Lake Istokpoga Advisory Committee Meeting 2

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center Auditorium, Conference Room 2
4509 George Blvd; Sebring, Florida 33875
August 9, 2018

Summary

Overview

On Thursday, August 9, 2018 the Lake Istokpoga Advisory Committee attended their second meeting in Sebring, Florida. Project principal investigator Kai Lorenzen, research scientist Chelsey Crandall, and lead facilitator Joy Hazell designed and facilitated the meeting (Appendix A, Agenda).

Approximately 8 committee members and 3 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff attended the meeting. The meeting objectives were to:

- Develop trust and community between committee members
- Develop shared understanding of Lake Istokpoga history and Habitat Management Plan proposed chapters
- Develop shared understanding of preferred Lake Istokpoga attributes

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began with 30 minutes of activities designed to set a positive, collaborative tone for the rest of the day. Activities included introductions, an explanation and clarification of the meeting agenda, objectives, and participant generated ground rules for the meeting (Appendix B). As an icebreaker, participants were asked to identify their favorite thing about Lake Istokpoga and the most exciting thing they had done since the first meeting.

Presentation on the History of Lake Istokpoga

Mark Hoyer, Lake Management Specialist and Director of Florida Lakewatch, delivered a PowerPoint presentation detailing the history of Lake Istokpoga. A PDF of the presentation can be found at https://lakeistokpoga.wordpress.com under project documents. The presentation was a summary of Chapter 2 of the habitat management plan (HMP). Following a question and answer session, advisory committee members were asked what key events, data etc. were missing from the history. Their responses follow:

- Snail kite data
- Waterfowl data
- Osprey data (Mike McMillan)
- Wading birds
- Spring lake: 2010-2015 pollution
- 2015: Sewage dump, Arbuckle Creek
- Hurricane Irma Impacts

Overview of Habitat Management Plan Chapters

Dr. Kai Lorenzen, the project principal investigator, shared the habitat management plan chapters as outlined by the FWC request for proposal.

Habitat Management Plan Chapters

1. Introduction, Overview and Purpose
2. Habitat Management Background and History
3. Overall Management Vision and History
4. Identification, Development and Prioritization of Management Issues, Strategies, Goals, Objectives and Recommendations

5. Identification and Development of Monitoring Measurables and Strategies
6. Actions for Other Agencies to Consider
7. Summary and Conclusions

Activity to Identify Preferred Habitat Attributes

Advisory committee members were split into small groups representing four of the most prominent stakeholder groups (Homeowners, Fishers, Environmentalists, Duck Hunters). Seven flip charts were placed around the room, each labeled with a different general habitat attribute (predictability, density, structure, essential species, location, patch size, and accessibility). Each group was then asked to move around the room and use each flip chart to record what was important to their stakeholder group with regard to each attribute. The objective of this activity was first to generally characterize preferred habitat attributes for each stakeholder group and second to identify points of agreement between stakeholder groups and points that need to be discussed further in future to come to consensus on best options. This activity did not end in decision making of any kind but rather elaborated on points of further discussion.

Table 1.

Attributes	**Stakeholder Groups**			
	Fishers	**Environmentalists**	**Homeowners**	**Duck Hunters**
Predictability	Natural fluctuation • Water level • Wind • Weather events • Natural fluctuation is not predictable. Better spray schedule transparency • What times of year so not to affect spawning • Not over spraying in areas that have little growth • Consistency	Natural fluctuation are long slow processes punctuated by fire/storms Lake changes quickly Fish live in different places Birds live in different places Species disappear	Good public information Dependability of good control over invasive	Set a long term target goal that triggers control – 30-50% Better spray schedule transparency No large scale treating plants during duck season
Density	Balance • Bulrush is thinning • Nursery habitat (dense vegetation) • Depth dependency	Varies with plant zone and successional stage Littoral marsh naturally gets dense and many unique species rely on this habitat Topped out hydrilla a problem	No tussock/floating islands	In littoral zone (within 100 meters of shoreline) 30%-50% mix of multiple plant types with open water

