

FINAL
Summary of Quarterly Water Coordination Meeting for A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR
April 10, 2006 South Florida Water Management District
2:00-4:00 pm

Attendees: See attached list

Prepared by: Bill Miller, A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR

Introduction- Mark Musaus welcomed everyone and noted how important he felt this meeting is to identify project needs and priority focuses.

Current Refuge Water Conditions- Average stage in the refuge (based on the 1-7, 1-9, and 1-8c, 4/10/06) was 16.00 ft, about 0.2 ft below the top of the regulation schedule. The recession rate is good and an increased number of wading birds have been observed foraging over the last several weeks. Bill Miller discussed the April, 2006 SFWMD wading bird survey prepared by Erynn Call. Bill noted bird nesting success on the refuge as conditions have recently been good for waders.

Regional Conditions/Position Analysis- Andy Ashley (USACE) provided an update on regional conditions (see power point WCA1 Quarterly Meeting 2006_Apr10.ppt). Andy reported that Lake Toho and Lake Kissimmee are running about 0.5 and 0.3 feet below schedule, respectively. Lake Okeechobee is dropping at 2/10's per week. Rainfall has been below average for January through April and is expected to remain below average for the next three month period. The region is -3.71 inches below normal rainfall or 52% of average totals for the period. Lake Okeechobee is in Zone E of its schedule and running 14.39 feet. WCA1 (refuge) stage is about 1.5 ft above the Lake O stage and appears consistent with the 25% exceedence levels, moving from the 50% exceedence level from the past quarter. WCA 2 has had a steep recession rate. WCA 3 appears in good shape.

The short term forecast is for an increased chance of drier conditions, but it's a pick-em for the transitional period. The longer term forecast is for a higher chance of wetter conditions. Basically, the prediction is for a drier than usual dry season and a wetter than usual wet season, with the wet season starting late.

Constraints on Moving Water- There are no physical constraints on normal movement of water at this time (no structures that need to be repaired, construction, etc.)

Status of STA's- Tom Kosier reports that the central and west flow-ways of STA1-E are in a good position for managing flood control. In STA1-W, the western flow-way remains off-line as does the northern flow way. Cell 5 (the northern flow-way of STA1-W) remains in rehab mode. The cell will be rehabbed with rice plantings to stabilize the soils, not to treat water. According to Tom, stabilization should allow appropriate SAV recruitment, overtime out-competing the rice. There's a need for clean water in order to produce the best available setting for cell 5 rehabilitation. The cell needs to be covered

with 6 inches to one foot of water – roughly 2 to 3000 acre feet in total. The water necessary to rehab would be pulsed into the cell over many instances rather than as a lump sum delivery. The time frame to do this is the middle of May. The timing of flooding should not interfere with stilt nesting. Vero Beach will be given notices of changes to the STA in case of adverse affect. Stilt nesting should be completed in June. **Tom asked about the appropriateness off pulling water from WCA-1 to help rehab cell 5 as it is the cleanest. If not, L-8 water would be a second but least preferred alternative. The Refuge will look into appropriateness – Mark and Bill.**

Tom Kosier expressed optimism about being able to use the STA for limited water supply this year, he cautioned that it would need to be done very carefully and watched closely to avoid harming the STA.

Lake Worth Drainage District Needs and Issues- The crops are in the ground, they started late and will be ending late – cucumbers are being replanted and the planting/farming season goes through June. LWDD makes every attempt to pull from structures 2 and 12 as a first alternative to the normal protocol of pulling from structures 1 and 3 in an effort to deliver water without compromising the needs of the Refuge. Cal Neidrauer asked if the 155A was open – it is and is opened as needed. Also, the new Control 4 pump is being run every other day for roughly 10 hours.

