



Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force



April 18, 2019
1:30pm

**Clayton E. Hutcheson Agricultural Services Center
West Palm Beach, Florida 33415**

Meeting Minutes

Water Resources Task Force Attendees

Seat ID	Member Name	Status	Alternate Name	Status
1	Vacant		Vacant	
2	Vacant		Vacant	
3	Chip Block (Chair)	Present	Vacant	
4	Jason Haselkorn	Present	Vacant	
5	Myra Koutzen (Vice Chair)	Absent	Rachelle Litt	Absent
6	David Stewart	Present	Donald Magruder	Absent
7	Melissa McKinlay	Absent	Gregg Weiss	Present
8	Vacant		Vacant	
9	Harry Raucher	Absent	James Alderman	Absent
10	Adrian Salee	Absent	Gregory Block	Absent
11	Vacant		Vacant	
12	John Flanigan	Present	Richard Tomasello	Present
13	Ted Winsberg	Present	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 1:30 p.m. (the attached sign-in sheet provides the full list of meeting attendees).

2. Consider Approval of January 24, 2019 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2019 Water Resources Task Force (WRTF) meeting was made and seconded. The January 24, 2019 meeting minutes were then approved by the WRTF.

3. Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project Update

Jeremy McBryan provided an overview of the proposed Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (Loxahatchee Project) as documented in the Draft Integrated Project Implementation Report (PIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for public comment on March 22. Key features of the proposed plan include an above-ground storage reservoir on the Mecca site, four (4) Aquifer

Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells, and improved connections between the river and watershed. The project, estimated to cost approximately \$473 million, is anticipated to achieve river restoration flow targets 91 percent of the time during the dry season and 98 percent of the time during the wet season. Public comments on the Draft PIR/EIS are due May 6, 2019.

Jeremy McBryan then provided a summary of the Loxahatchee Project discussion that occurred at the Technical Professional Working Group meeting held April 9. The discussion included a summary of the key features, assumptions, costs and risks. Concerns with the draft report discussed included poorly documented and/or justified assumptions, limited technical information, optimistic ASR recovery efficiency, overestimation of water available in Indian Trail Improvement District (ITID) canals, and uncertainty regarding water quality treatment to ensure ASRs can operate as planned.

Jeremy McBryan then provided three options to be considered, which were: 1.) support state and federal efforts to restore the Loxahatchee River, identify key concerns and express interest in optimizing the plan and addressing key concerns; 2.) neither oppose or support the plan, identify key concerns and express interest in optimizing the plan; 3.) oppose the plan. Based on his experience and as chair of the Technical Professional Working Group, Jeremy McBryan recommended option 1 to the WRTF. Jeremy then stated he would be attending the two public meetings held by USACE to listen and convey that Palm Beach County (County) would be providing written comments on the Draft PIR/EIS. Jeremy also mentioned that staff would be communicating WRTF input to the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and requesting direction from the BCC at their April 30, 2019 workshop meeting.

Chip Block stated that a natural flow-way incorporating Avenir lands is preferred over a Mecca reservoir, and that Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells may not be sufficient due to the optimistic recovery rate assumptions, which are much higher than rates experience by ASR wells operated by the City of West Palm Beach. Chip then asked for public comment.

Kelley Burke stated that Melissa McKinlay, while not able to attend today's meeting, is adamantly opposed to the mega Mecca reservoir in the heart of the acreage.

