

**South Florida Water Management District
Governing Board, Project and Lands Committee
Agenda**

April 8, 2008 – 9:00 a.m.

**Okeechobee Service Center - 205 North Parrot Ave., S-201
Okeechobee, FL 34972**

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Governing Board Members:

Shannon Estenoz, Chair
Mike Collins
Charles Dauray
Melissa Meeker
Patrick Rooney
Malcolm S. "Bubba" Wade, Jr.

South Florida Water Management District Staff:

Susan Gray, Dep. Dir. Watershed Mgt. Dept.
Terrie Bates, Asst. Dep. Exec. Dir., Water Resources
Chip Merriam, Dep. Exec. Dir., Water Resources
Tommy Strowd, Asst. Dep. Exec. Dir., Everglades Restoration
Dave Unsell, Dir., Lake Okeechobee Div.,
Paul McCormack, Ch. Env. Scientist, Lake Okeechobee Division
Gary Ritter, Interim Dir., Okeechobee Service Center
Rick Smith, WRAC Facilitator, SFWMD

Others Present:

Paul Gray, PhD., Audubon of Florida
Jackie Weisenblum, Audubon of Florida
Chuck Collins, Southeastern Regional Director, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Commission (FWCC)
Don Fox, FWCC

Ms. Estenoz called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There were no changes to the published agenda.

Ms. Estenoz the schedule for the day would include an inspection of projects and lands regarding Lake Okeechobee Restoration, a 20 minute briefing from staff, a swamp buggy tour of Lake Okeechobee northwest marshes and a planned return to the Okeechobee Service Center at 1:30 or 2:00 p.m.

Susan Gray, Ph.D., Director, Watershed Management Department, said that the District has worked on lake restoration projects in close partnership with the FWCC and Glades County. The goal is to see the return of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation. Some areas of the most important nearshore areas are doing well, some are not. Restoration area behind King's Bar is very important. Today, the inspection will visit some of the scraped down areas and areas where the FWCC is the lead agency.

Mr. Collins: We do not appear to be able to get to the restoration levels staff has been working toward. Where are we in funding and completing these projects?

Don Fox, FWCC: Worm Cove is an area where FWCC has accepted bids and the contractor is now mobilizing. Another project has had bid accepted. Basically, partners are continuing work on these projects.

Mr. Dauray: What water levels are out there now? Don Fox: don't know yet for today. It fluctuates according to the rainfall and winds. The area we'll visit is very important for fish and wildlife production.

Susan Gray: A contract with Glades County is on the Governing Board agenda this month; and, SFWMD is moving forward with pilot disking project where we will experiment with disking to turn under and sequester the sediment in the dried down areas of the marsh.

Mr. Dauray: Is the goal of getting 5 million cubic yards of scraped down material removed still viable? Susan Gray: Yes for "dry work". We will also continue work on Eagle Bay and Government Cut, and area of 1,483 acres with a natural sump for collection of the sediment.

Paul Gray passed around a sample of mud from Government Cut. Work is needed to determine if this muck is covering seeds and preventing germination of beneficial SAV.

Some of the areas being worked on by the FWCC have less muck and more decaying plant detritus. It is easier to deal with and dispose of.

Don Fox, FWCC – mentioned picture on wall of the Okeechobee Service Center showing Eagle Bay topped out with SAV.

Discussed contents of muck – David Unsell/Paul Gray: includes less than 50% organics. It will be very difficult to achieve the Total Maximum Daily Load for Phosphorous if this material cannot be removed from the lake.

Don Fox: Hurricanes transported some of this into the northwest portion of lake.

Mr. Dauray: How many acres or cubic yards of material are out there? Half of the open water area of the Lake – about 300 square miles is covered with it.

Chip Merriam: We hope tilling the surface layers under can successfully sequester the phosphorous. A proposal from "DCI" was for a period of several decades where they would create windrows in shapes like the spokes of wheel and treat those with alum.

Don Fox: you will see a large mound of the material mounded up in the areas we'll visit. In the old days it was not uncommon to see spoil mounded up in lake.

Mr. Dauray: asked whether there is any proof of the success of disking? Chip Merriam: that's why we're doing a pilot demonstration project. We've been using this technique in the Stormwater Treatment Areas to determine any benefits after hurricanes. This will be the largest scale project of this type that's been attempted.

Paul Gray: This mud keeps the lake turbid, but it keeps algae blooms down. So we want to get it down slowly. If we could dredge it all out that would be best.

Shannon: How quickly is it accumulating? Or is it primarily a phosphorous legacy problem? Susan Gray: it's still coming primarily from thhe Kissimme basin. If we can clean up what's coming into the lake, we'll start transporting cleaner sediment.

Mr. Dauray: Discussed concerns about removing arsenic. Dave Unsell: Levels in the lake are at acceptable levels; but when you pull it out and have to dispose it, becomes a problem.

Mr. Wade Background levels of arsenic in the Everglades Agricultural Area were at acceptable levels. Chip Merriam: In the EAA tests have shown the arsenic does not come into solution.

Mr. Wade: This material (the sample of muck) stuff is like what we get from EAA canals. The Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences at University of Florida (IFAS) was working on methods to harvest SAV from the canals and grind it and put out into the fields rather than spray and let die and decompose in water column. No effective methods have yet been found.

Don Fox: coming out of the drought we expect to have an explosion of water hyacinth. Control using All Terrain Vehicles has proven the best method to get at the millions of seedlings that are just emerging. Need more education of the public about this.

Ms. Estenoz: There being no further questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned to begin the inspection.

Shannon Estenoz
Vice Chairman
Projects and Lands Committee

Recorded By:

Rick Smith