Alt water supply from C-51. From the January, 2006 Water Coordination Meeting minutes - *The control 2 pump placement is still in the works. John Mulliken has been working on this and all internal SFWMD issues are close to being resolved. John is hoping the pumps will be in place in two to three weeks. They will be 30 inch diesel pumps initially. John hopes to have the flexibility to switch to electric pumps later. He is also looking ahead to permanent pumps. The goal is to get the pumps in and get the sound barriers up so that the pumps can be run on an as needed basis, which is likely to be longer periods than last year, but probably not 24 hours a day.*

According to the LWDD, little has been done to secure the alternative water supply and LWDD feels that little can be accomplished this year as the dry season is upon us without an alternative to pull water from a source other than the Refuge. All parties expressed concern towards the slowdown in forward movement. Dean Powell introduced Pete Kwiatkowski as the new SFWMD lead on the alternative water supply project, taking the place of John Mulliken and Dean stressed the need and desire to move forward on implementation. Dean reported that procurement hurdles have been solved which should enhance implementation efforts from this point. The LWDD expressed concern over the lack of SFWMD comments resulting from their July 18, 2005 letter identifying concerns resulting from the *Alternative Water Supply Source to the E-1 Canal from the C-51 Canal* summary drafted by the SFWMD on June 12, 2005. All parties agreed to move ahead as the desire to provide alternative water supply remains.

The LWDD asked that the SFWMD make a presentation at the May 17th, 2006 LWDD Governing Board meeting to provide a sense of clarity for the project, and provide comments and assurances based on the LWDD written correspondence.

Temporary Deviation to WCA-1 Regulation Schedule- The temporary deviation went into effect on 22 April 2005 and will be in effect through the dry season of 2006. Danna Ackerman-White asked why the document titled *Background of Temporary Deviation* identified the deviation was in effect until December 2006. Bill Miller agreed with Luis Alejandro's statement that the deviation was set to expire this July, not December as written.

Luis asked the audience to discuss the potential of extending the temporary deviation for another year and if so, and if the deviation would need to be changed or modified. Limits for preceding inflow have not been triggered since the temporary deviation was implemented. In other words, the Refuge has not been in a situation requiring preceding inflows from Lake O or another source as recession rates have not been greater than 0.2 feet over a 7 day period and Lake O levels have been greater than a foot below the Refuge during that time. Mark Musaus stated that the refuge has been getting rain at the right time during this period so preceding inflows have not been necessary. However, the long term answer of ensuring appropriate water delivery is lacking due to the continued absence of an alternative water delivery system and the inability of the STA's to provide water at acceptable quality. Tom Kosier discussed the reduced ability of the STA's to treat water supply water and that this may not be a viable, long term alternative to Refuge water delivery as the STA's were designed to treat stormwater, not necessarily water supply water from Lake O or any other source. This inherently limits Refuge supply choices. The deviation has helped STA recovery efforts in that preceding inflows have not been necessary which has allowed the STA's rehabilitation time.

Luis was asked what was the process to extend the temp deviation for another year. Luis identified that if the team agreed, the temp deviation would be processed in Jacksonville by the Corp and he didn't see it as a difficult process if, in fact it was simply a one year extension without changes.

The group decided to table this issue and hold a conference call meeting for to be April 20th. The discussion will focus on the appropriateness of an extension, necessity of regulation schedule revisions, and a time table for implementation if the extension is agreed to.

Discussion of Broward County water supply – There still exists a lack of participation from Broward County. Bill Miller spoke with Gary Smith of Broward County who replaced Lorraine Guise – the former water supply director. He said he would forward the need to attend to Dave Markward.

Next meeting will be held at the Refuge on Monday, July 10th, at 2:00.

Action Items:

Conduct a conference call meeting on April 20th to discuss extension of temporary deviation.

**Identify appropriateness of supplying Refuge water to cell 5 in an effort to rehab it.
– Mark and Bill.**

We all need to watch conditions as the dry season progresses and initiate a group discussion if conditions are undesirable before our next meeting.

SFWMD presentation at the May 17th, 2006 LWDD Governing Board meeting to discuss comments and assurances concerning the C-51 alternative water supply project – Dean and Pete.

Andy Ashley will make sure the Bill Miller is contacted if the recession rate approaches the critical point so that Bill can schedule a meeting (likely by phone) to discuss what to do.

Bill Miller will follow up with Dave Markward from Broward County and let him know when the next meeting is.

List of Attendees:

A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR-USFWS

Mark Musaus
Bill Miller
Mike Waldon – phone
Matt Harwell – phone
Donatto Surratt - phone

SFWMD

Pete Kwiatkowski
Cal Neidrauer
Tom Kosier
Dean Powell

LWDD

Bill Winters
Danna Ackerman-White
Patrick Martin
Mike Baker

Corps of Engineers

Luis Alejandro – phone
Andy Ashley - phone