	• Open water for crappy and bluegill	Spatterdock gets too thick		

Attributes	Stakeholder Groups			
	Fishers	**Environmentalists**	**Homeowners**	**Duck Hunters**
Structure (natural and artificial)	Fish attractors/marked Less muck More submerged aquatic vegetation	Littoral areas – monitoring and cause and affect research Full range of hydroperiod zones allowed to grow and remain More submerged aquatic vegetation Open water benthic structure – live and dead Sediment biogeo characteristics	Protect cypress Sparse emergent vegetation around residential areas No tussock! Stabilize shoreline	Increase water level fluctuation for more 30%-50% habitat types More submerged aquatic vegetation
Essential Species	Hydrilla, bulrush, eelgrass, Illinois pond weed, pennywort mat, spatterdock, coontail	Full biodiversity of plants and animals including inverts Duckweed Migrant birds and insects Some exotics are innocuous and not worth attention based on limited resources*	Nothing which blocks homeowner access Bulrush, emergent species in moderation Eelgrass with lilies for habitat, no invasive exotics* Cypress Aesthetics	Hydrilla does provide habitat in moderation* Nothing which blocks homeowner access Bulrush, emergent species in moderation Eelgrass Cypress Aesthetics
Location	Some open deeper water and leave alone important areas Several locations on the lake • North bulrush in no name creek • East shore • West side of big island	Plant ones in the right place, e.g. don't kill emergent to get submerged Tussocks are natural and offer good habitat for turtles, nesting, loafing, rabbits		Maintain boat access year round Moderate habitat around whole lake (30%-50%)

	• South of cut			

Attributes	Stakeholder Groups			
	Fishers	**Environmentalists**	**Homeowners**	**Duck Hunters**
Patch Size	Some larger areas of submerged plants (multiple species Moderate emergent with edge effect	Larger marsh areas, larger patch sizes Maintain linear connectivity of concentric marsh zones Don't hyper-fragment plant stands	Sparse vegetation around homes Intermittent access for "edge effect" in shoreline bulrush areas Open buffer areas separating shoreline from bird habitat	Manage high duck use areas for the birds Keep that habitat constant over time
Access	Navigable Canal access Creek access Trails* – clean up of old cuts in spatterdock, Henderson's cove	Maintain trails without over dissecting plant communities* Trails allow predation into deep marsh (molting area, fish, frog refuge) Shoreline access for public (without boats) could be expanded, ex. Windy Point long dock Canal boat lanes allow nutrients to flow into shallow marsh (concern)	Conflict between homeowner access and lake regulation schedule Channels to get out during potential drawdown	Navigable Canal access Creek access Trails* – clean up of old cuts in spatterdock, Henderson's cove

University of Florida Project Team Synthesis

The objective of the above activity was to identify points of convergence and divergence in how different stakeholder groups think about the listed attributes and to explore how the different groups conceptualize habitat and what aspects of different attributes are important to each.

Points of convergence or agreement examples included:

1. *Moderation in all actions and a willingness to understand that there is a need to balance multiple perspectives and uses for the lake*
2. *Desire for a mix of species*

3. *Understanding that natural fluctuations impact lake habitat*
4. *Desire for improved public access for boaters and non boaters including*
    a. *Improved public ramps*
    b. *Improved parking at Lake Istokpoga Park*
    c. *Docks for shoreline fishing and nature viewing*

*Points of divergence or issues that will need to be discussed at length in futue (noted in table by *)*

1. *Trade-offs between boater access and protecting animals/plants from predators and nutrient inputs*
2. *Definition of tussocks and tolerability, trends and control methods*
3. *Definition of invasive exotics and discussion of tolerability, trends and control methods*

<u>Pulling it all Together and Next Steps</u>

A parking lot was created to identify next steps and additional information desired by the committee. The following will be addressed in the next several months:

