Attendees

Seat ID	Member Name	Status	Alternate Name	Status
1	Monica Mayotte	Present	Vacant	
2	Don MaGruder	Present	Vacant	
3	Chip Block (Chair)	Present	Vacant	
4	Jason Haselkorn	Absent	Vacant	
5	Myra Koutzen (Vice Chair)	Absent	Rachelle Litt	Absent
6	David Stewart	Present	Vacant	
7	Melissa McKinlay	Absent	Gregg Weiss	Present
8	Vacant		Vacant	
9	Tommy Strowd	Present	Vacant	
10	Vacant		Vacant	
11	Jay Steinle	Present	Mark Elsner	Present
12	Vacant		Vacant	
13	Vacant		Vacant	
14	Michael Johnson	Present	Greg Shafer	Absent

1. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum was observed and Chip Block called the meeting to order at approximately 1:35 p.m. The Water Resources Task Force (WRTF) members then introduced themselves to the meeting attendees. The attached sign-in sheet provides the full list of meeting attendees.

2. Consider Approval of September 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 19, 2019 WRTF meeting was made by David Stewart (Lantana) and seconded by Jay Steinle (SFWMD). The September 19, 2019 meeting minutes were then approved by the WRTF.

3. South Florida Water Management District's Water Conservation Program

Robert Wanvestraut, Senior Conservation Analyst at the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD or District), provided a presentation on SFWMD's water conservation program. With South Florida's anticipated growth over the next several decades, water supply demands are expected to increase. To ensure future water supply demands can be met, efforts to increase

water supply and decrease demands are needed. Water conservation (i.e. using less water for a specific task and reducing wasteful water use) is less expensive than developing alternative water supplies (AWS), easier to implement than AWS, reduces stress on natural systems, has a lower carbon and pollution footprint than AWS and can reduce, defer or eliminate the need to develop AWS. SFWMD's water conservation program includes education and outreach, voluntary and incentive-based initiatives and regulatory activities. In addition, a water conservation plan is required to be submitted to SFWMD as part of consumptive use permit applications. Water conservation plans should include a water conservation public education program, an outdoor water use conservation program, a water conservation rate structure, a water loss reduction program, and an indoor water conservation program. Robert mentioned that Palm Beach County's current ordinance restricts landscape irrigation times, but allows irrigation seven days per week, which is inconsistent with SFWMD's year-round irrigation rule adopted in 2010. If there are any additional questions for Robert Wanvestraut, he can be reached at rowanves@sfwmd.gov or 561-682-6615.

Some discussion occurred on the potential for water conservation to mitigate future water supply demands that result from population growth. A question was asked about how SFWMD irrigation rules and local government ordinances work together. Robert stated that SFWMD landscape irrigation rules apply District-wide, but SFWMD encourages local governments to adopt ordinances which would then allow those governments to regulate and grant variances, etc. A question was asked about how reuse and conservation relate. Reuse water is another source; conservation can be applied to any source. Albrey Arrington stated that outdoor irrigation typically accounts for 50 percent of residential water use, so using reclaimed water (reuse) for outdoor irrigation can substantially reduce potable water supply demands. Mark Elsner (SFWMD) stated that the SFWMD landscape irrigation rule is the minimum and all municipalities should update their ordinances to comply with SFWMD's year-round irrigation rule adopted in 2010. Drew Martin (Sierra Club) stated that we should discuss ways to reduce the amount of residential turf as it is not native and sod is wasteful and suggests that the Task Force recommend reduced sod use in the County and remove any requirements for lawns.

4. A Brief Overview of Public Water Supply Permitting

Simon Sunderland, Water Use Bureau Chief at SFWMD, provided a brief presentation on public water supply permitting, including a regulatory overview, application requirements and details on the submittal process. Florida Statutes stipulate that to obtain a permit, the water use must be reasonable and beneficial, must not interfere with existing legal users and must be consistent with public interest. Permit applications require source identification, a wellfield operations plan, water use demand calculations, impact assessments, and a water conservation plan. If there are any additional questions for Simon Sunderland, he can be reached at ssunder@sfwmd.gov or 561-682-2705.

It was suggested that SFWMD staff coordinate with Richard Radcliffe (Palm Beach County League of Cities) to present similar water supply permitting and water conservation information to Palm Beach County municipalities.