Rich Walesky stated that he prefers natural storage on Mecca, as the Mecca reservoir requires multiple pumps, will lose water due to seepage, and has less storage volume than other options. He does not understand the risks identified by USACE regarding Avenir and the C-51 Reservoir, said that houses will be adjacent to the Mecca reservoir and these residents likely do not know about the plan, water quality is much better in natural areas than in reservoirs, and the reservoir will likely require fences which will impact utilization by wildlife. Rich stated that natural storage on Mecca and Avenir will result in wetland connectivity benefits, due to connections to DuPuis, Hungryland and Sweet Bay. Rich stated that the 2,400 acres of land in the north portion of the Avenir property will eventually be in public ownership and natural storage at Mecca and Avenir would provide 10,500 acre-feet (4,178 acres at 2.5 feet of water), more than the 9,500 acre-feet to be provided by the Mecca reservoir. Rich stated that the cost of operating and maintaining the

Mecca reservoir will be high; while maintenance costs of natural wetland systems is low. Rich said the Mecca reservoir cost is \$160 million, but natural storage would only cost \$14 million. He suggested that investing in storage that could be provided by the C-51 Reservoir should be done in lieu of building the Mecca reservoir.

Chip Block asked Deb Drum to provide an update on the County's coordination efforts with Avenir. Deb Drum stated that the County had been coordinating with the developers of Avenir in an effort to realize land restoration activities, similar to what the County has done on County-owned lands, on lands owned by Avenir, however, as of today, Avenir has chosen a regulatory path that does not include the County.

Jay Foy stated that ITID would be providing a letter to USACE outlining concerns with the proposed Loxahatchee Project, including the fact that the modeling assumes ITID canal stages are 1 foot higher than how they are currently operated, the Mecca reservoir embankment heights may be increased during future design activities and a risk analysis associated with lower ASR recovery efficiencies should be conducted to determine the impact on the river. Jay Foy is not recommending opposing the Loxahatchee Project since it improves the river, however, interlocal agreements would be needed to enable ITID water to be conveyed to Mecca, especially since the canals are used for fire protection and if drawn down, fire protection could be at risk.

Chip Block does not want USACE to walk away from the project, feels that we should advocate for the County to continue to negotiate with Avenir, and is inclined to neither support or oppose the USACE plan but express concerns with the Mecca reservoir and state the preference for a natural flow-way. Michael Johnson is leaning toward neither supporting or opposing the plan and identifying concerns. David Stewart stated that the Mecca reservoir could become a water quality problem, similar to Lake Okeechobee, but on a smaller scale. Jason Haselkorn stated that to be consistent with the mission of the WRTF, we should focus on expressing concerns instead of opposing or supporting. John Flanigan supports expressing concerns. Gregg Weiss made a motion to neither oppose nor support the plan, express grave concerns and communicate interest in working with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and USACE to optimize the plan. The motion was seconded by Jason Haselkorn.

Matt Morrison (SFWMD) reminded attendees that the federal interest in the Loxahatchee Project is the National Wild and Scenic River, stated that the Loxahatchee Project has evolved over the past 15-20 years, working within the federal framework can be challenging, and while he understands the concerns of a deeper reservoir on Mecca, there are new standards to ensure dam safety. Matt also mentioned that there are more regulatory challenges to incorporating Avenir into the project, specifically due to the issue of mitigation for private development. Chip Block called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual Update

Jeremy McBryan started by listing the organizations that have adopted resolutions related to Lake Okeechobee Operations, which are the Palm Beach Soil & Water Conservation District, Palm

Beach County, Lake Worth Drainage District, Palm Beach County League of Cities, Inc., City of West Palm Beach and Indian Trail Improvement District. Jeremy stated that the County's public scoping comments, which are still being drafted, align closely with the BCC resolution and focus on the County's issues, concerns and desired outcomes. Jeremy provided an overview of the County's draft public scoping comments which is summarized below:

Comprehensive Strategy Needed

- Impacts and risks to all communities as it relates to water supply, the environment, and the economy should be characterized
- Ensure proposed operations improve Lake ecology, protect water supplies, and are resilient to expected climate variability
- Lake operations should assist in meeting Everglades restoration goals
- A renewed focus is needed on regional-scale and local-scale water storage and water quality improvement projects, specifically in Lake tributary basins north of the Lake