- Creation of a document detailing who works on Lake Istokpoga including working group and those external to FWC
- Creation of a document of acronym definitions
- Ensure all slide presentations are available on the website
- Bring Invasive Plant Management (IPM) to talk about homeowner rules
- Increase public information/education on rules about spraying by homeowner hired contractors
- More info on snail kite patch size needs and what happened to bulrush
- Share IPM yearly plan
- Add Paul Gray's presentation, maps, etc. to website
- Add Lake Istokpoga draft plan to website

Next Meeting and Future Considerations

- Next public meeting will be held in late 2018 to capture seasonal residents
    - This next public meeting will be planned at the October Advisory Committee Meeting
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting (October 11, 2018) will be preceded by a field trip on the lake (October 10, 2018)
    - One to two points of divergence will be discussed in detail at October meeting
    - Advisory Committee Members will send Joy places/habitats of interest they would like to see during the field trip

This then closed the meeting.

Post Report Review Comments from Committee Members

Committee Member Comment on Habitat Plan Chapters:
This layout of a management plan minimizes or misses four important elements:

1. Identification and discussion of trends, which will affect the plan's operation. Planning needs to be based on the future environment. In my opinion, these trends include:
    a. Increased population pressure on this and other lakes, which impacts on pollution, lake recreational uses, shoreline environment and similar concerns.
    b. Increased pollution from non-point sources, (which could eventually result in a requirement for all homes to convert to a central sewage system). Population growth and continued local use of septic tanks raise the probability of increased nutrients and sewage flowing into the lake.
    c. Increased number of new invasive and exotic plants and animals with the concurrent requirement to identify and immediately control them
    d. Increased use of the lake for recreational, non-sporting activities.
    e. Impact of climate change, which may significantly increase plant growth thru warmer temperatures, and increase the amount of rainfall and number of violent storms.
2. Expansion of Chapter 5, for explicit implementation and monitoring of the plan's components. Without knowing how it will be implemented and managed or monitored the follow-on lake management will always be subject to disagreements and subjective evaluation.
3. What will implementing the plan cost, and is a budget going to be available to implement the plan's recommendations. (There is likely to be a strong push from some to implement ineffective and expensive plant control methods. Planning needs to consider the cost of lake management activities with some assurance the funds will be available.

What changes should be made to FWC's interface with the public and methods of providing information and education about lake management topics?

Committee Member Comments on Table:
Predictability-Shallow (0-6ft)in depth. Marsh mimicking and/or food source types of submerged aquatic vegetation species for bird and fish species.

Density- Littoral zone being 100 yards from furthest extending Emergent aquatic vegetation in and around lake. With some open water mixed in, but covered from outside wave energy and sight up to 10 ft off water in height if possible.

Structure- Flooding/ drought stages on lake expressed to maximum levels allowed to mimic a natural wetland cycle. Increase submerged aquatic vegetation populations and protected interior marshes.

Access- Homeowners can have trials cut for access, not entire portions of lake sprayed for submergent or emergent vegetation that may cause issues.

Committee comment: To quote Gen Eisenhower (architect of the WW II D-Day plan):

- "The Plan is useless."
- "**PLANNING** is indispensable."

Appendix A: Agenda

Lake Istokpoga Advisory Committee
Thursday, August 9, 2018

Meeting Objectives

1. Develop trust and community between committee members
2. Develop shared understanding of Lake Istokpoga history
3. Develop shared understanding of preferred Lake Istokpoga attributes

Meeting Agenda

8:30 Welcome and Introductions

9:00 History of Lake Istokpoga

9:45 Overview of Proposed Habitat Management Plan Chapters

10:15 Break

10:30 Activity to Identify Preferred Habitat Attributes

11:45 Proposed Habitat Restoration Project

12:15 Pulling it all Together and Next Steps

12:30 Adjourn

Appendix B: Group Norms

- Be on time
- Good A.C.
- No one person dominates
- Be an active/good listener
- Tough on issues, not on people/individuals
- Don’t tell someone else what their motives are
- Limit use of electronics
- Recognize different types of knowledge
- Use data when available