5. Loxahatchee River Restoration Local Initiative and Mecca Site Evaluation Update

Jeremy McBryan (Palm Beach County) provided a brief overview of the current status of the County's Loxahatchee River Restoration Local Initiative and Mecca Site Evaluation. Kimley-Horn, the County's consultant, is preparing three (3) alternatives with the Mecca site configured as a natural shallow flow-through marsh and alternative surface water storage features. The objective is to be able to compare the performance of these alternatives with the USACE plan. Preliminary results of one of the three alternatives are being reviewed and will likely be updated with improved operational rules. Kimley-Horn continues to coordinate with SFWMD staff to understand the details of the modeling tools. Discussions with SFWMD and USACE regarding next steps will continue to occur over the coming weeks. Jeremy stated that he anticipates briefing the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on November 5, 2019 on the results of the County's modeling study. If the results of the study are favorable, one option that has been discussed is to request language in USACE and/or SFWMD project-related reports or letters of support that allows for flexibility to consider alternative water storage options in the future. Another option is to request flexibility language in the Congressional legislation that would authorize the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. If there are any additional questions for Jeremy McBryan, he can be reached at jmcbryan@pbcgov.org or 561-355-4600.

Jay Steinle mentioned that since the November 2019 SFWMD Governing Board is being held in Fort Myers, the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project discussion will be postponed until the December 2019 SFWMD Governing Board meeting, which is being held in West Palm Beach as this will allow more local stakeholders participation. Jeremy stated that Kimley-Horn is targeting to deliver the bulk of the technical information from the modeling study by early November, however this depends on obtaining additional guidance and information from SFWMD staff. The plan is then to communicate the performance of the County alternatives (along with cost estimates) with the USACE recommended plan to the BCC.

6. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Update

Savannah Lacy (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or USACE) provided an overview of Lake Okeechobee operations, including the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (or LORS2008) and its purpose, inflows and outflows, structural and regulatory constraints, key factors in operational decision making, challenges, and interagency coordination. Operations of the Lake are expected to result in long-term low-volume releases to the estuaries and the remnant Everglades (aka Water Conservation Areas or WCAs). The ongoing Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (or LOSOM) will eventually replace LORS2008. Lake Okeechobee is an integral part of the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project, which has the following project purposes: Flood Control, Navigation, Enhancement of fish and wildlife, recreation, and water supply. Savannah stated that operational flexibility, which was utilized in late 2018 and early 2019, was implemented to lower the lake for ecological recovery and provide dry season flows to the Caloosahatchee Estuary. A 2019 Planned Deviation was proposed in August 2019 to release more water from the Lake when there is low risk of harmful algal blooms (HAB) and release less Lake water when HAB risk is high. If there are any additional questions for Savannah Lacy, she can be reached at Savannah.H.Lacy@USACE.army.mil or 904-232-2840.

Commissioner Weiss asked some questions regarding outflows from the Lake meeting downstream needs in the Caloosahatchee Estuary and recent operations which resulted in Lake releases being conveyed to the Lake Worth Lagoon. Savannah stated that Lake releases to the Lake Worth Lagoon are allowed under LORS2008, however those operations are not very prescriptive and those operations are limited due to the regional canal system being utilized for local basin flood control operations. Jay Steinle stated that SFWMD is actively tracking flows from Lake Okeechobee to the Lake Worth Lagoon.

Tommy Strowd (Lake Worth Drainage District; LWDD) stated he has worked with Savannah for a number of years and we are lucky to have her working on Lake Okeechobee. He then stated that many stakeholders are getting nervous as Lake Okeechobee levels continue to recede and in reviewing the planned deviation. The Lake Worth Drainage has determined through modeling that the 2019 Planned Deviation results in fairly significant impacts to water supply, doubling the frequency and duration of water shortages as compared to LORS2008 and doubles the volume of water supply delivery shortfall. There are also impacts to the environment and Lake Okeechobee due to the lower Lake stages that occur with the Planned Deviation. These results call into question the apparent imminent USACE decision of issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact.

Savannah stated that many safeguards have been included in the Planned Deviation to reduce impacts. The USACE is going to do some additional modeling to better understand and evaluate the potential impacts and provide additional information for agency and public review probably sometime during the winter of 2019-2020.

David Stewart asked if the USACE is looking at the quality of the water that us being sent to Flamingo, Shark River, Everglades National Park (ENP). Savannah stated that Lake Okeechobee water has to be treated in the Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas before it can be conveyed into the WCAs; water from the WCAs is then conveyed into ENP and Shark Valley Slough. David stated that compared to the 1960s and 1970s, the fish and wildlife have suffered. Jay Steinle reminded attendees that water quality monitoring occurs in Florida Bay and while most of the bay is fed by rainfall, the additional Tamiami Trail bridges have enabled more water to be conveyed from the WCAs into ENP and Florida Bay. Some discussion of water quality north of Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River restoration also occurred.

James Alderman (LWDD) asked about a plan for water supply for the spring of 2020 if Lake Okeechobee continues to decline. Savannah stated that at low Lake levels, the USACE shifts to a water supply-focused Lake operation and almost entirely relies upon water supply experts at SFWMD.

Jeff Koons stated we need to think about sending Lake Okeechobee water to the C-51 Reservoir and making a reservation for water within the L-8 Basin. There are opportunities to capture this excess water and store it in County natural areas and the City of West Palm Beach's Water Catchment Area (aka Grassy Waters).