Water Supply

- Operations should continue to guarantee protection of water supply and flood control as envisioned in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and consistent with federal and state law
- Operations re-evaluation must recognize its link to water supply planning and regulatory frameworks that rely on planned CERP infrastructure
- Operations should result in reduced frequency and severity of water use restrictions/cutbacks on public water supply utilities and existing permitted users
- Evaluations should recognize the obligation to provide a 1 in 10 level of drought protection
- Any proposed changes to Lake operations should protect against saltwater intrusion into coastal wellfields

Additional Operational Flexibility

- Concept needs to be re-evaluated and re-assessed as its implementation is ambiguous, too undefined and has the potential to be influenced by non-technical input
- Well-defined operational deviations should be pursued and associated impact evaluations should be conducted

Shared Adversity

- Concept needs to be re-evaluated and re-assessed as its implementation results in harm to County water resources but provides no discernable reduction in impacts to St. Lucie or Caloosahatchee estuaries
- Additional water quality data is needed to assess impacts of Lake flows to Lake Worth Lagoon
- Additional venues for stakeholders to provide input to USACE/SFWMD is needed

Economic Impacts

- Impacts and risks to all communities as it relates to the economy should be characterized

- Future Lake operations should minimize impacts to small businesses that rely on Lake recreation-based activities

Flood Risk and Flood Insurance

- Future Lake operations should reduce flood risk and flood insurance premiums for Glades communities

5. Task Force Member Comments

Chip Block stated that he met with Congressman Brian Mast and urged him to meet with Scott Kelly (City of West Palm Beach) regarding Lake Okeechobee operations and water supply concerns. Chip felt the meeting went well an understanding was reached regarding the County's focus. Chip supports what Jeremy is doing and supports developing additional data and strategies to assist in communicating the County's position regarding Lake Okeechobee operations.

6. Public Comments

Jay Foy stated that many years ago, the Lake Okeechobee operating schedule was raised by approximately 2 feet, then due to problems with the levees, the schedule was lowered in 2008 with the assumption that it would be raised to its previous schedule once concerns with the levees were addressed. He understands concerns with lower water levels, such as potential drought conditions and impacts to permitted water users and mentioned that ITID's resolution related to the Lake was almost identical to the County's except it suggested increasing the upper range of Lake levels to store more water and reduce discharges.

7. Adjournment

Chip Block adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:30 p.m.



Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force
Meeting Sign-in Sheet
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Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Ed Wnabeing	WRTF		
Richard Radcliffe	PBC League	RRadcliffe@PBCGov.org	
Richard Walecky	Sustainable PBC	rewalecky@gmail.com	
Patrick Rutter	PBC	prutter@pbcgov.org	
Jake Leech	PBC Resiliency	pleech@pbcgov.org	
DAVID STEWART	Town of Loxley		
CHIP BLOCK	JIC		
LAURA CORRY	SFWMD	LCORRY@SFWMD.GOV	
Mileneola Joseph	SFWMD	mjoseph@sfwmd.gov	
Liz Diaz	SFWMD	ldiaz@sfwmd.gov	
Brian Shields	Lake Worth	bshields@lakeworth.org	
Bill Lynch	James Edmunds	blynch@jamesedmunds.com	
Jan Van Arman	PBC Adm		
Brianna Nowakowski	Family Lands remembered	brinowakowski@gmail.com	



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Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Kelley Burke	D-6	kburke@pbcsu.org	355-2200
PAN BEATTY	NPBCID	PAN@NPBCID.ORG	624-7830
Jason Haselkorn	Town of Juno Beach	Jason3072661@gmail.com	(561) 307-2661
Dick Tomasek	Tomasek CE, Inc	dicktom@qol.com	(561) 575-3910
Deb DRUM	PBC ERM	ddrum@pbcpv.org	561-233-2400
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MATT MORRISON	SFWUD	mjmorrison@sfwud.gov	561-682-6844
Chris Pettit	WUD	cpettit@pbwater.com	561-493-6009



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Name	Organization	Email	Phone
Anne Cox	Family Lands Remembered	anne@familylandremembered.org	361-339-1549
Jay Foy	ITIA	jfoyston@jfoyston.com	242-0028
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