Eva Velez (USACE) then provided an overview of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project, including the project purpose, anticipated benefits, progress to date, and the current schedule. The recommended alternative is expected to reduce the amount of water that is rapidly discharged to tide, captures and stores high flows of lower nutrient water sources and gains ancillary water quality benefits due to restored and enhanced wetland areas, and redirects water back into former sloughs, wetlands and the Loxahatchee River during drier periods and other desirable times. Eva noted that Palm Beach County, the City of West Palm Beach, Everglades Law Center/Sustainable Palm Beach County and four local water control districts (Indian Trail Improvement District, South Indian River Water Control District, Hobe-St. Lucie Conservancy District and Pal-Mar Water Control District) are supporting the project but have concerns. It is expected that the USACE Senior Leaders Panel Briefing will occur in December and a Chief of Engineers report will be complete by March 2020. If there are any additional questions for Eva Velez, she can be reached at eva.b.veleztorres@usace.army.mil or 904-316-0247.

Jeremy McBryan stated that from previous public comments by Lt. Colonel Jennifer Reynolds, it would appear that there are opportunities to include language in the 2020 Water Resource Development Act (WRDA), for both the Loxahatchee River Restoration and Lake Okeechobee Restoration projects, that point to some future USACE activity that would authorize continued work on a single element of the authorized project due to input/concerns from local stakeholders. Eva stated that due to USACE process rigidity, flexibility language-type requests need to be communicated from external non-USACE parties and eventually be included in direction provided by Congress. It should be noted that these projects will compete with others around the nation for funding, so as additional evaluations occur, there could be delays in implementation. Lt. Colonel Todd Polk then introduced himself and mentioned that a legislative delegation was headed down to South Florida soon to hear about South Florida projects.

7. General Task Force Member Comments

None

8. General Public Comments

Jeff Koons stated that he is interested in finding out more details about the Everglades Restoration cost-share ledger as we have never been able to get a copy before. Jeff's farmer friends tell him that a drought is imminent and he recommends that the Task Force invite the City of West Palm Beach to come talk about what happened in 2011. The City installed an old pump and delivered minimum flows to the Loxahatchee River during the drought. All of the region's water supply planning assumptions assumed LORS2008 operations so if you change the way the Lake operates, all water supply providers will need to adjust. Looking at the 2011 event should teach us what we need to do; we have great water and great land and we can manage the water in our own basins.

Drew Martin (Sierra Club) does not think people in Florida outside of this room understand that there is a possibility of a drought in 2020; Floridians do not take water conservation seriously; the majority of water goes to people's lawns and Drew does not think any city has spent any

effort in reducing lawns and that is what we should be talking about. Nobody enforces the rules that requires a rain gage on irrigation systems and many sprinklers run at night during rain events but there is no enforcement. Water prices for normal ranges of use should be reasonable but repeated large users should have higher water prices.

Scott Kelly (City of West Palm Beach) appreciates and supports what the County has been doing regarding the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. A lot of these things are connected; the City supplies water from their allocation to the Loxahatchee River during low flow periods and they have tried to communicate these issues during the LOSOM and Planned Deviation discussions. The immediate health of the Loxahatchee River is dependent on getting water to the City's Grassy Waters area so that is available for delivery north to the river. Scott also stated that additional clarification from the USACE would be helpful regarding whether the Planned Deviation efforts are being suspended until additional information and modeling is prepared and distributed. The City has not been able to take water periodically due to water quality, high conductivity/salinity issues and algae blooms.

Savannah Lacy stated that the 2019 Planned Deviation is proposed to provide USACE with operational options and it may not be used in 2020. Implementation of any deviation will not occur until a record of decision is signed by the Commander of the South Atlantic Division.

Commissioner Weiss mentioned that the County recently held a Green Stormwater Infrastructure workshop with County staff from multiple departments and attendees from local cities and environmental non-profit organizations; the County is taking the issues of water resources and conservation seriously. The Commissioner also thanked Jay Steinle and SFWMD for working with the County to add water quality monitoring within the Lake Worth Lagoon and at Structure S-155 in the C-51 Canal. Commissioner Weiss also mentioned that he recently presented a request to the County's legislative delegation for \$3 million in funding for eight water resources improvement projects; initial indications from the delegation are very positive.

9. Adjournment

Chip Block adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:45 p.m.



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Meeting Sign-in Sheet
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Name	Organization	Email	Phone
CHIP BLOCK	JIC/WRTF	CBLOCK45@YAHOO.COM	917 923 0052
Ted Winsberg	Local Citizen		
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Savannah Lacy	USACE	Savannah.h.lacy@usace.army.mil	904 232 2846
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JEREMY MCBRYAN	PBC		



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Name	Organization	Email	Phone
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MONICA MAYOTTE	BOCA RATON		